



# Southern Spring Flow 2019

## Healthy rivers are vital for community wellbeing, agriculture and our native plants and animals.

As dry conditions continue across the Murray–Darling Basin, water managers are working together to keep the river system healthy.

During winter and spring, water for the environment will add to flows in the Murray River to help provide food for fish and give native plants a drink.

By flushing out leaf litter in the cooler months, the flows aim to reduce the risk of blackwater events, and associated fish deaths, in the summer.

It's important to deliver the flows before it is too late to make a difference.

The flows will provide social and economic benefits for communities along the full length of the river through improved water quality and amenity.

## Key facts



The flows will travel over 2000 kilometres from Hume Dam in New South Wales to the Coorong in South Australia.

Two flows are planned:

- A short pulse in August (about 2 weeks) to improve fish, plant and animal health.
- A longer flow (at least 6 weeks) from September will increase food and shelter for wildlife before breeding season, and give some wetlands a much needed drink. This flow will link up with planned environmental flows from the Goulburn River.

Environmental water holders have about 400 gigalitres of water available (carried over from last year). The amount of water used will depend on a range of factors including natural flows and deliveries down the river for other users.

Water for the environment will be added to existing river flows to achieve a targeted peak flow downstream of Yarrawonga of up to 15,000 megalitres/day.

We will work with communities and experts to closely monitor the benefits of the flow to the environment.



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## Why is the water being released?

Even in dry times like we are currently experiencing, natural flows would have replenished the Murray River each year with fresh food and nutrients as they flowed through low lying wetlands, creeks and river red gum forests.

Today the rivers are highly modified, with water captured in dams and weirs. This has decreased the size and variability of natural flows in winter and spring, and interrupted the triggers plants and animals rely on to survive, feed and breed.

Timely release of water is critical to restoring these triggers and help native fish and wetland refuges better cope with the forecast dry conditions.

The need for water varies along the Murray River. Some sites, such as Barmah-Millewa Forest and the Coorong, need water every year.

The Koondrook-Perricoota Forest missed out on water in previous years and is showing signs of stress.

Some areas, such as Gunbower Forest, Hattah Lakes and Chowilla Floodplain, will undergo natural drying phases. In these areas, only discrete wetlands will receive water from the Southern Spring Flow to provide critical refuges for animals to survive the drought.



Sampling at Bunyip Waterhole, Barmah Forest (photo: K. Ward)



Barmah Forest, October 2017 (photo: CEWO)

## Who's involved?

The flow is a joint action by the:

- Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
- Victorian Environmental Water Holder
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
- SA Department for Environment and Water
- Murray-Darling Basin Authority as manager of The Living Murray.

The flows are being delivered in close collaboration with river operators and local site managers.

## Want to know more?

- Find regular flow updates on the **CEWO's website:** [www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo)
- **Email:** [ewater@environment.gov.au](mailto:ewater@environment.gov.au)
- **Follow us on Twitter:** @thecewh

Community drop-in information sessions will be held along the Murray River over the coming months.

For details, contact your nearest Local Engagement Officer:

- Anthony Wilson (Albury) 0419 188 430
- Richard Minter (Mildura) 0437 218 649
- Michelle Campbell (Berri) 0437 064 664

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