

Community Information Communiqué

Management of Menindee Lakes 2011-2012 – Issue 8. 20 April 2012

Introduction

The flood peak in the Darling River is currently entering the Menindee Lakes. Inflows of 64,000 megalitres per day (ML/d) have been recently calculated and inflows of over 50,000 ML/d day are expected to continue over the weekend before beginning to fall. Airspace in the lakes is being used to minimise the flood impact around the Menindee township and downstream. Upstream at Wilcannia the river is falling slowly and no further rises are anticipated for this event.

This paper, and updates to follow, describes current flow conditions and operations, as well as information on what can be expected through April and May as the flood waters pass through the Darling River system.

Residents and authorities are reminded to check with the NSW Office of Water in Buronga on the required approvals before undertaking any earthworks to protect infrastructure or crops.

Current water levels and flows (as at 19 April 2012)

Location	Height (m)	Flow (ML/d)	Comment
Bourke	5.29	9,890	Falling (Peak 240,000 on 05/03/12)
Louth	5.18	12,139	Falling
Tilpa	8.13	23,290	Falling
Wilcannia (Main Channel)	10.57	39,040	Falling slowly (Peak 40,500 on 07/04/12)
Talyawalka Ck (Barrier Hwy)	4.22	21,580	Falling (Peak 53,000 on 07/04/12)
Menindee Town	8.94	-	Falling slowly
Weir 32	6.68	25,718	Falling
Pooncarie	7.35	18,450	Steady
Burtundy	7.33	19,489	Steady



Above is a view looking eastward to the Morton Boolka Swamp, a region of high-value biodiversity linking Lake Menindee (left) with Lake Cawndilla (right). Emu Lake, in the background, receives its water from the Darling River. Photograph by permission – dated 13 April.



Above is a view looking south across Copi Hollow toward Menindee Lake and Cawndilla Lake in the distance. The edge of Lake Pamamaroo can be seen to the left. Copi Hollow is an important recreational facility for the local community and visitors. Photograph by permission – dated 13 April.



Above is a view looking south. To the left with darker water is Lake Wetherell and to the right is Lake Tandure. Dark coloured water is yet to enter Lake Pamamaroo (centre) and Lake Menindee (top). The main weir is passing flows into the downstream channel centre-left. Photograph by permission – dated 13 April.



Above is a view looking north across Lake Cawndilla. The outlet regulator can be seen. At this point the Lake is 85 per cent full and releasing 1,200 megalitres per day for downstream environmental benefit. Photograph by permission – dated 13 April.

River operations

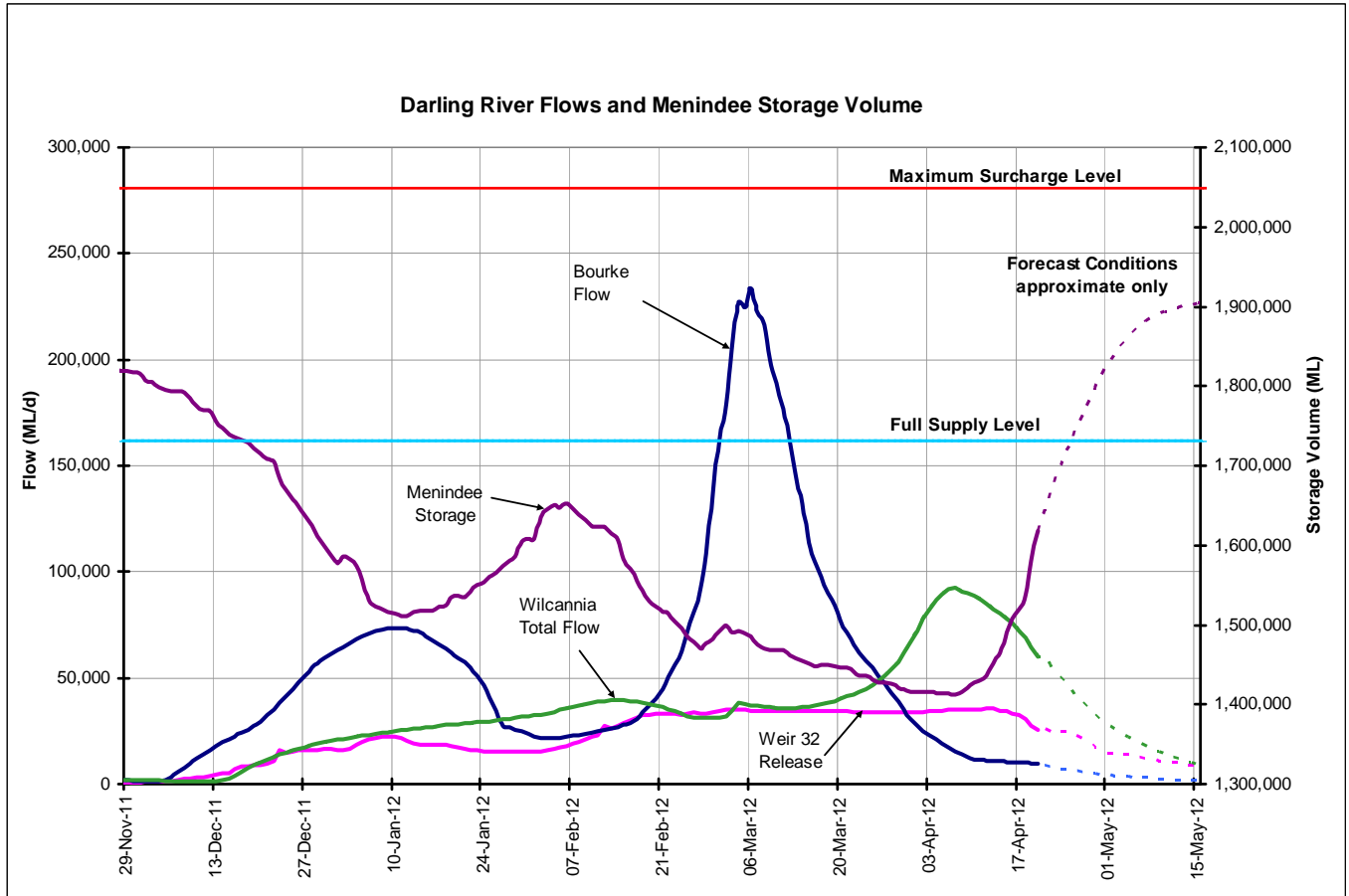
Darling River flows and Menindee storage volume

