



Working Together

CONTACT

South Australian
Murray-Darling Basin
Natural Resources
Management Board

Mannum Road
PO Box 2343
Murray Bridge SA 5253

Phone: (08) 8532 1432
Fax: (08) 8531 1843

www.samdbnrm.sa.gov.au

Frequently Asked Questions

ON THE DRAFT WATER ALLOCATION PLAN FOR THE MALLEE PRESCRIBED WELLS AREA



WHAT IS A WATER ALLOCATION PLAN?

A water allocation plan is a statutory tool that contains water management policies that focus on providing sustainable management of prescribed resources for the benefit of all water users. Plans are developed by Natural Resources Management Boards in consultation with the local community. The planning process is linked with the water licensing process that is managed by the Department for Water.

WHAT DOES PRESCRIPTION OF WATER RESOURCES MEAN?

Prescription is a means by which water resources can be sustainably managed to provide ongoing security to all water users. It also defines the boundary of a prescribed water resource area. Water users must then have a licence and an allocation to take prescribed water from this area for licensed purposes. This protects the resources from over-use, shares water between users, minimises adverse effects from new water resource development on existing water users, and ensures water is available to sustain the environment. For this draft Plan, the prescribed water resource is the underground water resources of the Mallee Prescribed Wells Area (Mallee PWA) (see map on page 2).



