

Managing local water to benefit native fish & water plants

Edward-Wakool Environmental Water Reference Group Update

Planned use of water in the Edward-Wakool in winter 2017

Stevens Weir pool is usually lowered each winter from its normal height of 5 metres to enable weir maintenance and allow the banks to dry for a period. From mid-May, rather than drawing down the weir pool completely, it will be lowered to around 3.8-4.0 metres. This will enable flows into Yallakool Creek-Wakool River and Colligen Creek-Niemur River at rates of about 200 megalitres per day. River levels may also be influenced by Murray River flows during this time.

These winter flows aim to:

- provide more refuge areas for juvenile and small fish to find food and avoid being eaten by bigger fish
- keep adult fish and water plants in good condition before spring arrives
- reinstate part of the flows that would have occurred naturally (before dams) during winter-spring
- improve links with other parts of the river system
- allow most of the banks in the weir pool and along the creeks and rivers to dry.

These winter flows are a trial to ensure the best use of environmental water for the region. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office will be working with the Reference Group to review and adjust flows as necessary. Outcomes will be evaluated by Charles Sturt University.



Troy Bright with a Murray cod caught in the Edward-Wakool River system during April 2017

Edward-Wakool Environmental Water Reference Group community members

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| • Troy Bright | • Rick Webster | • Jeanette Crew |
| • Jeremy Morton | • Roseanne Farrant | • John Lolicato |
| • Roger Knight | • Peter McDonald | • Jamie Hearn (Murray LLS) |

Summary of 2016-17 use of water in the Edward-Wakool system

During 2016-17 the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder approved flows for: native fish refuges during the 2016 hypoxic blackwater event, native fish spawning and movement, re-establishment of water plants and connecting various parts of the system. By the end of June, flows are expected to have been provided to:

- Yallakool Creek-Wakool River: 30,900 ML
- Native fish refuge flows: 107,370 ML
- Colligen Creek-Niemur River: 24,400 ML
- Tuppall Creek: 1,325 ML

Local input to 2017-18 water planning in the Edward-Wakool

Planning for the 2017-18 use of water is underway including discussions with local people. The following options are being considered for the benefit of native fish and water plants:

- Yallakool Creek-Wakool River, Colligen Creek-Niemur River and Merran Creek: proposed flows to maintain native fish conditioning, spawning and movement, maintenance of in-stream aquatic vegetation, connect nutrient-rich flows from Millewa forest into local rivers and creeks during the cooler time of the year, maintain connectivity with the Murray River system and encourage fish movement to and from the Murray River
- options for other creek systems such as Murrain-Yarrien and Tuppall Creeks will need to be discussed with key partners including local landholders, Murray Irrigation and NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
- as per previous years, the potential delivery of refuge flows for native fish and Murray crays if low dissolved oxygen conditions occur
- thinking about potential for watering in Werai and Koondrook-Perricoota Forests in future years
- linking Edward-Wakool flows and outcomes to those being sought in the Murray and Darling river systems, particularly for native fish.

These discussions help to guide water use decisions by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.



Meeting with Merran Creek landholders in May 2017

Have an idea about where water could be used in the Edward Wakool System?

Contact Linda Duffy, Commonwealth Environmental Water Office Local Engagement Officer on 0419 188 430 or linda.duffy@environment.gov.au