

Sunday, June 17, 2007

IRRIGATORS TO RECEIVE SMALL ALLOCATION FOR NEW WATER YEAR

South Australian River Murray irrigators will be able to access at least one percent of their allocations and some carryover water when the new water year begins on July 1.

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says based on Murray-Darling Basin inflows to the end of May, 12 gegalitres will be available for irrigation in South Australia and a minimum of 5GL will be available to allocate as carryover water in July.

“While the Murray-Darling Basin Commission advises there is enough water to cover heavily restricted critical human and stock water needs, for the first time, water availability for irrigation in 2007-08 will depend solely on rainfall received during winter and spring.

“The amount of water available to allocate to irrigation is expected to increase as the full extent of June inflows are analysed. A final assessment for allocations for the beginning of July will be made once we receive formal advice from the MDBC.

“While the opening allocation will be small, most irrigators normally use only 1-2 percent of their total entitlements in July so this modest initial allocation will be a significant benefit and relief.”

Minister Maywald says water will be available for industrial users from July 1, however they will need to complete a water efficiency plan to demonstrate exactly how they will reduce their usage.

“The Department of Water Land and Biodiversity Conservation and SA Water will work closely with industry associations and large water-using businesses to achieve savings. Industrial users should contact their water supply company for details of their obligations,” she said.

Minister Maywald says an initial allocation of five gegalitres will be available from July 1 for irrigators who applied to carryover water from the 2006-07 water year, for use in 2007-08.

“South Australia has carried over 30 gegalitres of this year’s water for use in 2007-08 but River Murray water users have applied for 56.1 gegalitres.

“Meters will be read in the first week of July and the actual amount of water applicants will be able to access as carryover will be determined after that. Irrigators will get a share of the 30GL and further information is available from DWLBC.”

Minister Maywald says as a result of the low initial allocation, temporary disconnection of a number of water bodies along the river will begin in order to reduce the volume lost to evaporation.

“In April, the government announced that if the initial allocation announcement was 50 percent or less, more temporary closures of water bodies along the river would begin.

“Ross and Jaeschke Lagoons have already been disconnected earlier than anticipated, in consultation with community groups involved in their management.

“Work will now begin on timeframes to temporarily disconnect Murbko South Wetland, Nelwood and Nelwart Swamps, Horseshoe and Yatco Lagoons, Lake Bonney and Gurra Gurra Lakes.”

Minister Maywald will reassess allocations before the end of June, based on updated information on rainfall and inflows from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.