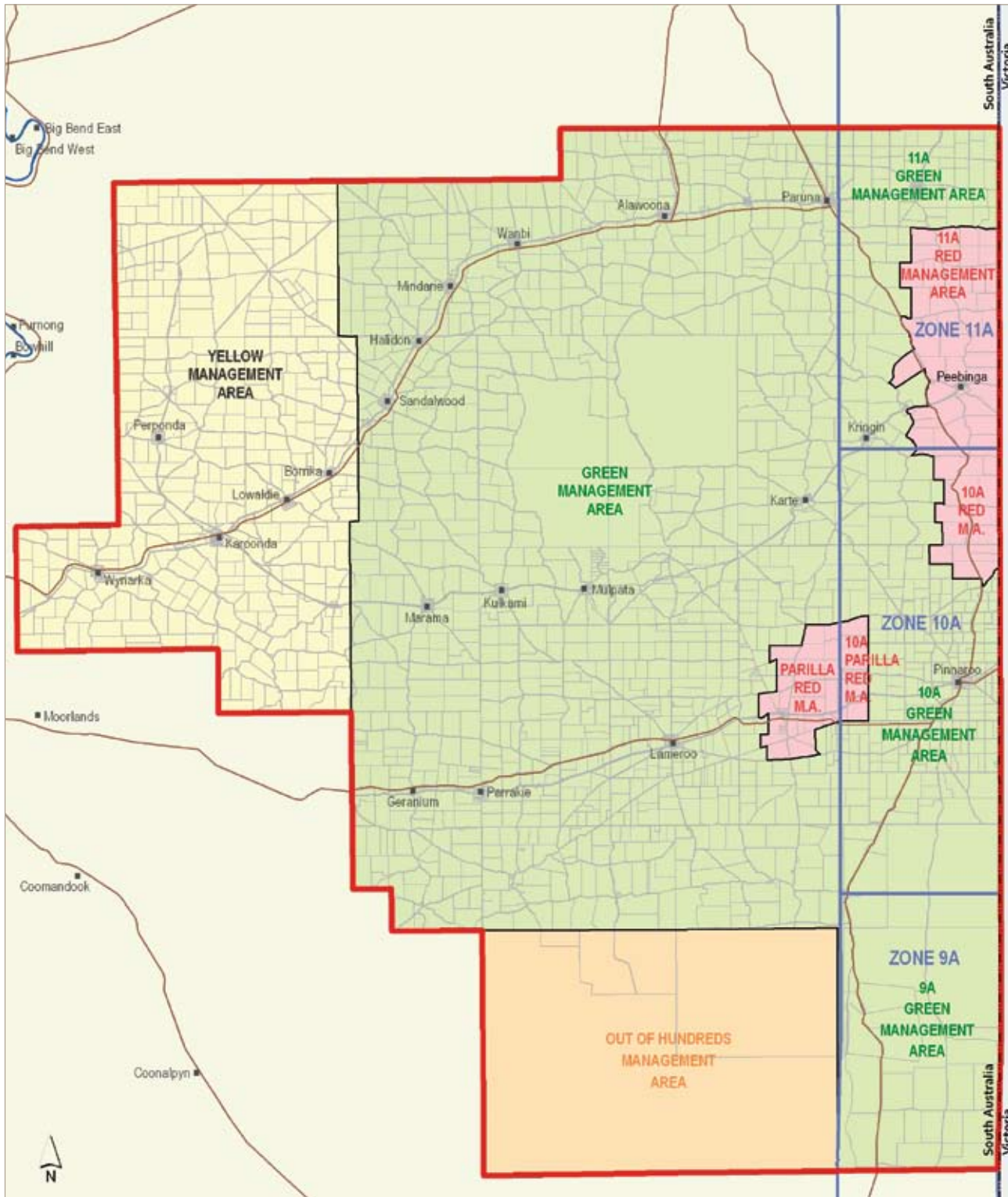
MORE INFORMATION

For more information contact the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board
Phone: (08) 8532 1432

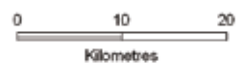


MALLEE PRESCRIBED WELLS AREA MAP

Management Area and Border Zones within the Designated Area



-  Management Area Boundary
-  Border Agreement Boundary
-  Mallee Prescribed Wells Area
-  Land Parcel
-  Major Road



Produced by: Information Unit - GIS Services
 Map Projection: MGA Zone 54
 Map Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994
 Date: August 2010



Government of South Australia
 Department for Water

WHAT IS AN ALLOCATION?

An allocation is the volume of water endorsed on a licence that can be taken each water-use year.

The infrastructure or source used to take water (the well, pump etc) is not part of the allocation, however, they will be specified on the licence and may be subject to licence conditions.

In some circumstances, licences, allocations and conditions may be varied by the relevant Minister in accordance with the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (the NRM Act). Conditions that govern the taking and use of the allocation are generally based on the policies in the draft Plan.

WHEN DO I NEED AN ALLOCATION?

A licence and allocation is needed for using a prescribed water resource for licensed purposes.

An allocation is required for any type of use with the exception of non-licensed purposes. Non-licensed purposes include:

- domestic water use, including watering less than 0.4 hectares (approximately one acre) of land
- providing drinking water for stock that are not intensively kept
- fire fighting
- making public roads
- the application of chemicals to non-irrigated crops or non-irrigated pasture, or to control pests.

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WHAT DOES THE DRAFT PLAN DO?

The draft Plan outlines maximum allocation limits of water (Permissible Annual Volume, PAV and Annual Allowable Volume, AAV) that can be taken under licence from the prescribed water resource. The draft Plan provides policies for ongoing management of water allocations, including transfer of allocations between users and monitoring and reporting. Additionally, it sets out policies for permit conditions such as construction of wells and use of imported water.

The draft Plan also sets policies for allocation of any water left within the PAV / AAV, after the needs of existing users have been met, and can provide a framework for setting licence conditions for current licence holders and existing users. The draft Plan sets volumetric limits for existing licences, which are currently area-based and also sets limits for areas where no licences have been issued.

The draft Plan is the document used to consult the community and stakeholders and is submitted to the Minister for the Environment and Conservation for approval to become the final (adopted) Plan.

When the draft Plan is adopted by the Minister, it will replace the current water allocation plan for the Mallee PWA (adopted in December 2000). Until the draft Plan is adopted, the policies of the current Plan and current conditions on existing licences continue to apply.



WHO ARE EXISTING USERS?

Existing users in prescription terms means individuals or organisations that were using water prior to an area becoming prescribed and have not yet been issued a water licence for the newly prescribed area. The Mallee PWA boundary expanded in October 2005 to include the Hundreds of Bandon, Hooper, Wilson, Marmon Jabuk and the Out of Hundreds area near Ngarkat Conservation Park. There are existing water users in these areas who will be considered for a water licence by the Department for Water following the adoption of the Plan.

HOW ARE EXISTING USER ALLOCATIONS DETERMINED?

