

Community update for Menindee and Lower Darling-Baaka

Increased flows from Menindee Lakes

The MDBA has recently increased its call on water from the Menindee Lakes to meet demands in the River Murray. The call on water is possible when Menindee Lakes are managed as a shared resource, that is, the total Lakes volume has risen to above 640 GL but hasn't yet fallen below 480 GL. This is set out in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement and operational water releases are made to assist in meeting River Murray system demands. The MDBA's call at Weir 32 will start increasing to 4,000 ML/day on Monday 30 September. The MDBA continues to monitor conditions and may adjust their call if required.

Water will continue to be sourced from Lake Menindee and Lake Wetherell. Lake Menindee outlet capacity will be maximised (anticipated flow 2,500 – 3,000 ML/day) and the difference will be made up from Lake Wetherell via the Lake Wetherell outlet (anticipated flow 1,000 – 1,500 ML/day). Flows in the Darling River have decreased over the past week with the flow rate through Wilcannia now at approximately 1,700 ML/day. Releases are being optimised to maximise resource availability in the top lakes.

Users in the weir pool and downstream of Weir 32 are advised that flows may fluctuate over the coming days and they should monitor warnings and river levels closely to make necessary arrangements to ensure infrastructure and livestock are not impacted.

Water Quality

The DCCEEW-BCS monitoring buoy located in the Darling River near Menindee township is showing the water column is well oxygenated with levels above the 4 mg/L upper critical level for fish health. Air temperatures in the mid to high 20's over the last week has seen an increase in water temperature near the water surface which is causing an increase in algal activity and higher dissolved oxygen during the day (Figure 1).

Due to the increase in river height over the coming weeks, the two WaterNSW monitoring buoys have been temporarily removed as a precautionary measure to prevent damage. They both will be returned once the water level has decreased. The fixed depth dissolved oxygen sensors located downstream of Lake Wetherell main weir, Menindee town and Weir 32 gauging stations remain operational.