The flow in the Darling River main channel at Wilcannia is currently 39,000 megalitres per day and falling slowly; however, the flow in the adjacent Talyawalka Creek has fallen from a peak of 53,000 megalitres per day on 7 April to currently 21,000 megalitres per day. Flooding is beginning to ease around Wilcannia and upstream. The combined flow passing Wilcannia peaked at around 93,000 megalitres per day and peak inflows to Menindee Lakes were calculated recently to be over 64,000 megalitres per day.

The main weir gate at Menindee has been operated to allow a peak outflow at Weir 32 of around 35,000 megalitres per day. With the flood peak arriving at Menindee, the main weir gates are now being closed. Airspace in the lakes

system is being used to protect Menindee township from the current high inflows and to maximise the capture of water for future use. The lakes are currently 93 per cent full and rising, and are expected to pass Full Supply Level (100 per cent) by early next week. The maximum surcharge capacity of the lakes is 2,050,000 megalitres (118 per cent).

NSW Office of Water is carefully monitoring inflows as the main weir gates are being closed. Releases will be held to about 25,000 megalitres per day at Weir 32 until inflows reduce below about 50,000 megalitres per day. It is expected that it will then be possible to alleviate most local inundation by reducing flows at Weir 32 to about 17,000 megalitres per day by early May.



Lower Darling River flows

Flows in the Lower Darling below the Great Darling Anabranch effluent are currently between 18,000 and 20,000 megalitres per day. Water levels at Pooncarie and Burtundy are steady at about 7.3 metres. Although releases from Menindee are now being reduced, the impact of the ungauged lower Talyawalka Creek on flows in the Lower Darling (below Weir 32) remains uncertain. Therefore, previous advice that maximum levels will be a little below those of the 1998 event, that is peak flows of no more than about 24,000 megalitres per day at Pooncarie and 22,000 megalitres per day at Burtundy over the next two weeks, remains current.

After reducing flows at Weir 32 to 17,000 megalites as quickly as practicable to alleviate local access difficulties, a slower reduction down to 9,000 megalites per day is planned for the Lower Darling through to mid-late May to minimise the risk of river damage through bank slumping.

Releases of unregulated water from Cawndilla Outlet for the Anabranch will continue at least until the flow at Weir 32 is reduced to about 9,000 megalitres per day and is within channel.

At the bottom of the Lower Darling River, flow in the Murray River at Wentworth is currently 55,100 megalitres per day and slowly falling after a peak on 10 April of about 57,300 megalitres per day.

Great Darling Anabranh flows

Flow in the Lower Darling at the Great Anabranh effluent has been relatively steady throughout March and April at around 18,000 megalitres per day and 9.5 to 9.6 metres, commensurate with the steady flows through Weir 32. In the Anabranh at Wycot the flow is rising slowly and is currently 13,560 megalitres per day and some 4.26 metres. It will rise a little further over the next week and will peak below 4.5 metres. A few thousand megalitres per day continues to flow in the lower reaches of the Anabranh and into the Murray River. It is anticipated that this full connectivity through the Anabranh system will last at least through May.

How this flood compares to previous events

The table below shows a comparison of the current flood events with previous floods.

Year	Max height at Bourke (m)	Total Volume at Bourke (GL)	Max height at Wilcannia (m)	Total flow at Wilcannia (incl. Talyawalka Ck) (GL)	Max height Weir 32 (m)
1971	13.73	7,700	11.0	5,800	7.6
1974	14.09	8,200	11.07	6,450	7.63
1976	14.17	14,000	11.59	10,500	8.07
1983	13.27	7,200	10.65	5,500	7.06
1990	12.99	9,000	11.0	8,150	7.37
1998	13.78	9,700	10.83	6,700	7.45
2010	10.78	2,370	9.43	2,400	5.44
2011	12.56	5,800	10.5	5,000	7.10
2012	13.8	5,000**	10.63	4,000**	7.04-

* Value predicted by the Bureau of Meteorology

** Values predicted by the NSW Office of Water

Releases from the Menindee Lakes at 19 April 2012

Location	ML/d
Main weir	25,500
Lake Wetherell outlet	2,500
Lake Pamamaroo outlet	0
Lake Menindee outlet	0
Lake Cawndilla outlet	1,000
Total	29,000

Communication and additional information

As conditions can change relatively quickly, the NSW Office of Water and State Water will continue to monitor the situation carefully and provide regular information to the community.

Where do I go for additional information?

Central Darling Shire (Road and Asset information) Reece Wilson T 0429 915 992

NSW Office of Water: Bunty Driver T 0407 403234 or visit the website www.water.nsw.gov.au

State Emergency Service Far West Region Head Quarters T 02 6879 7100 or visit website www.ses.nsw.gov.au

State Water: Menindee Officer on Duty: T 0429 784334