



Australian Government

Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

# Lower Darling/Baaka Spring Flow 2020-21 Update #1

September 2020

## A helping hand for native fish in the lower Darling/Baaka is on its way!

**Objectives** Support Murray cod breeding, recruitment and health along the lower Darling/Baaka, from Menindee Lakes to Wentworth.

Support the movement of golden perch from Menindee Lakes into the lower Darling/Baaka

**Start date** 15 September 2020

**Duration** To mid-January 2021

**Target areas** Murray cod breeding habitat in the lower Darling/Baaka channel

### How will we know how the fish are faring?

Real-time monitoring by NSW DPI Fisheries, before, during and after the release will measure how the flows are supporting native fish. Flow rates will be adjusted based on these results. Using real-time information will enable water to be used in a very strategic way to help fish when it's needed most and achieve the best possible outcomes.

### What's going to happen...

Water for the environment will be released into the lower Baaka from mid-September 2020. River flows will be brought up to 400 megalitres a day to help boost the health of the lower Baaka and support recovery of native fish after years of very dry conditions which lead to the devastating fish deaths in 2018-19.

Flows will be timed with the Murray cod breeding season. There is also potential for the flows to support breeding of golden and silver perch.

Murray cod breed in spring when they are signalled by rising water temperature and day length. The flow aims to give Murray cod access to more areas where they can lay their eggs, find food and provide shelter for baby fish.



Photo: Menindee Lakes at sunset. Koenraad Van Landeghem/  
DAWE

## We will adapt to what is needed

If monitoring records high levels of cod spawning through October, additional water may be released to generate more food for the baby fish and give access to more nursery habitat.

Many baby fish, like golden perch, from the upper reaches of the Darling/Baaka River and its northern tributaries end up in the waters of the Menindee Lakes where they feed and grow. Young fish can later move over Weir 32 into the lower Baaka and potentially all the way to the Murray River. This year, we're surveying fish in the Menindee Lakes to see how many golden perch have made it from the north and whether the spring flow can help them continue their journey into the lower Baaka.



Photo: Lower Darling/Baaka

## Other benefits of the spring release

Freshwater shrimp, mussels, and smaller native fish will also enjoy the benefits of the flow.

The environmental flow will also help maintain better water quality in the lower Baaka, from spring to early summer, by helping to mix the water column. This should lower the risk of extensive blue-green algal blooms that can grow in slow or still water during warmer months.

After the release, the lower Baaka will go back to minimum flows required by the water sharing plan - unless monitoring indicates fish still need our help or there is substantial water flow from the north.

This work would not be possible without the co-operation of the community and collaboration and support of our water delivery partners— NSW DPIE EES, NSW DPI Fisheries, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Arthur Rylah Institute, WaterNSW and the Murray Darling Basin Authority.

More information:

<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/catchment/baaka-spring-flow-2020>

## Local Engagement Officer

Contact the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office Local Engagement Officer for further information:

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