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## **REPLENISHMENT FOR RIVERS AS RESERVOIRS NEAR CAPACITY**

River systems in the Adelaide Hills and Mount Lofty catchment areas are likely to benefit from environmental flows as two of Adelaide's reservoirs get close to capacity, which will allow water to be released to neighbouring rivers.

On top of the best winter rains for many years, recent good rainfall in Hills catchment areas means that rivers below the Kangaroo Creek and Mt Bold reservoirs are likely to benefit from the flows.

Rivers set to be replenished by the water include the Onkaparinga and the Torrens.

Environment and Conservation Minister Jay Weatherill said the flows that are expected to start within days would provide enormous benefits for the environmental health of the rivers.

"We only need to look at the state of the River Murray – still under drought conditions – to remind ourselves of the need for environmental flows down our rivers" Mr Weatherill said.

"These flows will lower salinity, reduce natural sedimentation and provide vital habitat and food sources for native plants and animals.

"They will provide the extra water required to allow native fish, frogs, bugs and birds to migrate.

"No release of environmental flows has been possible for some time because of the ongoing drought conditions – until recent weeks.

"Under natural conditions, much more water would flow down these systems so the release of this water will replenish waterways starved of decent flows."

In the past 48 hours our metropolitan reservoirs have received about a billion litres of natural intake and this amount will increase as the rainfall from last night continues to flow into our catchments.

"Already this financial year Adelaide's metropolitan reservoirs have received more than double the amount of natural intake they received for the entire 2008-09 financial year," Minister Maywald said.

"This means Adelaide's drinking water supply for the 2009-10 financial year will be able to rely more on the recent rainfall into our catchments than the River Murray," she said.

“We have also only pumped about 1.3 gigalitres of water from the River Murray into Adelaide’s metro reservoirs this financial year. For the same period last year (1 July 2008 – end of September) we had already pumped close to 40 gigalitres.”

Adelaide’s largest reservoir, Mount Bold, is currently at more than 98% capacity, holding almost 45.2 gigalitres.

Reservoirs that supply Adelaide’s drinking water hold back water from flowing into these natural systems. Increasingly there is recognition for water to be allocated for the benefit of the environment.

In 2006, the State Government developed a formal environmental flow trial for the waterways. The aims of the trial were to assess the minimum amounts of water for the rivers downstream of the reservoirs.

Due to the drought, this trial was curtailed in October 2006 but given the return of average flow conditions, these trials will be recommenced and valuable data on aquatic health can now be collected to help determine long term environmental flow releases that should be adopted. Downstream sections of the waterways will be monitored to assess ecosystem responses to these flows.

“Capturing the environmental impact of these flows will provide crucial data for environmental scientists and engineers to ascertain the best options for future decisions about environmental flows,” Mr Weatherill said.