

STORAGE INFORMATION as at January 11th

	%	ML
Coolmunda	11	7610
Glenlyon	27	57379
Pindari	25.4	79362
Boggabilla Weir		5850

Happy New Year to all.

May 2010 be far better for everyone, in terms of water and seasons than 2009 proved to be.

Border Rivers/Gwydir Infrastructure Pilot Project

NSW Sustaining the Basin (STB)

The first pilot project as part of the Commonwealth's Water for the Future program is open for Expressions of Interest until Monday January 11th. There is only a very short window of opportunity to register interest in doing an on-farm project this year. The pilot projects are being run by the NSW department of Industry and Infrastructure (I&I) with assistance from the Border Rivers/Gwydir CMA.

The short notice is due to the fact that the Border Rivers was a late inclusion in the project after requests from us were approved by Minister Penny Wong late last year. Further projects will be available in subsequent years.

The Pilot project timelines expected are as follows:

1. Expression of Interest to be lodged by January 11th, 2010.
2. Farm Assessments conducted by 'Approved Irrigation Consultants' – assessing efficiency opportunities for individual properties. Tenders are developed around the proposal.
3. Projects submitted through a 'closed tender' process, where they are appraised by a panel (by 29 March 2010.)
4. Project tenders passed by the Assessment Panel then proceed to contract negotiation (from 1 May 2010)
5. Projects to be finalised, payments made and water entitlement transfer completed by 31 October 2010.

Of particular interest in the initial stages of the project is the opportunity to have up to \$6000 used for WUE consultant's assessments reimbursed (80% of cost). This is available to everybody who submits an Expression of Interest and there is no obligation to proceed past the assessment stage if you don't wish to.

All NSW irrigators are encouraged to find out more about this project.

There are some information packs still available from the BRFF office or you can access the same info from the NSW Industry and Infrastructure website (<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/resources/water/irrigation/sustaining-the-basin>) which is also available through the link on the BRFF website.

The QLD Healthy Headwaters program will follow in due course with a Pilot Project, which may begin around March or April this year.

We will keep all members posted as information becomes available.

December/January Unreg Event

The rainfall that arrived at Christmas time was most welcome, although rainfall recordings from across the Border Rivers catchment were patchy. Though there was little inflow into any of our major upstream storages, the announcement of the event enabling water-harvesting/supplementary access was not a moment too soon and welcomed by all water-users across the valley.

We have already been made aware of a number of concerns in regards to the management of the event and we are currently taking these up with the appropriate authorities. No doubt there are other concerns held by water-users and we encourage everyone to let us know if, and how we can assist in any way.

The Basin Plan

A significant proportion of our energies are being spent on the coming Basin Plan.

To give a brief overview:

- A Draft Basin Plan will be released about June 2010. The Final Basin Plan will follow in June 2011, at this stage. The Basin Plan comes into force in the Border Rivers in 2014, when our current plans (NSW and QLD) expire.
- The Draft Plan will contain new Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL's) for every surface water resource planning area in the Basin. The common expectation is that these new SDL's will be set lower across the Basin than the current MDB Cap, which they are intended to replace.
- The states must then develop their next set of Water Sharing Plans (WSP's) and Resource

Operations Plans (ROP's), referred to as the Generation 2 Plans, using the new lower limits.

- The adjustment from the old Cap to the new lower SDL will be achieved through the buyback program and the Infrastructure program where half of the savings made are signed over to the Commonwealth. If too little entitlement is received by the Commonwealth after these programs are exhausted, there may be a further reduction made under the Risk Assignment provisions of the National Water Initiative, though it is not known how that would work at this stage.
- The SDL's are expected to be legally enforceable on the states, where current Caps have not been.
- The Basin Plan will not include the Great Artesian Basin groundwater resource.

A discussion Paper on SDL's was circulated in November last year and submissions were due just prior to Christmas. The MDBA have said that they will continue to receive submissions on SDL's indefinitely, so if anyone wishes to make further submissions to the MDBA on SDL's they may do so.

It is clear from the interactions we have had with the MDBA to date that they are under a great deal of pressure to get the Draft Plan completed in time for release in June 2010. They openly admit that they have a great deal of work still to do in order to get it completed and a lot of information still to find, BRFF, along with most other stakeholder groups in the Basin, have grave concerns that it may be rushed and not be up to the standard required for anyone to have much confidence in, if they are required to stick with the current timetable. For example, the MDBA have only just commenced updating the river models for all catchments across the Basin from those used for the CSIRO Sustainable Yields study. Given that Draft SDL figures will be included in the Draft Plan and that the vital modelling information required for that process is yet to be established, we feel it is very important that they be given enough time to understand unique catchments, such as the northern valleys and particularly the Border Rivers. We are trying to avoid the situation that occurred with the CSIRO study that was widely inaccurate in their depiction of the situation in the Border Rivers and which they openly acknowledged after the report was released in 2007.

The other glaring inadequacy in the Basin Plan process is the consideration of social and economic information only AFTER the SDL figures have been established. We have argued that this is a 'body-count' type of approach is completely unsatisfactory and that social and economic factors be given equal weight with

environmental factors through the entire Basin Plan process.

We anticipate that the Basin Plan will be an extremely important development in terms of the future of all water-users, and their reliant communities, with impacts possibly much greater than the state planning processes we have endured over the last 15 years.

BRFF will continue to be at the forefront of stakeholder involvement in all engagement processes on behalf of its members and associates.

Buyback Results for 2009

Currently there has been a total of 5,325ML of Supplemented entitlement bought by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) out of the QLD Border Rivers. Average price paid was \$2300/ML licensed, with an expected average annual volume of 1757ML, giving a reliability factor of about 33%, and a value of \$6970/ML of actual water. It is a little over 6% of the QLD Supplemented water total of 85,000ML.

There has been none purchased from the NSW Border Rivers at this stage.

There is no Tender currently open to the Border Rivers or other northern valleys, though there is expected to be another round announced later in 2010.

We don't expect a lot more interest in buying water from the Border Rivers, though the Commonwealth have said they will continue to buy on a value/ML 'no-regrets' basis from willing sellers. They have said that their focus will remain on the priority 'stressed' valleys, as determined by the CSIRO Sustainable Yield study and the Sustainable Rivers Audit, in which the Border Rivers was deemed to be the 'healthiest working river in the basin'. They have today announced a new tender for the southern basin which is where we expect they will be buying most of the water from now on.

Upcoming Association Meetings

The next round of Association meetings is scheduled for the second week of February, at this stage. All members are encouraged to notify their local association office-bearers of any current issues to their local associations for inclusion on the agenda and discussion at the meeting. The earlier that issues are raised with your association, the more information can be gathered and better chance of quick resolution, if that is possible.

This also applies to BRFF meetings as well, so please bring issues forward and participate in the discussions.

BRFF Management Committee January 21st

Association Meetings Feb 8th – 12th.

BRFF General Committee February 18th