

Mitchell River Basin

January 2014

Introduction

Southern Rural Water (SRW) is the water corporation responsible for administering and enforcing the Mitchell River Basin Local Management Plan (LMP).

The purpose of the Mitchell River Basin LMP is to:

- Document the management objectives for the system;
- Explain to licence holders (and the broader community) the specific management objectives and arrangements for their water resource and the rules that apply to them as users of that resource;
- Clarify water sharing arrangements for all users and the environment, including environmental flow requirements; and
- Document any limits, including water use caps, permissible consumptive volumes or extraction limits that apply to the system.

Management objectives

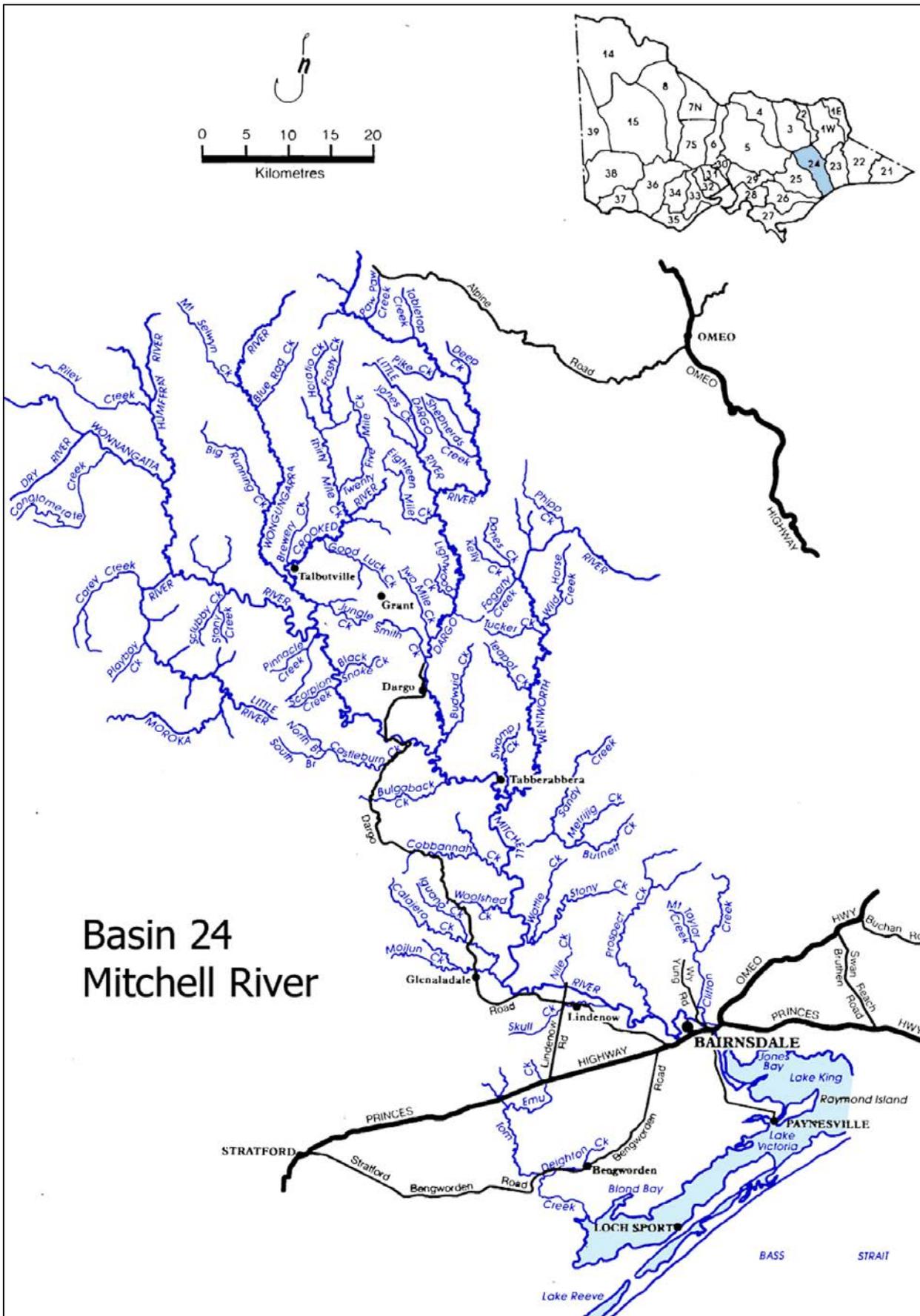
The objective of the LMP is to ensure the equitable sharing of water between users and the environment and the long-term sustainability of the resource.