Water is allocated to existing users under a separate section of the NRM Act. For more information on the proposal for allocating water to existing users please contact the Berrri office of the Department for Water on (08) 8595 2053.

Though the draft Plan does not set out how allocations to existing users are determined, it does set out the PAV and AAV for the underground water resource and provides a framework that can be used for setting licence conditions.

Under the NRM Act, entitlements of existing users are considered first, subject to the sustainable capacity of the water resources, the needs of the environment and non-licensed users. In the draft Plan, the existing users are in separate management areas (Yellow and Out of Hundreds Management Areas – see attached map) to current licence holders. Final allocations and licences will be issued to existing users following the adoption of the Plan.

HOW DOES THE DRAFT PLAN APPLY TO STOCK AND DOMESTIC WATER USE?

A licence and allocation is not required when using water for stock and domestic purposes. However, a permit is required to drill a well for stock or domestic purposes.

The use of water for stock and domestic purposes is not regulated by the draft Plan. The estimated usage or total requirement for stock and domestic use in the Mallee PWA is accounted for when setting the PAV and assessing transfers. This helps to ensure drawdown impacts are minimised and the water resource is not over-used.

HOW DOES THE DRAFT PLAN APPLY TO EXISTING WATER LICENCES?

The draft Plan sets volumetric limits for each management area within the Mallee PWA. The draft Plan also outlines the basis on which existing area-based entitlements will be varied and be expressed as a volumetric limit. This process will only apply to those with an existing area-based licence.

1. Water licences that currently have a volumetric allocation (e.g. intensive farming, town water supply, industrial)

Current water licences allocated for intensive farming, town water supply or industrial purposes will be subject to the policies and licence conditions in the adopted Plan. Current volumetric allocations will not be altered. Many of the policies relating to existing licences in the draft Plan are similar to the current Plan. A major change for existing volume based licences is the change from Hundreds to management areas and the ability to transfer between management areas (see Section 6 of the draft Plan). The management areas are based on resource capacity and current development intensity. Licences will be subject to the rules that apply to that management area.

2. Water licences that are area-based (ha/E) e.g. irrigation

Using the principles in the draft Plan, area-based allocations will be converted to volumetric allocations following the adoption of the Plan (see Section 5.2 of the draft Plan). This will be a major change for irrigators in the Mallee PWA.

WHAT will be my volumetric allocation?

The final volumetric allocations for individual irrigation licences cannot be determined at the time of consultation on the draft Plan. There are several factors that are considered when determining the final allocation, including:

- individual development - area grown and crop type;
- the collective volumetric conversion of all allocations within a management area; and
- the AAV of the management area.

The conversion volume for individual allocations can be estimated now, using existing information. The AAV of each management area is shown in Table 5 of the draft Plan.

WHAT is the Assessment Period?

In order to calculate individual volumetric conversion volumes, development will be assessed against an assessment period. This is the period between 1 July 2004 and 30 June 2009.

WHEN will I know what my final volumetric allocation will be?

Final individual volumetric allocations will not be known until the licence is granted, following the adoption of the Plan. Prior to this, the Department for Water will calculate the conversion volume for developed allocations. The Department for Water will then notify individual licensees of their calculated conversion volume and how it was derived. **This may not be the final allocation.** The SA MDB NRM Board and the Department for Water will aim to notify licence holders of their final allocation prior to the start of the water use year, to enable irrigators to make well-informed business decisions on crop plantings.



HOW much will my volumetric conversion volume be varied?

Each management area and individual irrigator will face a different level of adjustment to volumetric water allocations compared to previous and current water use, depending upon the AAV for the respective management area and the amount of development that has occurred collectively for that management area.

The impact will vary per individual licence. Some licensees may find there is minimal variation in their final allocation from average use. Dependent upon management practices and seasonal planting/watering times, others may find there is a significant variation from average use during the assessment period (1 July 2004 – 30 June 2009).

3. Other authorisations / licences

Drought alleviation: A small number of drought alleviation licences remain in the Mallee PWA. These types of allocations are no longer available for allocation. The current licences will be converted to volume (if they have not already been converted) for the purpose of irrigation and the policies and conditions from the draft Plan will apply to these licences in the future (see principle 32 of the draft Plan).

