

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

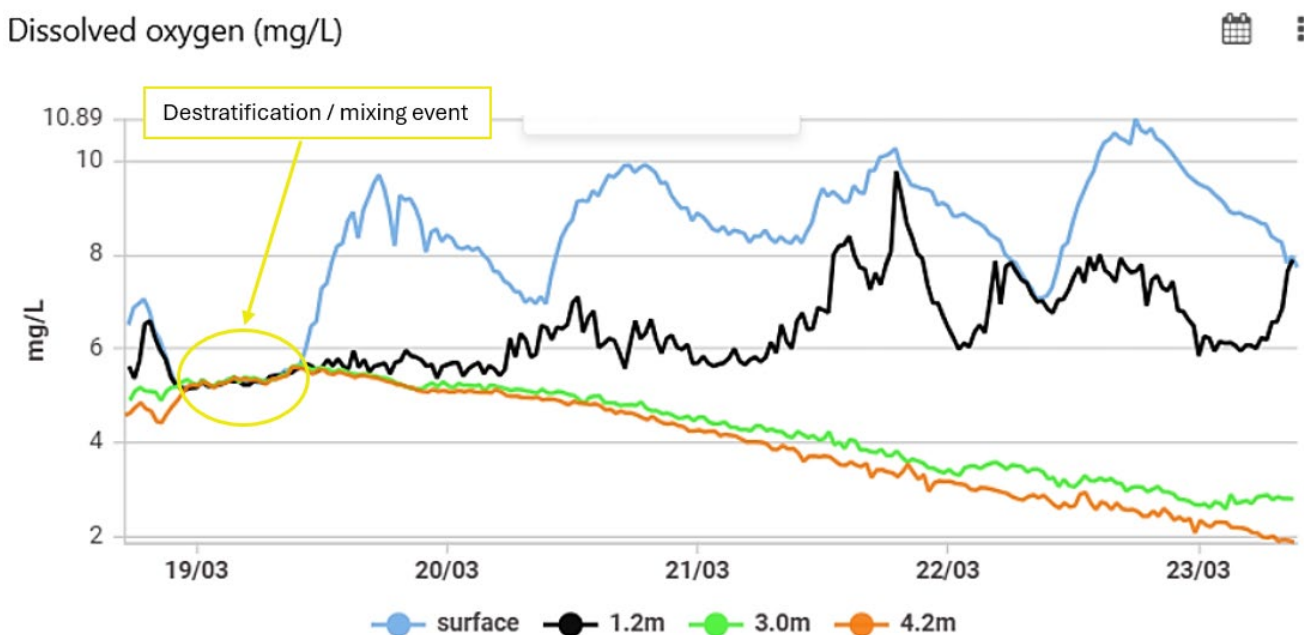
Pulse flow

Flows from Lake Pamamaroo increased on Monday afternoon 23 March from 500 ML/day to 900 ML/day and will last for two days. This action has been taken as the dissolved oxygen in the lower water layers of the Menindee weir pool continue to deteriorate.

The graph below, taken from the [publicly available dashboard](#), shows the currents dissolved oxygen conditions within the weir pool at the monitoring buoy, which is located 400m upstream of the town boat ramp. The yellow circle indicates where the water column destratified on Thursday last week. Over the weekend, dissolved oxygen in the water at 3m and 4m depths continued to decrease.

The increase in flows from Lake Pamamaroo is a precautionary measure designed to assist the increase in velocity of the water in the weir pool and help to increase dissolved oxygen in the lower layers so that when destratification of the water column does occur, the overall oxygen levels within the weir pool will be suitable for fish. A cooler weather change is expected on Thursday/Friday this week which, in turn, is expected to promote destratification. However, without a flow intervention today, it was possible that dissolved oxygen in those lower layers could continue to decrease to anoxic levels.

Figure 1. Dissolved oxygen at Menindee town showing persistent stratification



As of today, 23 March, 850 ML/day is being discharged from Weir 32, but from tomorrow this will increase to a maximum target of 1,250 ML/day for approximately 2 days. The **expected height for this release at Weir 32 is 1.75 metres**, which will be an ~10cm increase in river height. WaterNSW is advising customers and landholders that flows may fluctuate over the coming days and to be considerate of the variable changes. The community is advised to monitor river levels closely to make necessary arrangements to ensure infrastructure and livestock are not impacted.

