

River Murray Flood Recovery 2023

Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Areas

Levee network repairs and dewatering process

What is happening now?

The re-establishment of the levee network and dewatering process is the highest priority for producers in the Lower Murray region.

With the River Murray flood now in the recovery phase, the planning process is already underway for the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area (LMRIA)

The Government of South Australia aims to work with landholders within the LMRIA to establish a coordinated approach to the recovery process.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) is leading the engagement with landholders for dewatering and agriculture recovery.

A comprehensive engagement process is being implemented to ensure all landholders understand each stage of the recovery process. PIRSA will work with each irrigation area individually to ensure the unique needs of each area are addressed in the recovery process. Future meetings will be held with landholders within each irrigation area to enable further input to the discussions and planning process.

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) has engaged Mr Scott Ashby to liaise with each irrigation area to determine individual requirements and possible short-

term solutions. During these discussions, DEW would also like to hear from landholders about what they would like to see from the levees in the future.

DEW is working with engineers and landholders to look at what repair solutions may be feasible once on-ground works are possible, noting that each levee is likely to have different possible solutions and there is unlikely to be a one-size-fits-all solution.

The key priority in the initial stages is to stabilise the levees to allow dewatering to occur, get farmers back on their land and to protect the land against potential high flows over the coming winter period.

What needs to be done to repair the levee?

Until full inspections are completed, it is not possible to predict the exact nature of the works required, or when or how they will be completed. It is likely that different solutions to stabilise each levee will be used in the short-term to allow for dewatering to commence.

The options chosen will depend on the damage incurred, accessibility (including road and/or river access to the site), integrity of the remaining levee, contractor and material availability and other factors.



Safety is the priority when accessing inundated areas to undertake dewatering and no works will be undertaken unless safe to do so.

My levee is privately owned, what help will I receive?

The Government of South Australia recognises the need to get all the inundated agricultural land dewatered as soon as possible and will undertake the same process for all levees, whether they be private or government owned.

What can I expect to see?

LiDAR surveys are being undertaken along levees that have breached or overtopped. This will involve setting up base stations at each location and then undertaking the surveys by drone. This process is expected to take 2 to 5 days per levee depending on flying conditions. LiDAR surveys commenced Monday 27 February 2023.

For those levees that have not been breached or overtopped, an on-ground height survey will be undertaken.

To ensure the safety of staff, contractors and those accessing the levees, structural integrity testing of the levees will also be undertaken prior to any works commencing. Engineering advice is being sought on how this will be done and we will update you once that advice is available.

Irrigation Trust presiding members will be advised when surveys are due to be undertaken on their levee.

Concurrent with these localised surveys, condition assessments of access roads and review of bathymetry surveys of the river will also be carried out to determine how the

levees can be accessed to undertake any required repairs.

Once it is deemed safe to do so, DEW will undertake on-ground inspections of damaged levee embankments to finalise the methodology for any stabilisation works required.

When can I expect water to be removed from the land?

With flood waters still receding and the unknown nature of levee stabilisation that may be required, it is difficult to determine the timeframe for dewatering. Dewatering cannot commence until the water levels and structural integrity of the levee are such that further inundation will not occur.

Dewatering can commence in areas where:

- the area is safe to access
- the breach/overtopping area is no longer below water level
- the flow of water into the irrigation area has ceased
- no stabilisation works are required to the levee
- vehicle access to the levee is not required for pump placement and operation.

The timing for obtaining a pump and commencing dewatering will be subject to meeting the conditions listed above and availability of the appropriate equipment.

Do I need to organise my own pumps for dewatering?

There will be a coordinated government program to provide pumping for dewatering and cover relevant operating costs.

PIRSA will work with each irrigation area individually to identify the specific dewatering



requirements and provide the relevant support.

To participate in the program, landholders must work collectively through their local Irrigation Trust.

Can I access the levee in the meantime?

Safety is always a key consideration and will be a priority when accessing inundated areas to undertake levee stabilisation works or dewatering. No works will be undertaken unless it is safe to do so.

Any Local Irrigation Trust members and contractors still accessing the levees for emergency response or maintenance works are encouraged to take all necessary precautions when working on the levees, particularly during or following wet weather.

What is the longer-term plan for the levees?

The priority for now is to undertake quick-fix solutions to stabilise the levee and to allow for dewatering to occur. Once the areas have dried out and the levees are no longer engaged on both sides, a full condition assessment will be undertaken to determine longer term requirements.

What is happening with releases from upstream storages? Am I likely to be impacted again?

Releases from Hume Dam are within the normal range for this time of the year with releases being made to meet downstream orders only. No pre-releases have been required at this stage, but should further rainfall occur then pre-releases may be necessary.

Pre-releases from the upper dams to create airspace does not necessarily equate to an increase in flow at the South Australian border.

For the most up-to-date information about what is happening upstream and how this may affect you, please refer to the Weekly Flow Report available at www.waterconnect.sa.gov.au/River-Murray.

What other help is there?

Primary producers impacted by the River Murray flood are encouraged to access the Primary Producer Recovery Grants and the Primary Production Irrigation Grants along with other services.

For more information visit www.pir.sa.gov.au or call 1800 931 314.