Water system covered

The LMP covers all the unregulated rivers and creeks located within the Mitchell River Basin, which includes:

Mitchell Catchment	Wonnangatta & Dargo Catchment
Mitchell River (downstream of East Gippsland Water off take)	Wonnangatta River
Mitchell Lagoons (including Pound Swamp & Macleods Morass)	Dargo River
Clifton Creek & Tributaries	Upper Mitchell River (upstream of Wentworth River)
Prospect (Boggy) Creek	
Iguana Creek	

The Mitchell River Basin is shown in the map below.



Catchment information

The Mitchell River is a Heritage River and is the largest remaining river system in Victoria that does not have a large on-stream dam. Its major tributaries include the Wonnangatta, Wongungurra, Dargo and Wentworth Rivers. With a catchment basin of some 4800km² and long term average discharge rates of 884,500ML per year, it provides valuable irrigation water to Lindenow valley farmers as well as supplying urban water users. The Mitchell River is the source of supply for the towns of Bairnsdale and Paynesville and other towns in adjacent river basins including Bruthen, Nicholson, Nowa Nowa, Johnsonville, Swan Reach, Metung, and Lakes Entrance.

Diversions take out a relatively small proportion of total inflows varying from approximately 1.5% during wetter years to 4.5% during drier years. The Mitchell River underpins a substantial economic base in the region including irrigated agricultural production, tourism, a growing number of small businesses and manufacturers, and increasing residential population.

The Gippsland Lakes are important environmental assets partially dependent on water from the environmental water reserve in the Mitchell basin. The lakes are listed as internationally significant wetlands under the Ramsar Convention and rely on freshwater inputs from the Mitchell basin to function ecologically. Other environmental assets that rely on the EWR include heritage river reaches, fish populations (Australian Grayling, Black Bream), water birds (Great Egret) and botanical values (Yellowwood).

Water entitlements and use

Licence allocations in the Mitchell River Basin, which includes the Mitchell River Catchment, Wonnangatta River Catchment and the Dargo River Catchment are;

Licence Type	Number of Licences	Volume (ML)
Irrigation* - All year round pumping	136	12617.9
Irrigation – Conditional**	40	2217.7
Irrigation - Winterfill	7	1223
Registration	99	2622.2
Domestic and Stock	72	192.4
Commercial / Industrial	7	77.8
Dairy	11	58
Total	372	19009

* Includes amalgamated D&S, Dairy & Commercial licences

** Includes amalgamated D&S licences

General rules

Licences in the Mitchell River Basin are managed in accordance with the Water Act 1989 and Policies for Managing Take and Use Licences. A copy of these policies can be found at:

<http://waterregister.vic.gov.au/Public/TakeAndUseLicences.aspx>

The general rules for licences in the Mitchell River Basin are as follows:

New licences

- The Mitchell River Basin is not fully allocated. The Sustainable Water Strategy 2011 identified 6,000 ML of new winterfill water entitlements.

Metering

- Diversions are metered and licence holders must not use more than their licensed volume.
- Meters are installed on all active licences of 10ML or greater or all new licences regardless of the volume.
- Meters are read at least twice per year or upon request.

Restrictions

- Take and use licences allow for SRW to roster and restrict extraction during periods of low water availability. Restrictions will be applied by SRW as required. Notifications will be provided to licence holders in advance of their implementation.

Transfers

- Temporary transfers of a licence (or part of a licence) can be for up to 5 years, and conclude at the end of the water season (30 June).
- Permanent or temporary transfers of a direct stream (all-year licence) may only be approved if:
 - the licence will be transferred to a downstream user, or
 - the licence is issued to the buyer as a winterfill licence
- A winterfill licence cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year licence).

Renewals

- Licences are renewed in accordance with the Water Act 1989 and Policies for Managing Take and Use Licences.

The general rules apply to all licences in the Mitchell River Basin, unless otherwise stated in the system specific rules.

