

Pike Floodplain

2026-27 proposed environmental water operations



Government
of South Australia

Department for
Environment and Water

Operation of the Pike Floodplain environmental watering infrastructure is planned for spring 2026. The final decision to proceed, as well as the scale and timing of the operation, will depend on River Murray conditions, including flows received through winter and spring, environmental water availability and approvals.

Pike floodplain environmental watering is planned between late September and December 2026, providing maintenance works occurring at Lock 5 are complete within the planned timeframe.

A raise of Weir 5 is required to support exchange of water and protect water quality in the Pike anabranch when the floodplain regulators are operated, with the exception of during very low-level managed inundations.

Under dry conditions, a low-level watering event is planned that will raise water levels by 45 cm to inundate approximately 255 hectares of the floodplain immediately adjacent to the permanent waterbodies, without the raising of Weir 5.

Abundant regeneration of eucalypts has been observed at low elevation adjacent to the permanent watercourses since the 2022-23 River Murray flood. This operation will enable those young trees to be watered, therefore increasing the likelihood that these stands of saplings survive to become adult trees.



River red gums on the Pike River, showing waterlines from the 2025 watering event.



Baby broad-shelled turtle, Spring 2025

Upstream water levels are usually held to a relatively stable pool level to supply Pike River irrigators, so a low-level operation of the regulators will provide water level variability that is beneficial for the near-bank vegetation, improving bank soil moisture for trees and encouraging growth of littoral zone understorey plants.

Inundation of this scale will result in connection that delivers fresh throughflow to Col Col Wetland, improving soil moisture availability for the fringing trees. Col Col is a terminal permanent wetland that gains salinity during normal operating conditions when it has a single narrow connection to Pike River.

This low-level operation will also inundate Duck Hole and Snake Creek, increasing the amount of inundated edge habitat and local aquatic productivity.

Duck Hole and Snake Creek hold high habitat value for waterbirds due to the complex mix of deep open waters, shallow edge zones, dense strands of lignum, emergent woody debris and surrounding woodlands. Snake Creek regularly has the highest diversity of waterbirds during floodplain surveys.

If flow conditions improve, a further raise of the regulators by an additional 40cm is proposed. This

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will deliver water to approximately 576 hectares of the Pike floodplain. The ability to operate at this scale would generate the most extensive watering that has occurred at Pike Floodplain since the 2022-23 River Murray flood.

This operation would require raising of Weir 5 by up to 50 cm to support water exchange through the anabranch to protect water quality. This would result in between 490 and 640 hectares of floodplain within the weir pool being watered, depending on the height of weir raising. It would also water an increased extent of lignum shrublands and reach additional trees in the floodplain and along the weir pool.

Under low flow and normal operating conditions, there is limited shallow foraging habitat available for wading waterbirds. A slightly higher watering event substantially increases the area of productive temporary wetland and inundated floodplain habitat, benefitting waterbirds and frogs.

Water level increase under either of these watering options is expected to cue frog breeding.

Should wet conditions develop, a higher level watering operation may be considered to enable some of the driest parts of the floodplain to be watered, including black box woodlands and connecting Snake Lagoon via Snake Wetland.

This would only be possible in the unlikely event that flows are at a level where works at Weir 5 need to pause, therefore making raising Lock 5 possible.



Beeping froglets, Spring 2025



Black-fronted dotterel chick, Spring 2025

Monitoring of fauna and water quality will occur throughout the operation and vegetation response will be assessed in autumn 2027, once delivery of water for the environment is complete.

Dissolved oxygen and salt levels will continue to be monitored closely throughout the operation, which will be adaptively managed in response to any changes in river and anabranch conditions.

More information

Information about Pike Floodplain:
environment.sa.gov.au/pike-floodplain

Updates regarding water for the environment planning, including operations at Pike, Katarapko and Chowilla floodplains and weir pool manipulations are provided in the weekly SA River Murray Flow Report. To view the Flow Report or subscribe to receive it directly to your email, please visit www.environment.sa.gov.au/flow-report

If you have further queries about the proposed floodplain operations, please contact our Environmental Water Team at DEW.ewater@sa.gov.au