

## Environmental Water Releases

An initiative of Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, working to protect the values of the Wimmera River system for the benefit of the entire community.

# SPRING UPDATE

El Niño conditions have resulted in 2015 winter rainfall in the Wimmera being in the bottom 5% of historical records. This follows several subsequent years of below-average rainfall. Our current dry conditions and limited inflows into water storages have severely reduced environmental water allocations this spring.

However, sustained environmental water releases since 2010 have resulted in the Wimmera River system recovering well since the Millennium Drought, and being well-placed to face the challenges posed by these dry conditions.

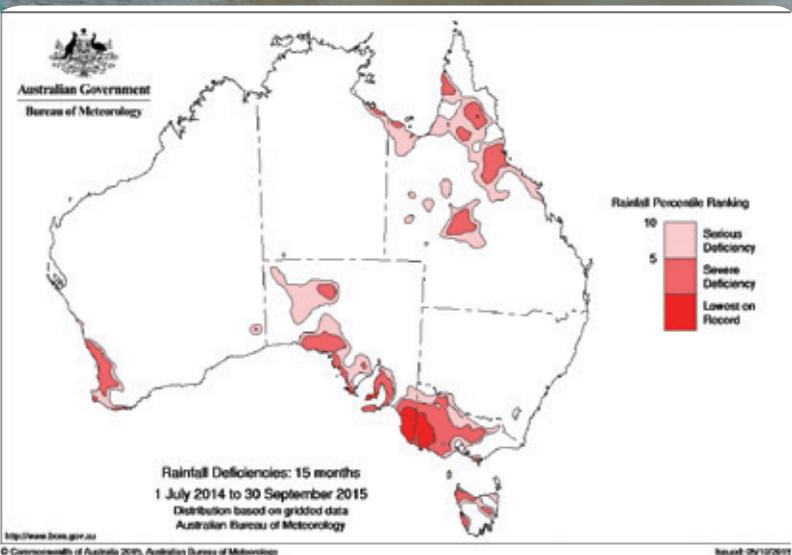
### Why is there so little water available for the Wimmera River?

The 15-year average inflow into the Wimmera River catchment, measured at Glynwylln north of Stawell in the upper catchment, is 19,365 ML.

The inflows into the catchment for the past four years have been well below average, and since January this year, only 8ML has flowed past Glynwylln, making 2015 the driest spring on record.

### Flows in the Upper Wimmera River since 2001

Year	Annual discharge at Glynwyllin (ML)
2015/2016	8
2014/2015	617
2013/2014	1,661
2012/2013	5,638
2011/2012	24,643
2010/2011	199,384
2009/2010	16,178
2008/2009	738
2007/2008	6,550
2006/2007	763
2005/2006	4,045
2004/2005	7,437
2003/2004	6,063
2002/2003	1,694
2001/2002	15,061



## Current situation

Current water available for environmental water release is only a small fraction of what would be required to guarantee a healthy river system. To best use the water available in the Wimmera catchment, the following environmental releases are planned in spring 2015:

- **Lower Wimmera River:** environmental flows are planned through to early November to top up refuge pools and improve water quality. Unfortunately, due to the small volume, it is unlikely flows will reach far past Dimboola. Wimmera CMA will continue to work with the community during this period to manage impacts on fish and riparian vegetation.
- **Mid-upper MacKenzie River:** environmental flows started in mid-October at 4 ML/d to top up refuge pools to support native fish communities and platypus populations.
- **Upper Burnt Creek:** environmental water will be released when storage transfers are finished. These will top up refuge pools to support native fish communities.

## What we are doing to deal with the dry conditions

For the past several months, Wimmera CMA has been working with local agencies and community groups to canvas opinions on other actions to minimise the impacts of dry conditions.

Wimmera CMA has also installed temporary monitoring technology at refuge pools to monitor water levels. This complements current stream monitoring, enhancing our decision making, with a focus on salinity and water quality.



### Want to know more?

Sign up to our environmental water releases SMS message service by sending an SMS with the word 'register', your full name and locality to 0427 871 565 or email [wcma@wcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:wcma@wcma.vic.gov.au)



Wimmera CMA

Dimboola Rowing Club, October 2015



Mackenzie River at Zumsteins, spring 2015



Depart Well, October 2015

## What is environmental water?

Water efficiency savings from the Wimmera Mallee and Northern Mallee pipelines created environmental water.

Wimmera CMA works with the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH), GWMWater and local councils to deliver this water as part of the VEWH Seasonal Watering Plan 2015-16. However, weather conditions ultimately dictate how much water is available.