System specific rules

Some systems within the Mitchell River Basin require more specific management rules that address rostering, restrictions and trade. Specific rules exist for the following systems:

- Mitchell River- refer to appendix 1
- Wonnangatta & Dargo Rivers - refer to appendix 2

Annual reporting

SRW produces Local Water Reports for each river basin. These reports include information on licences, water use and seasonal conditions. A copy is sent to each licence holder each year.

Consultation and review

SRW will consult with licence holders and relevant stakeholders before making changes to the Local Management Plan, other than administrative changes or clarifications.

The Local Management Plan will be reviewed every 5 years, unless an update is required sooner.

References

- Department Primary Industries – Victorian Resources Online
- Victorian Water Accounts

Contact details

For general information call or visit

1300 139 510

ROSTER HOTLINE

1300 723 294

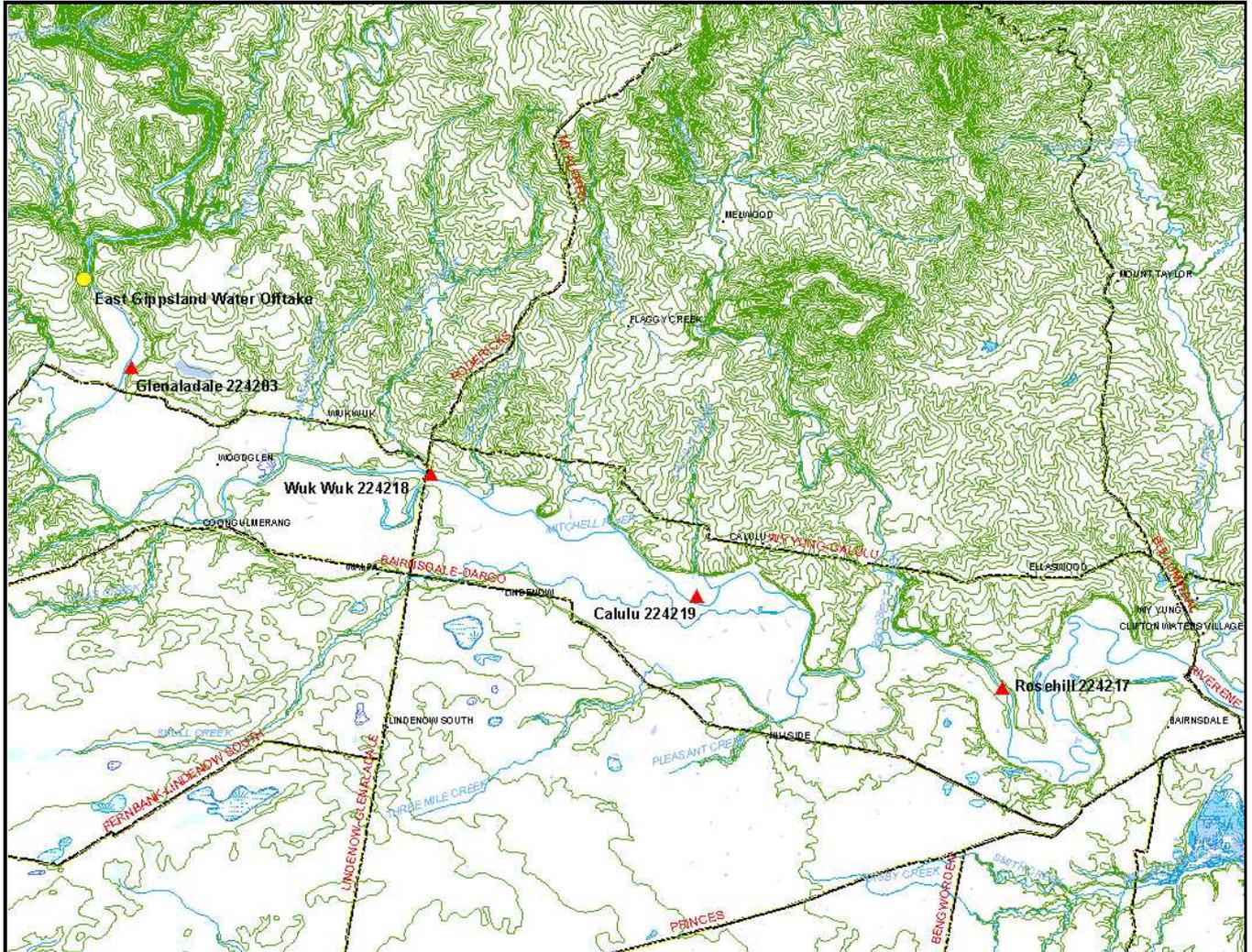
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Appendix 1

Mitchell River Rules

Area Description

These rules apply to all Mitchell River **irrigation licence** holders downstream of the East Gippsland Water Offtake, as shown below.



