

Changes to how water is allocated

Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan | November 2013 | Factsheet 2

The groundwater resources of the Lower Limestone Coast are unique and precious, and underpin the region's people, townships, industries and environment.

The Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation adopted the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan (the WAP) to ensure the long term sustainability of the region's water resources, bring certainty for water users, and protect water resources into the future.

Developing the WAP has involved significant research and stakeholder consultation, resulting in what is believed to be a world-first approach to sustainable water resources management in that it now includes commercial forests as a licensed water user.

Most of the water in the Lower Limestone Coast has been allocated in the form of area-based (hectare irrigation equivalent) licences. The WAP changes the way water is allocated across the region by expressing all water allocations as a volume of water.

This factsheet explains how water will now be allocated and calculated under the new WAP.

HOW WILL MY WATER ALLOCATION BE CALCULATED?

"Volumetric conversion" is the term used in the WAP to describe the conversion of area-based water licences (expressed as hectare irrigation equivalents) to licences that allocate a specified volume of water per year. The conversion applies to both the unconfined and confined aquifers.

Volumetric conversion takes into account the water requirements of different crops, and broadly allows for variables associated with climate, soil type, and irrigation type.

Volumetric conversion is calculated by a model that was developed in consultation with stakeholders and the region's community.

Under the volumetric conversion model, water is allocated in the components described in the adjacent table.

Table 1: Water allocation components

Component	Description	Who is Eligible
Tradeable component	Provides the crop water requirements. Calculated by multiplying hectare irrigation equivalents by a volume. Additional 16% of volume to allow for system losses. Takes into account each management area's local climate and predominant soil types.	Allocated to all water licensees with area-based water licences. Can be transferred between all licence types, hence the term "tradeable component."
Delivery supplement for flood and spray. Cannot be traded, but can be reissued to flood licensees under certain circumstances.	Additional volume for eligible flood and spray irrigators. See Table 5 (Appendix of Figures and Tables) in the WAP for volumes. Takes into account each management area's local climate and predominant soil types.	Available on application to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All eligible flood irrigators outside the Border Zone.* Active eligible flood irrigators in the Border Zone.* All eligible spray irrigators in the Benara, Kongorong, MacDonnell and Moorak management areas. Active eligible spray irrigators in the Donovans management area (Border Zone*).
Specialised production. Can be traded only under limited circumstances, and must continue to be used for the same purpose.	Volume required for crop production in addition to crop water use and delivery volumes e.g. frost protection for vines, drift control for potatoes, and high production pasture.	Available on application to eligible irrigators.
Bridging volume. Cannot be traded	Temporary additional volume for licensees who need time to adjust and improve irrigation practices in order to meet their new volumetric allocations. Will expire 30 June 2016.	Available on application to eligible irrigators. Not available in management areas undergoing reductions to allocations, or in the Border Zone.*

*The Designated Area under the Groundwater (Border Agreement) Act 1985 extending along the border of South Australia and Victoria See factsheet 8.



The process of conversion of an area-based to a volume-based water licence will be the same regardless of whether a management area requires reductions to the level of allocation or not. The volumes of water allocated in some management areas, however, will be reduced under other elements of the WAP that seek to retain more water in the aquifer, to sustain the water resources so that these are available in the long term.

HOLDING ALLOCATIONS

Most water holding allocations are expressed as a volume. Under the WAP, the volume of water on a water holding allocation remains unchanged, and will be considered fully tradeable.

EXISTING VOLUMETRIC ALLOCATIONS

Since 2001 some water users have already received allocations expressed as volumes rather than based on area. Under the WAP, these allocations will generally remain unchanged, except for:

- allocations for aquaculture;
- allocations for plant nurseries that can be demonstrated to be insufficient; and
- allocations for irrigation or recreational purposes that were not calculated in accordance with the principles of volumetric conversion in the WAP.

These allocations will be updated as part of the process of volumetric conversion.

NEW ALLOCATIONS

Under the WAP, new water allocations will be issued only for the following uses:

From the unconfined aquifer:

- existing commercial forests;
- bridging volumes (temporary allocation);
- mining (temporary allocation);
- existing pulp and paper mill operations; and
- existing public water supply.

From the confined aquifer:

- public water supply;
- bridging volumes (temporary allocation);
- geothermal energy generation (temporary allocation);
- co-produced water from petroleum and carbon dioxide production (temporary allocation); and
- mining (temporary allocation).

In addition, the WAP proposes that a licensee who has undergone reductions to allocations is eligible to apply for a water (taking) allocation, or an allocation attached to a forest water licence, in an under-allocated management area equivalent to the volume of the reduction.

WHAT'S CHANGED AS A RESULT OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION?

No changes have been made to the policy for volumetric conversion/protecting groundwater dependent ecosystems/managing water in the Border Zone, as a result of community consultation.

A number of changes have been made to other parts of the WAP. Please refer to the other fact sheets available on our website for details on these changes.

WHAT IF I NEED MORE INFORMATION ON THE WATER ALLOCATION PLAN?

If you have questions about the WAP and how it will operate, you will find further information on our website:

www.senrm.sa.gov.au

If you are a licensee, you will also shortly receive further information including application forms from our licensing staff.

Assistance is also available from Natural Resources South East. Contact **08 8735 1177**.

FURTHER READING

Guide to the WAP

Factsheet 1 -	Sustaining our region through water allocation planning
Factsheet 2 -	Changes to how water is allocated
Factsheet 3 -	Forest water use
Factsheet 4 -	Protecting vulnerable water resources
Factsheet 5 -	Water trade and transfer
Factsheet 6 -	Protecting groundwater dependent ecosystems
Factsheet 7 -	Managing the confined aquifer
Factsheet 8 -	Managing water in the Border Zone
Factsheet 9 -	Farm forestry