Sand mining authorisation: At the time of preparing this information, the future of the sand mining authorisation had not been finalised. Currently the sand mine at Mindarie has an authorisation to use water. An authorisation is not a licence, is not tradable, and sits outside the PAV. If sand mining operations were to continue, the current authorisation would be reassessed and a licence issued and allocated within the AAV of the management area (see section 5.3.1 of the draft Plan).

The sand mining company is an existing user in the boundary expansion area. The reasonable needs as an existing user will be assessed and a licence issued (following the adoption of the Plan).

WHERE CAN I TAKE MY ALLOCATION FROM?

In order to allow local impacts on other users and the environment to be assessed and minimised, a water allocation can only be taken from the management area, the aquifer and the wells as specified on the licence. All wells used for the purpose of the licence need to be specified on the licence. Additional wells can be added to the licence, on application to the Department for Water and subject to Section 7 of the draft Plan.

CAN I TRANSFER MY WATER LICENCE AND/OR ALLOCATION?

Water licences and allocations are assets that are separate from land. Allocations can be transferred to other management areas or licence holders subject to Section 6.1 of the draft Plan and the approval of the Minister for Environment and Conservation. A transfer is generally assessed as if it was a new allocation, except if the transfer is of the whole licence together with the sale of a property (see principles 47 of the draft Plan). Any private arrangements for payment of transferred water allocations and licences are not managed by the draft Plan.

HOW CAN I GET AN ALLOCATION?

Where there is water available for allocation (see Section 5 of the draft Plan), applications for new allocations can be made to the Minister for Environment and Conservation. New allocations will only become available once the Plan is adopted and will be subject to the policies in the Plan. The allocation and licensing process is administered by the Department for Water; for more information contact the Department's Berri office on (08) 8595 2053. Under the draft Plan, payment will be required for new allocations.

“ The impact will vary per individual licence. Some licensees may find there is minimal variation in their final allocation from average use. ”





Working Together



WHAT IS GOING TO BE DISCUSSED DURING PUBLIC CONSULTATION?

The public consultation will include two public meetings. During these meetings, the SA MDB NRM Board and the Department for Water staff will explain the policies in the draft Plan, including the volumetric conversion of area-based licences, transfer of allocations between management areas, monitoring of drawdowns, salinity and water use, well construction permit conditions, and allocation limits for the management areas.

The separate process of issuing licences and water allocations to existing users will also be explained.

During public consultation, information will be provided on the water allocation process, how to access further information about the draft Plan, and how to make a submission.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE AND HAVE MY SAY ON THE DRAFT PLAN?

There are three ways to hear more, ask questions or have your say. You can attend a public meeting, make an appointment with an SA MDB NRM Board staff member, or submit a written submission.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

You can come to a public meeting to hear a presentation about the draft Plan and discuss the policies and science of the draft Plan. Public meetings will be held on:

- **Tuesday 23rd November 2010 from 4pm – 6pm at the Parilla Sports Centre; and**
- **Thursday 25th November 2010 from 7pm – 9pm at the Karoonda Sports Centre**

Please register by telephoning the SA MDB NRM Board on (08) 8532 1432 by Friday 19th November 2010 if you would like to come to one of these meetings.

Individual appointments

You can also telephone the SA MDB NRM Board on (08) 8532 1432 to make an appointment to discuss the draft Plan individually with Board staff at a suitable time and location.

Written submissions

Written submissions on the draft Plan can be sent to:

Cameron Welsh
SA MDB NRM Board
PO Box 2343
Murray Bridge SA 5253
Fax: 8531 1843
Email:
wapfeedback@samdbnrm.sa.gov.au

The closing date for written submissions is Friday 14th January 2011 at 5pm.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once the consultation period on the draft Plan has closed, the SA MDB NRM Board will consider all of the responses received and finalise the draft Plan. The SA MDB NRM Board will then forward the draft Plan and the consultation responses to the Minister for Environment and Conservation for consideration, finalisation and adoption of the draft Plan. It is anticipated that the draft Plan will be adopted mid 2011.



Public meetings will be held on:

Tues 23rd November 2010 from 4pm – 6pm, Parilla Sports Centre; and

Thurs 25th November 2010 from 7pm – 9pm Karoonda Sports Centre