Licences: Only direct pumping licences are included on the 10 stage Mitchell River roster (see below).

Irrigation Licence Type	Number of Licences	Volume (ML)
Direct Pumping – All year round	80	10521
Conditional	40	2200
Winterfill	5	1200

The following licences are not subject to restriction: domestic & stock, dairy, commercial and registration licences. Also licences on the Mitchell Lagoons, Pound Swamp, Macleods Morass, Boggy (Prospect) Creek, Clifton Creek & tributaries and Iguana Creek are not restricted. Licence holders must keep within their licensed volume.

Management of Licences

Winterfill: Winterfill licences can only be used from the period July 1 to October 31. (However some older licences have a commencing date of May 1 – when renewed these licences will be standardised to reflect the July 1 start date.) Passing flows at the Glenaladale gauge site must also be at a minimum of **1400 ML per day** before licences can be activated. Due to the low number of licences, customers are notified directly when these licences can be used.

Conditional: Conditional irrigation licences cannot be used during restriction periods. Customers are notified prior to the likelihood of restrictions coming into force. Once restrictions are announced, irrigators using these licences must cease pumping until such time restrictions are lifted. A letter is sent to each customer advising of the need to cease pumping and roster hotline details are provided so that customers can monitor when restrictions start and also cease.

Direct Pumping (All year round): These irrigation licences are restricted in their use when the Mitchell River at the Glenaladale gauge site falls below **185 ML per day***. Rosters are sent to all customers who hold an all year round licence prior to this level when the river is at approximately 225 ML per day. Members of the Mitchell River Local Area Committee (representatives of Mitchell River customers) are also notified of impending restrictions. The sending of rosters notifies customers that restrictions are imminent, as well as informing them of contacting the **Roster Hotline** daily to confirm when restrictions are in force. Historically, there can be a season, or successive years, where restrictions are not required due to good rainfall periods.

A minimum passing environmental flow of **15 ML per day** must pass the Rosehill gauge site. This is re-calculated upwards depending on the number of active irrigators below this site (usually very low numbers and often inactive). An **irrigation ban** applies when the passing flow at the Rosehill site cannot be maintained at or above 15 ML per day.

How the roster works: The roster is divided into 3 groups for Mitchell River irrigators. Stages 1 to 3 allow all groups to pump at reducing rates. From stages 4 to 7 only two out of three groups are allowed to pump each day. Stages 8 to 10 only allows one group on daily. The groups are rotated daily to ensure every group has a fair share. Stage 11 is when a total irrigation ban applies.

Pump capacity and authorised licence volume determines the number of hours each customer is entitled to pump for each stage of the roster. Customers must contact the Roster Hotline (message service) after 9am daily to confirm the stage of restriction and

comply accordingly. A text service also informs customers with mobile phones of the daily stage of restriction.

*This may vary dependant on seasonal conditions – subject to significantly reduced irrigation use and high passing flows at the Rosehill gauge site.

Mitchell River - Restriction triggers for each stage of restriction – these are indicative only as seasonal and usage factors can often vary the stage of restriction.