Lake Menindee releases will continue to be maximised. The current release strategy will be reviewed before returning to the previous flow rates. Further updates will be published if the current planning changes.

Lake Pamamaroo inlet regulator remains open and is discharging ~1,000 ML/day from Lake Wetherell into Pamamaroo which is assisting with moving water off the Wetherell floodplain. In the coming weeks the lake levels will equalise. This will also allow WaterNSW to complete required maintenance at Main Weir later this week.

Storage	Percent full (active storage)
Lake Wetherell	30%
Lake Pamamaroo	78.9%
Lake Menindee	6.5%
Lake Cawndilla	29.3%
Menindee total	36.8%

Golden Perch Deaths

Daily reports of fish deaths continue to be in the 10’s but the daily death totals have not increased since the event begun. Total fish deaths remain in the low 100’s and are predominantly Golden Perch with additional observations of fish in stress.

The Barkandji River Rangers continue to complete onsite assessments along the weir pool monitoring conditions and recording numbers of affected fish. The cause of the fish deaths remains unknown, but investigations are ongoing. NSW Government agencies are exploring appropriate

actions to manage the situation, noting options may be limited until the cause of death and any associated risks are known.

Water samples were sent in late February to the departments Environmental Forensic lab in Sydney. In last week's update we explained the results in more detail but there were no increases in the parameters tested that would suggest a cause of the fish deaths.

Community members are encouraged to report any fish deaths or struggling fish to the Fishers Watch phonenumber on 1800 043 536. For more information on fish kills please visit:

dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills

Algae alerts

- Lake Menindee, Lake Menindee Outlet, Lake Menindee at Sunset Strip, Darling River at Weir 32 and Silver City Hwy (Great Darling Anabranch) remain on **RED** alert. Weekly sampling at these sites is being conducted by WaterNSW.
- Copi Hollow, Pamamaroo Inlet, Pamamaroo Outlet and multiple sites along Lake Wetherell have **AMBER** alerts in place.
- Darling River pump station (Menindee), Lake Tandure and Lake Pamamaroo centre have **GREEN** alerts in place.
- Elsewhere around the region, Tolarno, Pooncarie, Burtundy, Ellerslie and Tapio remain on **AMBER**. Upstream at Wilcannia, Louth and Bourke remain on **AMBER**.
- For the latest algal alerts and algal alert definitions, go to [Algae Alerts NSW map - WaterNSW](#).

Connectivity

The final scheduled webinar on the Northern Basin Connectivity and Minimum Inflows programs is on Monday 30 March, 12:00–1:30 pm. [Registrations are still open](#).

Webinars held last week provided updates on the programs and discussed the benefits and impacts of the recommendations made by the independent connectivity expert panel. These webinars were recorded and will be put on the departments webpage for those who were unable to attend.

Find more information on our website at: [Northern Basin Connectivity Program](#)

Menindee Review

The MDBA team will be visiting Menindee on **30–31 March** to speak with the local community about both the **Basin Plan Review** and the **Menindee Review**.

The MDBA is keen to hear your views, including:

- **What is most important to you about Menindee Lakes?**
- **What are the main issues you would like to see addressed at Menindee Lakes?**
- **What options should be considered to improve the future operation and management of Menindee Lakes?**

If you – or someone you know – would like to speak with the team and have not already been contacted, please feel free to call **Richard Unsworth** on **0448 456 237**. He will work with you to find a suitable time to meet the team and discuss the matters that are most important to you.

Upcoming engagement/agency trips to the area

The table below outlines the dates and times that agencies will be visiting Menindee and the surrounding areas or holding events. As always, Menindee’s local department contact Kate McBride will be around and is happy to discuss any water related matters in person or over the phone.

Agency	When	Reason for visit/activity	Location
MDBA	Monday 30 & Tuesday 31 March	Menindee Review and Basin Plan Review	Menindee
Water Group	Monday 30 March, 12:00–1:30 pm	Northern Basin Connectivity Program	<u>Online</u>

More information

- To notify the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of potential blackwater events email: water.enquiries@dcceew.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@dcceew.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 the department – Strategic Science & Engagement 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>