

Community update for Barwon–Darling, Menindee Lakes and Lower Darling–Baaka river

Current conditions

The Murray Darling Basin Authority's call on water at Menindee will remain at 7,000 ML/day for the foreseeable future, including 3,000 ML/day of Additional Dilution Flows. Flows in the Darling–Baaka around Menindee have seen some variation of flows in recent days due to changing location of water releases and the installation of temporary fish passage. The water level at Weir 32 for releases at 7,000 ML/day is expected to remain around 2.7 metres. All flows are now being released from the upper lakes of Pamamaroo and Wetherell which is allowing for a freshening of the Menindee weir pool ahead of Summer, and acting as an attractant for fish to move upstream towards the temporary fish passage (Fishheart unit) at Wetherell outlet.

Releases will continue to be made from the upper lakes while inflows from the northern Basin continue to reach Menindee, and full supply level can be maintained, but releases may also include Lake Menindee if these are required. For example, in coming weeks as the fishheart unit begins operating the location of part of the releases may need to include Lake Menindee, if the high flow rates from the upper lakes are impacting on the operation of the fish passage unit. Community updates will communicate any changes.

Inflows

Total Storage at Menindee Lakes is currently at 79.4%, holding 1,375 GL with a further 460-560 GL expected inflows until end of October. WaterNSW has opened the Pamamaroo inlet regulator and the Menindee inlet regulator moving water between the lakes, preparing for fish passage between the upper lakes and allowing air space for incoming flows.

As at 12 September, flows at Wilcannia are above 14,000 ML/day and rising and flows upstream at Louth are exceeding 17,000 ML/day and dropping. Wilcannia flows are expected to peak below 17,000 ML/day later this month. WaterNSW inflow forecasting is undertaken using the best available data at the time. There are several variables which may impact the final volume, with uncertainty of the final volume reducing as water flows toward the Lakes.

Below are figures from the latest Water NSW [Operations Update on Menindee Lakes System \(forecast inflow\)](#).

Temporary Fish Ladder/ Baffles Trial

The department has been working in collaboration with WaterNSW and NSW Fisheries to allow for temporary fish passage between lakes Pamamaroo and Wetherell through the use of a temporary fish ladder (vertical slot baffles). The baffles, last trialled in 2022 passed fish when the difference in water level across the regulator was less than 650 mm however the effectiveness of passage increased as the differential of lake levels decreased. Accordingly, following directions from water agencies, WaterNSW has begun reducing the head difference between the lakes by opening the Pamamaroo inlet regulator and will install the temporary baffles on Monday.

The current head difference is 550 mm and the open regulator will be acting as a necessary attractant flow. NSW Fisheries and departmental staff will be on site Monday to assist and conduct monitoring of fish passage and report findings from the trial in due course.

Allowing fish passage between the lakes and into the Northern Basin is important for breeding and population distribution of large bodies natives such as golden perch and Murray cod, also known as flow specialists. NSW Fisheries and partner agencies will monitor the trial to look at fish movement between the lakes and help inform future use and operations.

We would like to thank the community for raising this possibility with the department and recognise the commitment from various water agencies to achieve a ‘win’ for Menindee and native fish.

NSW Fisheries – Year 1 Fishheart unit results

The first year of the temporary fishway trial (fishheart unit) at Menindee wrapped up at the end of April 2025 and the early results are in!

- 🐟 7,505* fish moved through the Fishheart unit between February and April 2025
- 🐟 96% of the fish identified moving through the unit were native fish, however only 35% of fish could be identified using the automated system
- 🐟 5 species of fish were identified: Bony Herring (over 2,400 of the fish identified), Golden Perch, Spangled Perch, Carp and Goldfish.

*Of the fish recorded moving through Fishheart, over 65% were not identified to species level by the automated system, due to poor water clarity. We also expect the total count is an underestimate due to the limited field of view of the unit’s camera.

The Fishheart unit has just been re-installed in the Baaka River for the next on-season until April 2026. Some of the tech has been adjusted as part of the learnings from Year 1, including adding more cameras and lighting improvements to help visibility and detection of fish moving through the system. For more information visit: dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/fishing > Fish Passage NSW > Fish passage programs and projects > Menindee Lower Darling–Baaka Temporary Tube Fishway Trial

Upcoming agency trips to the area

Below is a table outlining the dates and times our agencies will be visiting Menindee and the surrounding areas. Each agency will provide notice to the community if needed.

Agency	When	Reason for visit / Activity	Location
NSW Fisheries	20 September	Temporary Tube Fishway Trial – Year 2 Launch	Lake Wetherell Outlet Regulator (Main Weir Road)



Temporary Tube Fishway Trial Year 2 Launch Community Day

Join us for a free BBQ with a fun and informative day out on Country!

- 🐟 Fishheart demonstration: Get a behind-the-scenes look in the control room
- 📄 Info stands & displays: Learn more about the project and the health of the Baaka!
- 🎨 Community art installation: Help us paint the pipes!

When: Saturday, 20 September | 10 AM – 3 PM

Where: Lake Wetherell Outlet Regulator (Main Weir Road)




**YEAR 2
LAUNCH
20 SEP 2025**

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 water.nsw.gov.au/menindee-updates
- If you've got any questions regarding this update or other water matters **contact your local implementation officer, Kate McBride on 0458 945 149** or kate.mcbride@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- To report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface, or crayfish leaving the water please call the **NSW Department of Primary Industry Fisheries Phonenumber 1800 043 536** or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: 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 department's website at: water.nsw.gov.au/hypoxic-blackwater
- Additional information is also available on the Murray–Darling Basin Authority website at: www.mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths
www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/infrastructure/menindee-lakes
- WaterNSW operational updates are available in [WaterInsights](#)
- Water quality data collected after the fish deaths at Menindee is available on the Environment Protection Authority web page at: www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill
- Real-time water quality data from DCCEEW–CPHR monitoring buoys can be accessed from the [Darling–Baaka River Health Project dashboard](#)
- Data from the WaterNSW gauging network can be found in WaterInsights at: <https://waterinsights.waternsw.com.au/12104-lower-darling-regulated-river/river-data>