



Merri River Local Management Plan

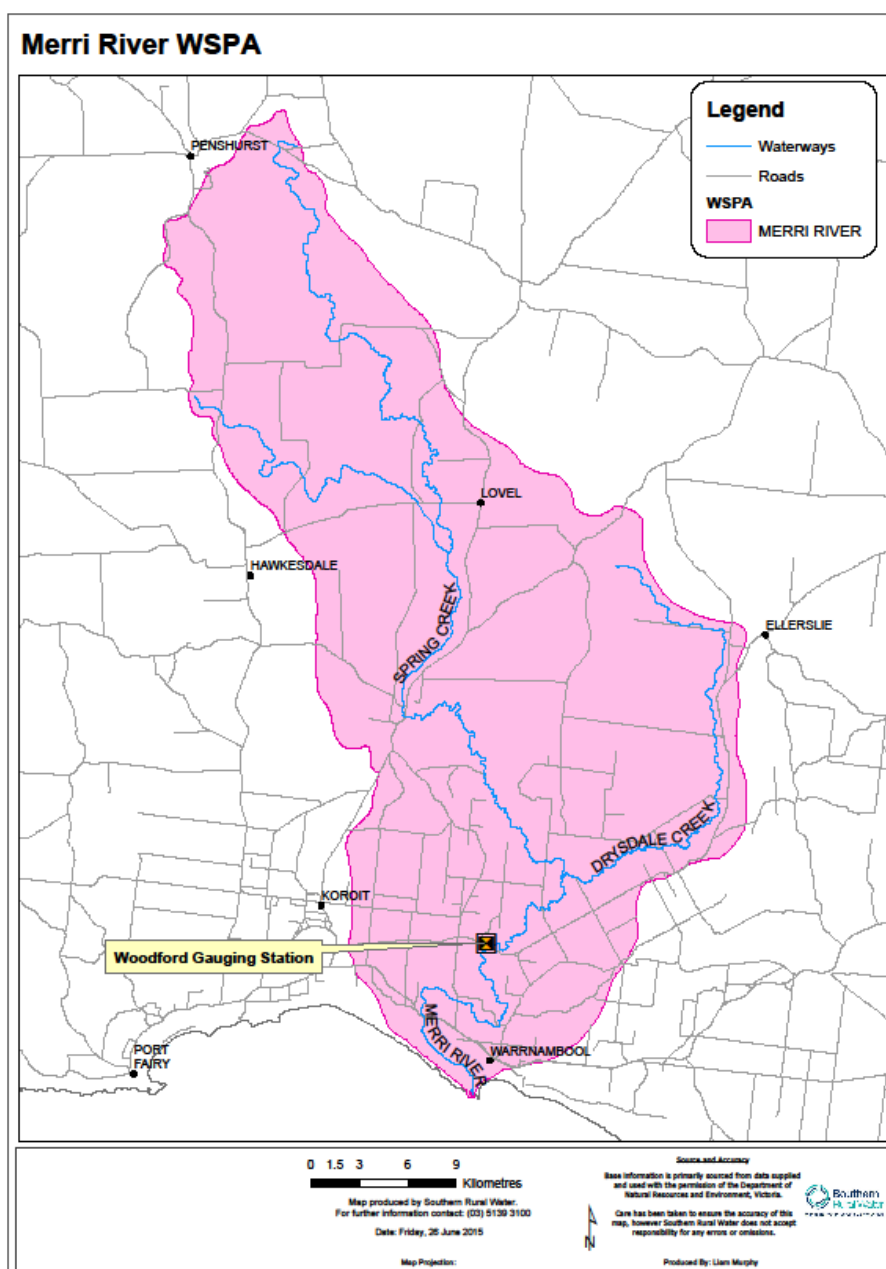
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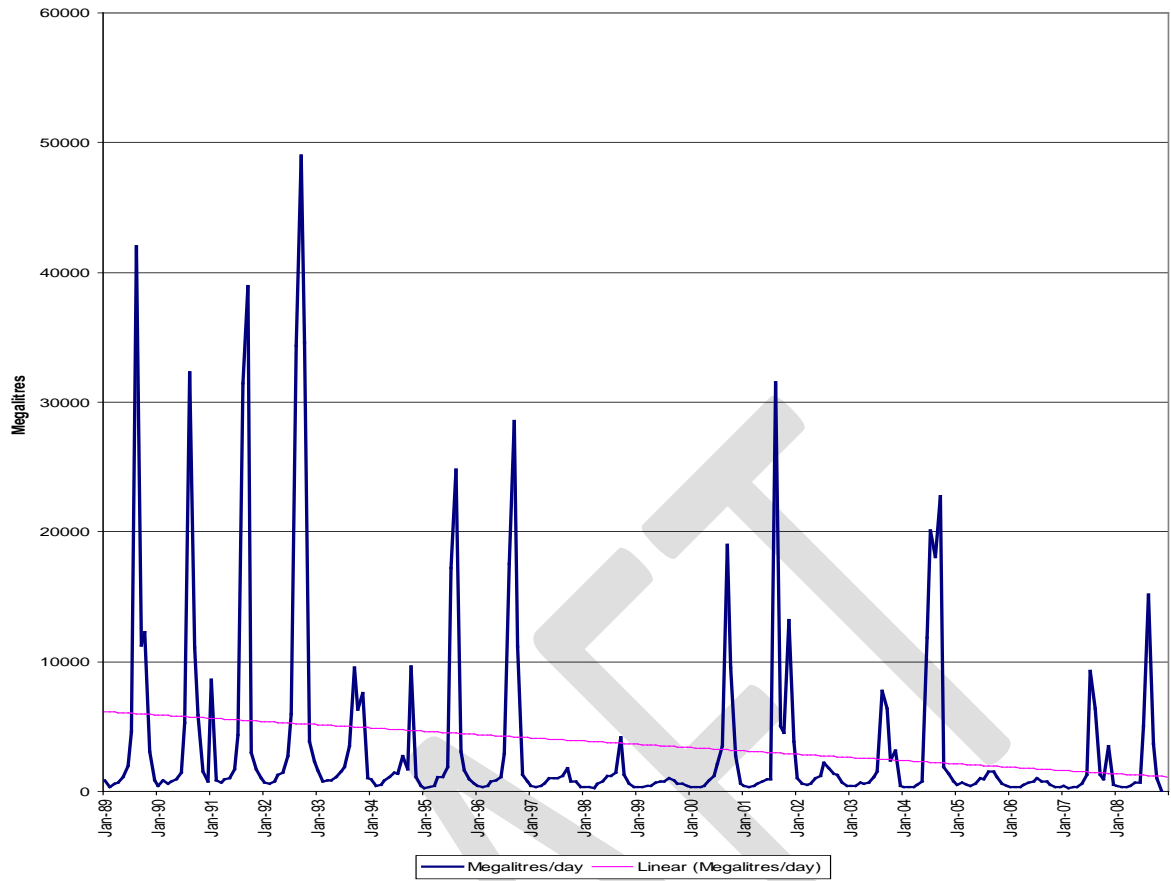
Merri River Rules

1. Area Description

The Merri River is located in the south western region of Victoria and runs into the city of Warrnambool. The Merri River catchment is approximately 900 km² with a mean average rainfall of 700-800 mm across the catchment. This allows the Merri River to have a yield of 70,000 ML's/year.

These rules apply to all Merri River irrigation licence holders located within the Merri River catchment as shown below.





Daily flows recorded at Woodford GS 1989 – 2009

2. Licences

Summary of all Merri River System licences per sub catchment

Licence Type	Merri River Section	Number of licences	Volume ML	Total number licence type	Total ML licence type
Irrigation-Direct	Zone A upstream of Woodford	13	1542.0		
	Zone B downstream of Woodford	15	1816.1		
	Drysdale Creek	4	535.0		
	Spring Creek	8	394.5	40	4287.6
Irrigation-Winterfill *	Zone A upstream of Woodford	0	0.0		
	Zone B downstream of Woodford	0	0.0		
	Drysdale Creek	1	28.0		
	Spring Creek	1	21.0	2	49.0
Registration	Zone A upstream of Woodford	2	15.9		
	Zone B downstream of Woodford	8	79.9		
	Drysdale Creek	2	878.0		
	Spring Creek	4	48.8	16	1022.6
Domestic and Stock	Zone A upstream of Woodford	1	2.2		
	Zone B downstream of Woodford	5	8.6		
	Drysdale Creek	0	0.0		
	Spring Creek	1	2.2	7	13.0
Commercial/Industrial	Zone A upstream of Woodford	0	0.0		
	Zone B downstream of Woodford	1	5.0		
	Drysdale Creek	0	0.0		
	Spring Creek	0	0.0	1	5.0
Dairy Use	Zone A upstream of Woodford	0	0.0		
	Zone B downstream of Woodford	0	0.0		
	Drysdale Creek	0	0.0		
	Spring Creek	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTALS		66	5377.2	66	5377.2

* Under the Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy, a winter fill volume of 590ML per year is available to new users under the Sustainable Diversion Limit.

More detailed information can be located in the Victorian Water Register.

3. New licences

- There are no new all-year licences available.
- There is a winter-fill volume of 590ML available to allocate as recommended in the 2011 Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy. 21ML has been allocated prior to 2011 and 28ML was issued in 2015. Future licences will be subject to a site specific Sustainable Diversion Limit assessment.
- Licences for bona fide domestic and stock may be permitted. Example domestic and stock licences issued under Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs), “Riparian Management Licences”

4. Management of Licences

Management of the river since 1998/99 has been based on a draft streamflow management plan – the first to be developed in the State for an unregulated river. The draft plan was developed by a committee with broad representation and went through a public consultation process. It aimed to find better ways to balance water use and environmental water needs.

The Merri River is split into two reaches for diversions management – Zone A upstream of Woodford and Zone B downstream of Woodford. Management of Zone A as well as Zone B are based on flows at the Woodford Road Bridge gauging station (Woodford GS).

Key points and environmental Flow requirements under the plan include:

- Maintaining a minimum summer flow of 10 ML per day, over a five-day rolling average at Woodford GS.
- A trigger for a ban on diversions if the minimum instantaneous summer flow (November 1 to -June 30) falls below 8 ML per day at Woodford GS.
- A trigger for a ban on diversions if the minimum instantaneous winter flow (July 1 to October 31) falls below 43 ML per day at Woodford GS;
- The year-round licence volume is capped at the current allocation; and
- 590 ML is available under a winterfill licence cap.(July 1-October 31) (Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy, 2011)

5. Irrigation Schedule and Restriction triggers.

The Merri River operates under a nine stage restriction schedule. The schedule will commence on or about October 1st each year or earlier if the daily flow falls below 30ML/day at Woodford GS. The irrigation schedule has been developed to maintain environmental flows and to share the available flow equitably among irrigators.

Under stage 1 licence holders are unrestricted, this allowing them full use of their “Maximum Daily Volume”; this being the volume authorised to be extracted via the works licence

- Generally, for Zone A and Zone B, stage 2-6 restrictions are gradually increased one stage at a time when flows at Woodford GS fall below 12 MI’s/day.
- Stages 7 & 8 are introduced when flows at Woodford GS fall below 10 MI’s per day.
- These restrictions are eased one stage at a time when the daily flow at Woodford GS reaches 12 MI per day (stages 7&8); and 13 MI per day (stages 1-6)
- Southern Rural Water also have an option to introduce a roster type arrangement from stage 7 if it is felt required. There is no formal arrangement for a roster; if introduced, this will be in close consultation with the licence holders

The restriction schedule has the ability to react to a rapid fall in flows or various weather conditions. Southern Rural Water can also implement a higher level of restriction quickly or even place an immediate total ban if flows fall below 8 ML’s/day daily or 10 ML’s/day on the five day rolling average. (Refer Table 1 below)

Table 1

Merri River Irrigation schedule: Triggers and Stage levels at Woodford GS

		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7	Stage 8	Stage 9
% of Daily Allowance		100%	80%	65%	50%	35%	25%	17.50%	10%	BAN
Increase	Daily Average	< 12MI - one stage; < 10MI go to stage 7; < 8MI - immediate BAN						< 10MI - one stage; < 8MI - BAN		
	5-Day Average	< 12MI - go to stage 7 immediately; < 10MI - immediate BAN						< 12MI - one stage; < 10MI - BAN		
Ease	Daily Average	> 13MI - one stage						> 12MI - one stage		

Southern Rural Water will distribute information relating to the commencement of the irrigation schedule and the requirements of licence holders to adhere to each stage of restriction.

Southern Rural Water has adopted a message bank system to assist in the delivery of a more equitable allocation of the water resource for all licence holders. The message bank will indicate the stage of restriction set for the river, for that day. The 1300365607 (message bank) telephone number must be called to determine the stage level for the river, prior to any diversion on any given day.

6. Compliance Point

There is one gauging station in operation for the management of the Merri River flows.

Merri River at Woodford: (Gauge Site No.236205B) located below the Woodford Road bridge at Woodford, North of Warrnambool.

- 1) Meters are installed on all active licences of 10 MI or greater or all new licences regardless of the volume.
- 2) Meters are read at least twice per year and licence holders must not use more than their licensed volume.

The local Field Officer accesses the daily instantaneous flows (via SMS) once the irrigation schedule has been introduced.

7. Trading

Licences, both temporary and permanent, are transferable within the Merri River catchment subject to approval by Southern Rural Water and the following conditions:-

General Rules: (Based on Ministerial Policies for Managing Take and Use Licences 2014)

- a) Water may be traded downstream without restriction.
- b) 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).
- c) A winterfill licence (July to October) cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year) licence.
- d) Approval of an upstream trade of an all-year licence can only occur if it is converted to become a winterfill licence and;-
 1. The adverse effect on winter flows will be outweighed by the beneficial effect on summer flows, and this assessment is agreed to by the relevant CMA
 2. There will be no undue adverse impacts on other water users.

8. Winter Diversion Management

The Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy identified a winterfill volume of 590 megalitres per year that is available under the sustainable diversion limits. There is a trigger ban on diversions if the minimum instantaneous winter flow (July 1 – October 31) falls below 43 MI per day at Woodford.

9. Consultation

Management of the Merri River since 1989/99 has been based on the draft Streamflow management plan. The draft plan was developed by a committee with broad representation and went through a public consultation process.

The Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy was also developed with broad representation and went through a public consultation process. As such, a consultation process is not considered necessary for the development of the Merri River LMP.

Southern Rural Water will advise licence holders and the CMA of the development of the Merri River LMP. This will include a summary of the key inclusions and how to obtain a copy.

10. Approvals

Southern Rural Water will be the approval authority for the LMP, as per the Local Management Plan Guidelines.

11. Review

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