Restriction Stages	Trigger Value for Introduction of Next Stage of Restriction Based on flow passing at Glenaladale site no. 224203	Percentage Reduction
Stage 1	185	14%
Stage 2	160	23%
Stage 3	145	32%
Stage 4	125	43%
Stage 5	110	51%
Stage 6	90	61%
Stage 7	70	71%
Stage 8	55	81%
Stage 9	40	90%
Stage 10	30	95%
BAN	<30	100%

Compliance Points

Southern Rural Water currently manages the Mitchell River using the following Gauging Stations:

Gauge Site Name	Site No.	Used for
Mitchell River @ Glenaladale	224203	Used to monitor inflow, set restrictions, ban conditional licences, determine winterfill take
Mitchell River @ Wuk Wuk Bridge	224218	Only used in low flow periods to monitor flow between gauge sites
Mitchell River @ Calulu Bridge	224219	Only used in low flow periods to monitor flow between gauge sites
Mitchell River @ Rosehill	224217	Used to change roster levels & determine bans, ensure minimum environmental flow

Transfers

- Temporary transfers of a licence (or part of a licence) can be for up to 5 years, and conclude at the end of the water season (30 June).
- Permanent or temporary transfers of a direct stream (all-year licence) may only be approved if:
 - the licence will be transferred to a downstream user, or
 - the licence is issued to the buyer as a winterfill licence
- A winterfill licence cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year licence).
- The Mitchell River has historically allowed sales water – though customers are encouraged to keep within their licensed volume.

Consultation

SRW liaises with the customers from the catchment as the need arises.

Review

These rules will be reviewed in accordance with the requirements of the Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy.

Other

East Gippsland Water has a Bulk Entitlement of 9208 ML on the Mitchell River. Its off-take is at Glenaladale (refer map). Contact East Gippsland Water or refer to its website for further information on its management and compliance rules.

