

Locals taking positive action in environmental water management

Edward-Wakool Environmental Water Reference Group

Commonwealth environmental water providing refuge flows at the Wakool escape into the Wakool River at 500 megalitres per day (dark water is blackwater and light water is refuge flows containing more oxygen for fish).

Refuges of fresh water with improved oxygen levels are being created for aquatic wildlife with environmental water flows. Local anglers observed Murray Cod congregating at the Edward River Escape almost immediately on release of this water.

The Edward-Wakool Environmental Water Reference Group (EWEWRG) has been working hard developing a careful approach to delivering environmental water into the local river systems, following recent natural floods.

Murray Irrigation's Edward River Escape, Wakool River Escape and Thule Creek Escape are being used to get water diverted around the flooded forests via the Mulwala Canal to create fish refuges from oxygen depleted (hypoxic) water.

Locals have been instrumental in getting staged water releases delivered as soon as flood waters began to recede. Additional escapes are being investigated for the Jimaringle and Niemur systems and elsewhere in the Edward-Wakool system as the recession continues.

Blackwater benefits: The dark colour indicates organic material dissolved in the water. Microorganisms consume the organic material using oxygen in the process. This adds to the foodweb for river life.

Hypoxic blackwater occurs if the conditions – high organic material, warm water – cause the microorganisms to use oxygen more quickly than can be replaced from the air.

For more information on hypoxic blackwater visit: <https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/publications/factsheet-hypoxic-blackwater-events-and-water-quality>

Rainfall resulted in floodwater This was a natural flood from record rainfall in the catchments. Water was released from the Hume Dam as a result of record inflows. Unregulated flows from the Kiewa, Ovens, and King Rivers which flow into the Murray below the Hume

Dam contributed to flows released out of Yarrowonga. At its peak the release from Hume Dam was less than 50% of the peak below Yarrowonga. These large releases from Yarrowonga flowed downriver impacting the Murray, Edward and Wakool river systems. There was no environmental water in the Edward-Wakool system in the recent flood event.

Who is this EWEWRG? The group was formed early 2016 to ensure a local voice in the use of environmental water flows in the Edward-Wakool river systems. The group is supported by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.

What the EWEWRG has done: Weekly meetings are being held during the current flood to get direct community input into when, where and how environmental water could assist in reducing the negative effects of this natural flood event.

Landholder representatives have been in regular contact with their networks to identify when flows could commence locally, without adversely impacting landholders.

Result: Staged delivery of environmental water into the river system via Murray Irrigation escape infrastructure to create fish refuges. This is being done in consultation with those landholders downstream of the escapes, SES, Local Government, state and Commonwealth water agencies. In consultation with community and landholders as floodwater began to recede, fresh oxygenated water has been released into the rivers via Murray Irrigation Edward River, Wakool River and Thule Escapes. Ongoing points of release are continuing to be discussed daily.



Edward Wakool Environmental Water Reference Group meeting at Thule Lagoon

Edward-Wakool Environmental Water Group local community members

Troy Bright	Rick Webster
Jeanette Crew	Jamie Hearn
Roseanne Farrant	John Lolicato
Roger Knight	Peter McDonald
Jeremy Morton	

What can I do to help?

Send your photos, ideas and further information for environmental water to ewater@environment.gov.au.