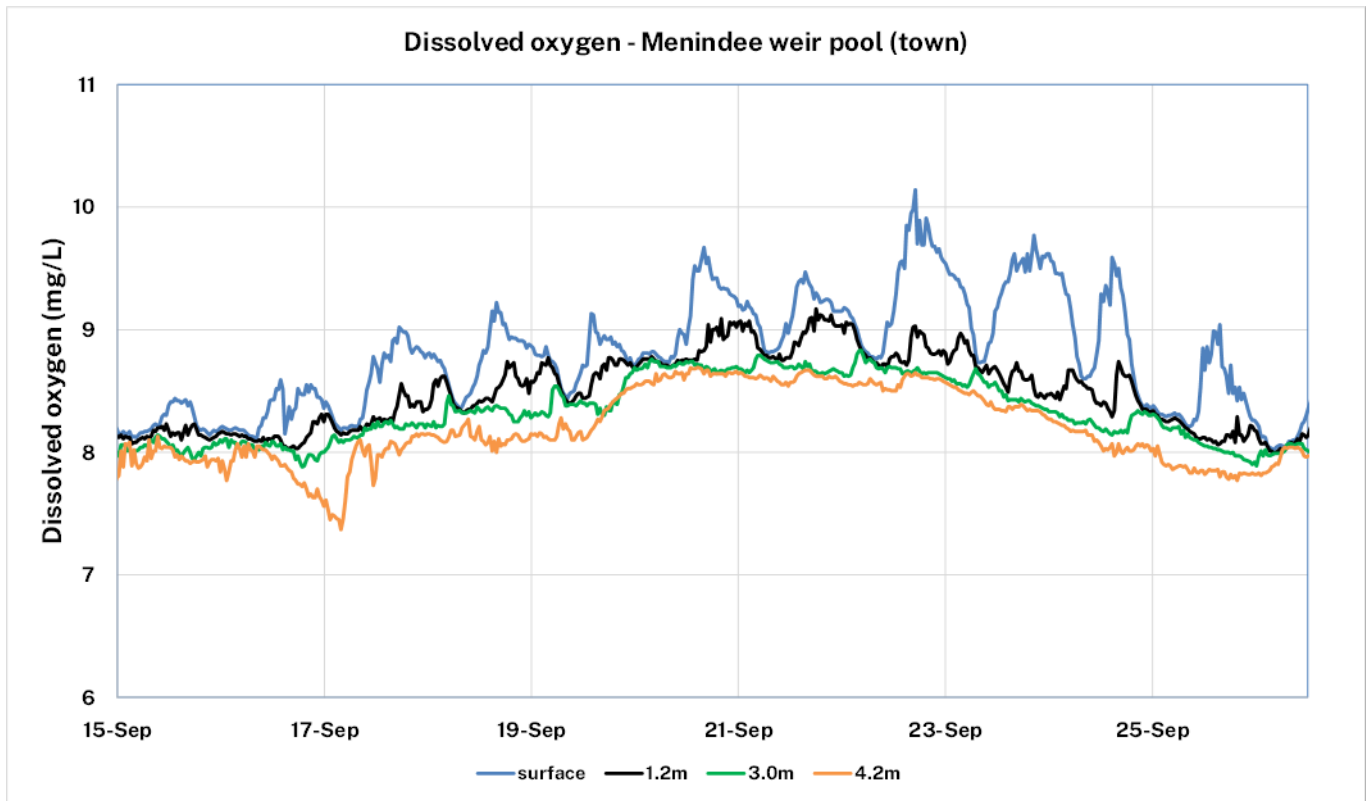


Figure 1: Dissolved oxygen (mg/L) in the Darling River at Menindee town – 15 to 26 September 2024

Satellite imagery taken on 19 September using a custom script to highlight algal growth shows algal numbers in the lakes are low (blue). There is an increase in algal numbers in parts of Lake Menindee (green) but there is still a low risk for water users (Figure 2). Results from algal samples collected 26 and 27 August show no alerts for recreational use near the Lake Wetherell or Lake Menindee outlet regulators. Algal samples were collected at multiple sites last week. The laboratory results are not yet available.

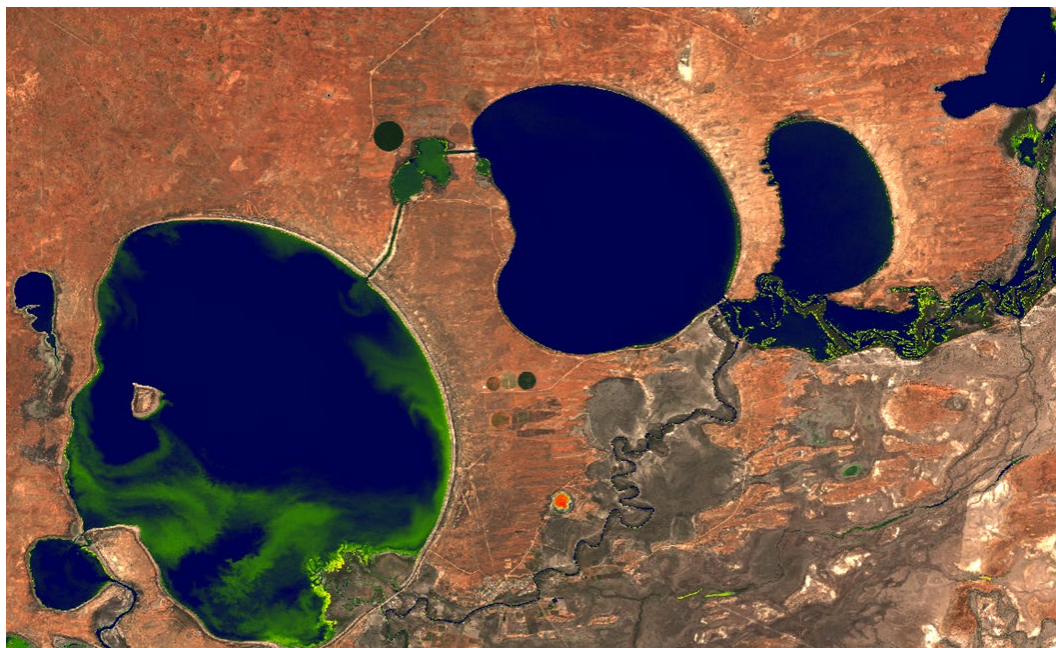


Figure 2: Sentinel satellite image of Menindee Lakes with custom algal script – 19 September 2024

Additional information

- To notify the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of potential blackwater events email: water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- To view community updates issued, visit [Community updates and frequently asked questions | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- To report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface, or crayfish leaving the water please call the **NSW DPI Fisheries Phonenumber 1800 043 536** or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills-2019-2020/info-sheet>
- Information on recent fish deaths is available at: [Fish kills in NSW](#). When reporting, please include the name of the river/waterbody, location and date of your observation and provide photographs. If possible, please also record what species are affected and an estimate of number of each species observed.
- Further information on blackwater events can be found at the DCCEEW Water website at: [Hypoxic blackwater | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- Additional information is also available on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website at:
<https://www.mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths>
<https://www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/infrastructure/menindee-lakes>
- Operational updates are available at: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#)
- Water quality data collected after the fish deaths at Menindee is available on the Environment Protection Authority web page at: <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill>