

# SA River Murray quarterly water account requirements and penalties

May 2021



**In South Australia it has been a long-standing requirement that River Murray water account holders ensure that their water use does not exceed the volume of water allocated and that they submit meter readings to the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) at the end of each quarter. Since July 2019, penalties apply if water use in a quarter exceeds the volume of water allocation available for that quarter.**

## **Why has a quarterly accounting period been implemented for water users?**

In July 2019, a quarterly accounting period was introduced for the River Murray and penalties have been applied to the minority of water users who have been found to have taken more water than was available on their water account for use during each quarter.

In South Australia, it has been a long-standing legal requirement, in accordance with the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* (and previous legislation), that all River Murray water account holders ensure that they have not used more water than their available water allocation at any time and that they submit meter readings to the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) at the end of each quarter.

Whilst water accounts were previously reviewed on an annual basis and a penalty applied for any excess water use, it was still an offence for usage to exceed the account balance at any time.

The practice of using water before it has been purchased has the potential to negatively affect other irrigators and water users, including the environment, put at risk South Australia's compliance with the Basin Plan sustainable diversion limits that came into effect from 1 July 2019 and

compromises the delivery of environmental water by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.

The adoption of a quarterly accounting period is to help ensure that water can be reliably delivered to all River Murray water users, including the environment, when it is required. This is particularly important when water availability is lower, such as during the dry times that have recently been experienced across the Murray-Darling Basin and also when the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder is delivering specific parcels of water to environmental assets at specific times.

## **As a responsible water user, will I be affected?**

If you have always remained within your available allocation and continue to do so, you will not be affected by these changes.

South Australian irrigators are renowned for doing the right thing and this is exemplified by only a very small minority of South Australian River Murray water account holders (<1 per cent) exceeding their available allocation at the end of each of the first three quarterly accounting periods in the 2019-20 water year.

## What is my water allocation?

Water allocation announcements can be found on DEW's website: [www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/river-murray/water-allocations-and-announcements](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/river-murray/water-allocations-and-announcements).

Water allocation announcements are also provided through email and/or SMS to account holders, if your details have been provided to DEW. Alternatively, you can check your available allocation and account balance at any time by submitting an [online meter reading form](#) and selecting that you wish to receive a water usage advice statement (like a bank statement for your water account) by SMS or email.

If you would like to receive updated allocation announcements and/or updated account information as soon as they are available, please provide your name, licence/account number, email address and mobile phone number via email to [DEWwatertrade@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEWwatertrade@sa.gov.au) or phone (08) 8595 2053.

## What is the cut-off date for lodging water trades each quarter?

All water trade application forms must be submitted to and received by DEW before 5:00 pm on the last business day of the accounting period if they are to be included in the quarterly water account balance.

If your water trade application needs to be processed to balance your water account, the last business day for each 2021-21 quarterly accounting period is:

Quarter 1: Wednesday, 30 September 2020

Quarter 2: Thursday, 31 December 2020

Quarter 3: Wednesday, 31 March 2021

**Quarter 4: Wednesday, 30 June 2021**

## Am I required to submit a meter reading?

There is no change to your existing meter reading requirements. If the conditions on your water resource works approval require you to submit a meter reading,

you are required to provide this reading in accordance with the conditions on your approval.

Failure to take and/or submit a meter reading by the required date will result in an expiation notice being issued.

## What is the penalty for taking more water than has been allocated or without an available allocation?

It is important that water users do not use more water than has been allocated to them, even if it is likely that allocations may increase throughout the water year. Exceeding an allocation limit at any time during the year is a breach of the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.

If your water use during a quarter is not equal to or less than your available allocation for that quarter, you will incur a penalty charge based on the rates shown in the table below. Penalty rates for the River Murray are reviewed and calculated on a quarterly basis, taking the market value of water and the level of risk that water theft poses to the resource into consideration.

If you take water during the quarterly accounting period without any allocation you will incur the penalty for unlawful taking or use of water, as shown in the table.

Accounting Period	Penalty for Overuse			Penalty for unlawful taking or use of water
	First 10%	Above 10% up to and including 25%	Above 25%	
1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021	\$0.15/kL	\$0.45/kL	\$0.83/kL	\$1.20/kL

kL = kilolitre

## More information

To find out more, or register for updated allocation announcements and/or updated account information:

Email: [DEWwatertrade@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEWwatertrade@sa.gov.au)

Phone: (08) 8595 2053

Visit: DEW Water Licensing, 2 Wade Street, Berri

[www.environment.sa.gov.au/river-murray](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/river-murray)