

Report Card for Merriwa River Water Source FOR PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Water Source Context	River Flows
Area: 809 km ² (21% forested) Average Annual Rainfall 634 mm Inflowing water source: Nil Receiving water source: Lower Goulburn River, Hunter River Regulated System, Hunter River Tidal Pool	Low flow Index: (80 th ile in December of days with flow) = 1.5 ML/day Flow records: 1963 to 1993 This estimate is based on flows measured at Merriwa River at upstream Vallances Creek (210037) adjusted for longer term climate.

Licensed Water use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total surface water entitlement: 4756 ML/year (99% used for irrigation purposes, 1% used for industrial purposes) • 52 surface water licenses - Peak Daily Demand=46.6 ML/day • Total groundwater entitlement: 900 ML/year (100% used for irrigation purposes) • 4 groundwater licences • 10.39 % of total Goulburn Extraction Management Unit entitlement

Background information		
Water Source attributes	Rating	Justification
Relative Instream Value (within catchment)	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no known threatened frog, bird or flora species • high species diversity • moderate fish community integrity, • the ecology value of the river for invertebrates is deemed to be moderate
Hydrological Stress	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peak extraction demand exceeds available flows in December
Relative Economic Significance of Irrigation (within catchment)	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medium economic dependence of the local community on water extracted for irrigation
Risk to Instream Value (from extraction)	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instream values are at medium risk of being impacted by extractions within the water source

Existing Access Arrangements During Dry Conditions	
Water User Association (WUA)	yes - Merriwa River WUA
Licensed Cease to Pump (CtP)	Cease to pump conditions on some licences

Proposed Recommendations for Merriwa River Water Source

Draft Access Rules	
Cease to Pump (CtP)	Existing licence conditions apply for the first five years of the plan. For those without existing conditions the cease to pump is when there is no visible flow in the river in the downstream vicinity of the water supply work. From year six of the plan cease to pump is when flows are at or below 0.5 ML/day at Merriwa River at Upstream Vallances Creek gauge. (Note cease to pump conditions may be amended, and management zones introduced, if the Merriwa town gauge is reinstated.)
Reference Point	Merriwa River at Upstream Vallances Creek gauge

Draft Trading Rules	
INTO water source	No trading into or out of the water source. The plan allows amendment to allow downstream transfers between water sources in the Goulburn Extraction Management Unit based on studies to identify cumulative impacts of transfers.
WITHIN water source	Trading permitted within the water source but no transfers into specified groundwater buffer zones.
Conversion to High Flow Access Licence	Not permitted
Conversion to Aquifer Access Licence	Not permitted

Key Factors for Panel Decision

Classification

- Losing stream type
- High instream value, high hydrological stress, medium risk to instream value, medium economic dependence.
- The Regional Panel revised the instream value from low to high in recognition of the more reliable flows and good condition and habitat value of the river relative to other northern tributaries of the Goulburn River.
- The Regional Panel revised the risk to instream values from low to medium to reflect the higher instream value compared to hydrological stress.

Rules

- Trading rules identified through classification process were adopted by the Regional Panel
- Access rules identified through classification process (no pumping from pools where there is no visible inflow and outflow; cease to pump to maintain a visible flow at specific site; specific flow rule for instream values) were not adopted by the Regional Panel because more stringent rules already apply to most licences, and these were adopted.

Matters raised during targeted consultation

No changes to the rules were proposed by water users or interest groups during the targeted consultation period.
(Additional gauge at Merriwa town may be considered during plan term)

Aboriginal Cultural Values

- The initial consultation with local Aboriginal communities indicate that they consider healthy rivers with natural flows and good biodiversity as being important. Further feedback is being sought from Aboriginal communities about values in their area.

For more information about the macro planning process for the Hunter Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources refer to the "Hunter Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources – Background Document" on the Department's website:

www.dwe.nsw.gov.au

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