



## The Southern Spring Flow in 2020

During the period from September – December 2020 water for the environment will be released from Hume Dam to benefit key wetlands from the mid-Murray to the lower Murray, and all the way to the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

Early season rainfall has led to good natural flows in the River Murray over autumn and winter.

To build on these flows, small releases of water for the environment began from Hume Dam in September. These flows helped restore winter baseflows to support native fish such as Murray cod in the mid-Murray.

River regulators have been opened to allow water to flow into parts of the Barmah-Millewa Forest. This will give river redgums a drink and flush organic matter off low lying parts of the floodplain and into the river. This is beneficial for native fish (like Murray cod) as it starts the process that creates their food source.

Each year we prepare for a range of conditions and will scale our water use as the season unfolds.



Murray Cod, courtesy MDBA.

<b>Objectives</b>	Provide food and shelter for native fish and other aquatic animals along the River Murray, from Hume Dam to the Coorong.
<b>Start date</b>	September 2020 (Hume Dam release)
<b>Total duration</b>	September – December 2020
<b>Flow rate</b>	Combined with other flows to target up to 2.2m (15,000 megalitres/day) downstream of Yarrawonga Weir.
<b>Target areas</b>	River Murray channel and key wetlands and creeks in Barmah-Millewa forest, Edward-Wakool system, Chowilla, Coorong and Lower Lakes.

Environmental water holders work closely with scientists, local community members and river operators in making decisions on flow rates and the timing of water for the environment releases.

## Murray cod are nesting

Murray cod breeding marks the beginning of this year's Southern Spring Flow. Murray cod in the mid-Murray River are starting to build nests! There is about a six-week window from September to November when Murray Cod start to pair up and begin their breeding cycle. Water for the environment is being delivered to keep Murray cod nests submerged to give the eggs and larvae the best chance to survive.

## An annual boost for the River Murray system

River regulation has changed how the River Murray flows. Naturally flows would have been highest during winter and spring. Now with river regulation, these flows are stored in Hume Dam and released in other seasons, mostly summer for irrigation.

Water for the environment helps restore flows in the river at times when plants and animals need it most to feed, breed and thrive. These flows also improve water quality, which is good for communities too.

The water being used for this year's flow is made up of carryover from last year and water from this year's allocations.

We will be taking advantage of operational water for consumptive users that is already in the river to make efficient use of all water.

Like other water users we only have a limited amount of water available. We make careful choices about how best to use water for the environment, and which parts of the environment we can look after.

We will track the flows as they work their way down the river and work with communities and scientists to closely monitor the environmental benefits.



On Country meeting. Courtesy MLDRIN.

## Priorities for First Nations

Country needs proper flows to be healthy. Sixteen First Nations across the Southern Basin sent this

message loud and clear in a major Environmental Water Guidance project this year.

Environmental water holders have heard the message that keeping rivers connected is key to sustaining the cultural health of waterways.

Coordinated flows down the Murray, all the way to the Coorong, will help water red gums, nourish lignum and support other culturally important species. Water will flow through to the iconic Barmah-Millewa forest and help move vital nutrients through the system.

Flows that connect rivers from the source to the mouth, and nourish our wetlands, creeks and billabongs are needed. The Southern Spring Flow is a step towards stronger recognition of First Nations values and objectives in water planning.

## Water delivery partners

Environmental water holders are working together to coordinate deliveries along the length of the River Murray and build on the success of last year's flow.

Our partners include the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, SA Department for Environment and Water, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Goulburn-Broken CMA, WaterNSW and Goulburn Murray Water.

For more information, visit our website:

<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/catchment/southern-spring-flow-2020>

## Local Engagement Officers

**Anthony Wilson** (Wodonga, VIC)

☎ 0419 188 430

@ [anthony.wilson@environment.gov.au](mailto:anthony.wilson@environment.gov.au)

**Richard Mintern** (Mildura, VIC)

☎ 0437 218 649

@ [richard.mintern@environment.gov.au](mailto:richard.mintern@environment.gov.au)

**Michelle Campbell** (Berri)

☎ 0437 064 664

@ [michelle.campbell@environment.gov.au](mailto:michelle.campbell@environment.gov.au)