



Making the most of recent rains!



Objectives: To boost river flows and help native fish move, feed and breed along the Barwon-Darling River system



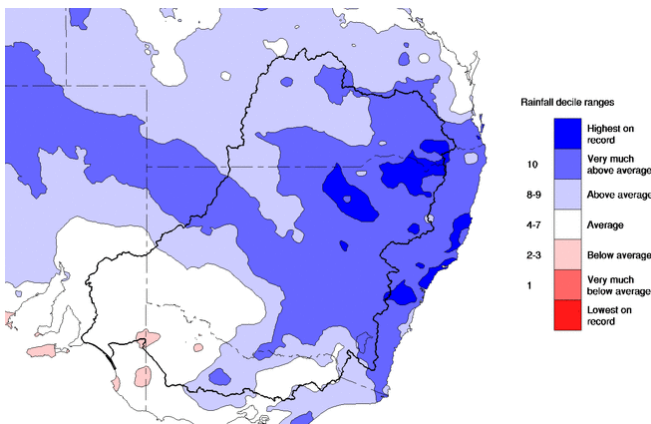
Target areas: Barwon-Darling River system



The Barwon River at Dangar Bridge (Walgett) on 25 March 2021. Source: CEWO

Recent rainfall provides welcome relief to Barwon-Darling River system

There was significant rainfall and flooding across Northern NSW and Southern Queensland in late March 2021. This generated substantial inflows into the Barwon-Darling, with flows peaking downstream of the Barwon-Namoi river junction at ~75,000 ML/day on 7 April. It is expected that a significant volume of water will reach Menindee Lakes, its largest inflow since 2016.



Rainfall Deciles in the Murray-Darling Basin for March 2021. Source: Bureau of Meteorology

A boost with water for the environment

Commonwealth and NSW environmental water managers along the Barwon-Darling use their water licences to protect a portion of natural flows from extraction and keep water in the river. Just like for irrigators, environmental licenses are only triggered when flows in the river exceed certain rates. This portion of the flow is protected from extraction through Active Management rules. This helps native fish to travel along the Barwon and Darling Rivers to increase their opportunities to feed and breed.

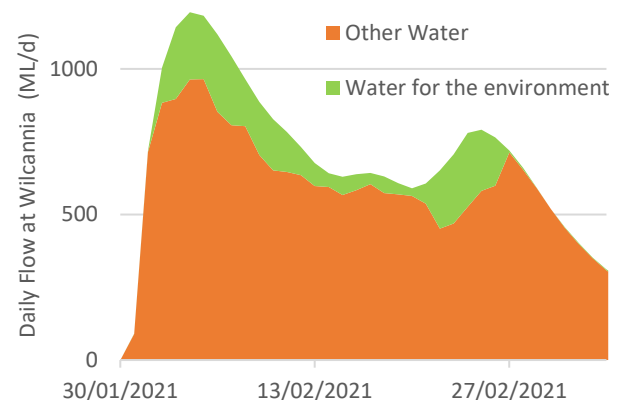
Whilst only a part of the overall flows, water for the environment allows more water to remain out of the river channel for longer, giving native fish greater opportunities. For example, fish can more easily swim into wetlands, which are an important source of food and a nursery area for breeding.

How much is water for the environment?

Between 4 January and 7 April 2021, ~ 40 GL of water had been protected in the Barwon-Darling for the environment.

The graph below shows flows in the Darling River at Wilcannia between late January and early March 2021. The green section shows how much of the river was Commonwealth and NSW water for the environment. This includes water delivered from the Border Rivers and the Gwydir through the [Northern waterhole top-up](#).

As of 4 May 2021, over 500 GL had flowed past Wilcannia. Of this, ~ 19 GL was made up of water for the environment (around 4 % of the flow).





Watching where the water is flowing

The [Water Insights Portal](#) – a website run by WaterNSW – provides key information on how water is currently being managed and shared within the Barwon-Darling. The portal is an invaluable tool for environmental water managers and community members alike.

Sentinel satellite imagery helps water managers and the community see the parts of the Barwon and Darling rivers where water has reached.

The images to the left show the Barwon River before and after the recent flows. Whilst the top image is dry, the bottom image shows water spilling onto the floodplain, with flows at Barooma Gauge at 38.5GL/day. The portion of these flows that were water for the environment were ~1 GL/day.

Working together

Commonwealth and NSW environmental water managers work in partnership with Traditional Owners, communities, scientists, and government agencies - these contributions help identify the best outcomes from environmental water and are gratefully acknowledged.

Sharing water in the Barwon-Darling

New [Active Management](#) arrangements in the Barwon-Darling came into effect in December 2020. With these arrangements, water users must wait for WaterNSW to announce access before they can pump water from the river. Water access is announced on a daily basis and is based on the amount of (actively managed) environmental water in the river at that time.

Local Engagement Officers

Contact the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office Local Engagement Officers for further information:

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The CEWO acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Murray-Darling Basin. We pay our respects to them and their elders both past and present.