ROSTER HOTLINE

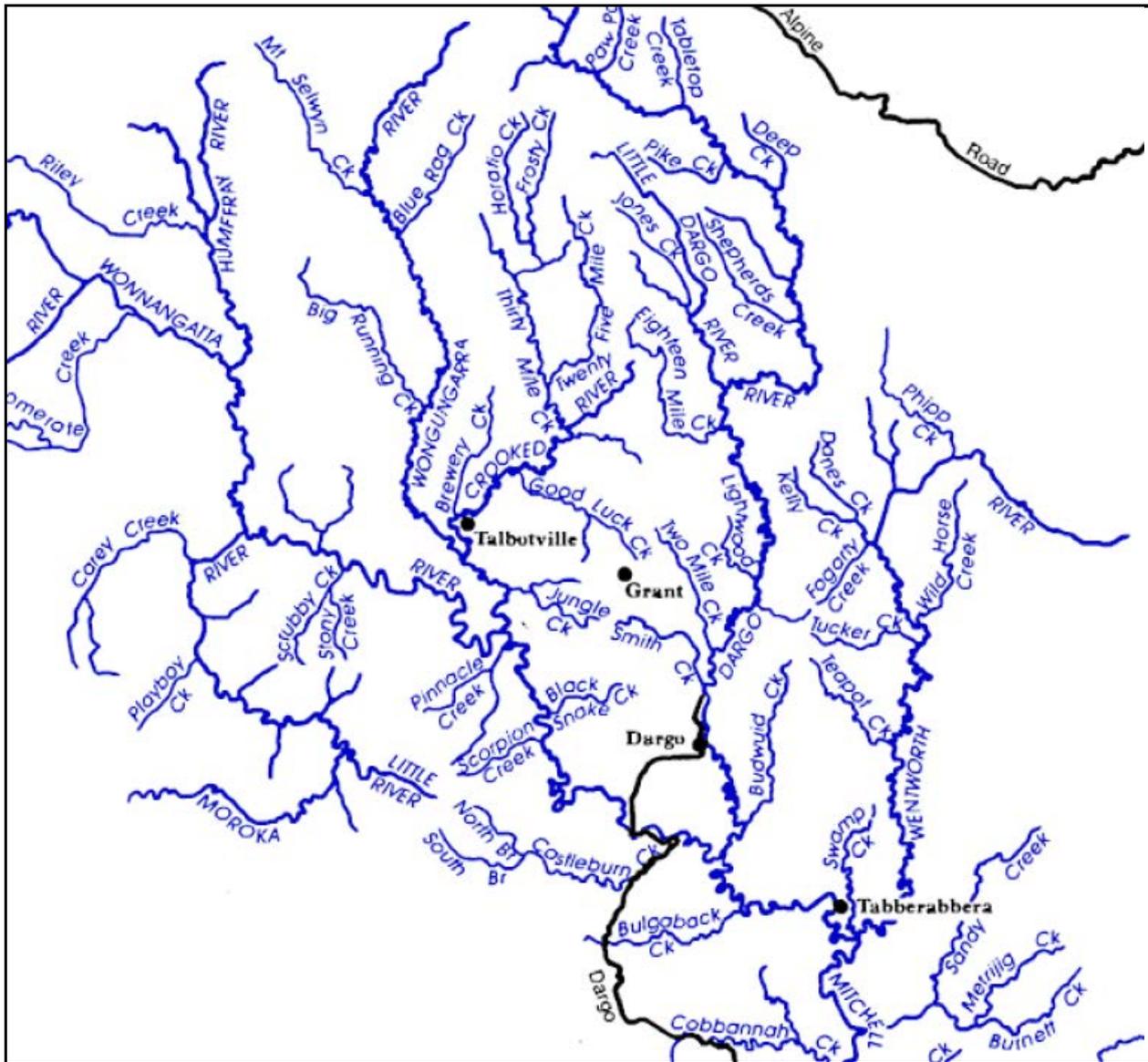
1300 723 294

Appendix 2

Wonnangatta & Dargo Rivers Rules

Area Description

These rules apply to all irrigation licence holders upstream of the Mitchell River and Wentworth River junction as shown below.



Licences: There are no winter-fill or conditional irrigation licences in this system. Most irrigation licences are either inactive or are low use. Domestic & stock, commercial and registration licences are not restricted.

Licence Type	Number of Licences	Volume (ML)
Direct Pumping - Irrigation	29	1181.1

Management of Licences

Wonnangatta & Dargo Rivers - Restriction triggers for each stage of restriction (indicative only)

Restriction Stages	Trigger Value for Introduction of Next Stage of Restriction Gauge Reference	Percentage Reduction
Stage 1	125 ML per day @ Glenaladale Gauge	30%
Stage 2	70 ML per day @ Glenaladale Gauge	70%
Ban	<30 ML per day combined: Wonnangatta River @ Waterford and Dargo River @ Lower Dargo Rd or;	100%
Ban	<10 ML per day Wonnangatta River @ Waterford	100% (on Wonnangatta River only)
Ban	<10 ML per day Dargo River @ Lower Dargo Road	100% (on Dargo River only)

How the Roster works: When restrictions are established on the Mitchell River, Wonnangatta and Dargo irrigators are sent their rosters and must contact the Roster Hotline daily. This roster is linked to the Mitchell River roster to determine restriction levels.

How this is interpreted:

When the Mitchell River roster is on **stages 1 to 3** – Wonnangatta and Dargo irrigators remain unrestricted;

When the Mitchell River roster is on **stages 4 to 7** – Wonnangatta and Dargo irrigators are on **stage 1**;

When the Mitchell River roster is on **stages 8 to 10** – Wonnangatta and Dargo irrigators are on **stage 2**;

However a ban only applies to Wonnangatta and Dargo irrigators when the combined flow of the Wonnangatta River @ Waterford and the Dargo River @ Lower Dargo falls below 30 ML per day. Or either: the Wonnangatta River falls below 10 ML per day (there may be high flows on the Dargo River) a ban applies to the Wonnangatta River only. The Dargo River falls below 10ML per day (there may be high flows on the Wonnangatta River) – a ban applies only to the Dargo River. Customers are informed via the Roster Hotline.

Compliance Points

Southern Rural Water currently manages the Wonnangatta & Dargo systems using the following gauging stations;

Gauge Site Name	Site No.	Used for
Mitchell River @ Glenaladale	224203	Determine restriction levels
Wonnangatta River @ Waterford	224201	Monitoring inflows into Mitchell system, determine bans
Dargo River @ Lower Dargo Road	224213	Monitoring inflows into Mitchell system, determine bans

Transfers

- Temporary transfers of a licence (or part of a licence) can be for up to 5 years, and conclude at the end of the water season (30 June).
- Permanent or temporary transfers of a direct stream (all-year licence) may only be approved if:
 - the licence will be transferred to a downstream user, or
 - the licence is issued to the buyer as a winterfill licence
- A winterfill licence cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year licence).

Consultation

SRW liaises with the customers from the catchment as the need arises.

Review

These rules will be reviewed every 5-years, unless an update is required sooner.

ROSTER HOTLINE

1300 723 294