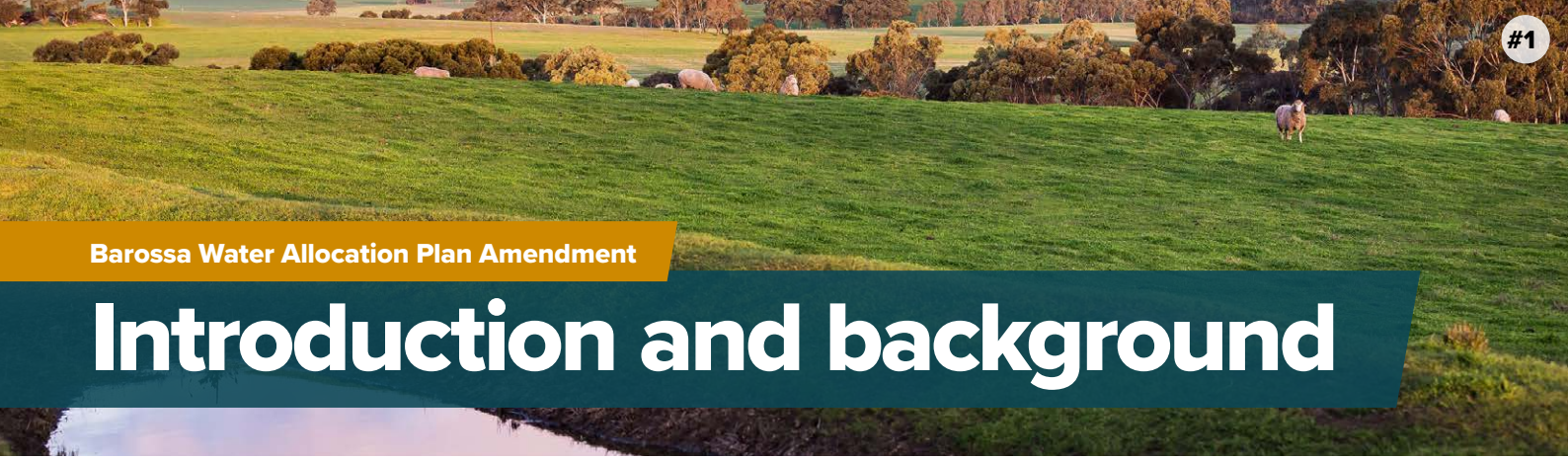


Barossa Water Allocation Plan Amendment

Introduction and background

The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board is amending the Barossa Water Allocation Plan (the Plan) and investigations into the surface water and groundwater resources of the Barossa Prescribed Water Resources Area have been undertaken.

The Board is engaging with the community and stakeholders over the coming months on the objectives of the amended Plan, the outcomes of the science undertaken and potential management options to consider when preparing the amended Plan.

Once management options are finalised, the Board will consult on an amended Plan before presenting it to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for approval. A draft amended Plan is currently on track for completion in 2022 with formal consultation planned in 2023.

Community engagement on management options

A workshop is scheduled for Tuesday 22 November 2022 at The Barossa Cellar to present the latest science, identify objectives for the Plan and discuss management options to address issues facing the surface water and groundwater resources.

The workshop will be a 4-hour event starting at lunch time. Further information about the event and RSVP details are available at https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/barossa-water-allocation-plan-amendment-workshop-tickets-453459990037?aff=ebdsoporgprofile

This is a chance to have your say in how the water resources of the Barossa should be managed.

Information sheets

A package of information will assist in discussions at the workshop on 22 November 2022. The information sheets provide background details and set out the issues Barossa water resources are facing and what the Plan can do to manage those issues:

#1: Introduction and background

#2: Surface water and ecosystems

#3: Groundwater

#4: Barossa ecological summary 2022

#5: Issues and management options

Background

Modelling has provided information about the current and future availability of water, the impacts of different levels of extraction, and the effects of climate change on local water resources.

The last 5 years the Barossa have seen mainly below average rainfall, with conditions being worse than predicted. This has resulted in minimal flows through creeks and waterways and reduced recharge of aquifers. It has affected access to surface water by water users and ecosystems, and has seen groundwater levels decline and salinity levels rise.

While the current level of use of surface water and groundwater resources are within the total volume of water allocated, there are increasing risks to water-dependent ecosystems, amenity and availability of water for extraction. Based on the last 5 years of data, a combination of reduced resource capacity (due to less rainfall) and significant increases in use above current levels would present a significant risk.

The Board is seeking community input into management options to address the risks facing local water resources.

What does the water allocation plan do?

A water allocation plan is a legal document that sets out objectives for managing prescribed water resources and the principles (the rules) for ensuring that the taking and use of water is sustainable. A water allocation plan:

- considers the water requirements needed by ecosystems
- sets out how much water is available for consumptive purposes, how that water may be allocated to water users and may also include policies and principles for the transfer of water
- must set out principles that ensure an equitable balance is achieved between environmental, social and economic needs for water

Once a water allocation plan is in place, water is allocated to water users and licensing arrangements set out the conditions under which a licensee can take and use water.

Why is the water allocation plan being amended?

A review of the water allocation plan found that the policies in the 2009 plan require updating. Through the amendment process, the following areas are being considered:

- the impacts of climate change on the surface and groundwater resources in the Barossa
- environmental water requirements in a changing climate
- sustainable extraction limits for surface and groundwater resources
- rules around storing and using imported water
- transfer rules to protect existing water users and ecosystems
- Aboriginal water interests will be included in the Barossa Plan for the first time

Engagement with the Barossa community will inform the policies included in a draft Plan. Once a draft of the Plan is finalised, a formal consultation process will be undertaken. In addition to the current engagement underway, this will be a further opportunity to provide feedback on the water management policies included in the Plan.

How can the water allocation plan help manage local water resources?

The Plan can include policies that manage the take and use of water and also monitoring and evaluation requirements to ensure usage and ecological health is being tracked. This information will help over time to test whether the policies in the Plan are working. It will also help to inform future amendments of the Plan, so that policies can be updated based on best available information and evidence.

There are legislative requirements that the water allocation plan must meet, and some options sit outside of these requirements.

See Information Sheet #2 for more information about how a water allocation plan can manage water resources.

Management options are presented in Information Sheet #4 and these will be discussed further at the November workshop.

Other water projects underway

The amended Plan is being developed in the context of the broader Barossa Water Security Strategy currently under development (link: Department for Environment and Water - Barossa Water Security Strategy) and related water projects.

The Barossa Water Security Strategy has been developed in recognition of the need for a long-term strategy around water security, particularly in the context of a warming and drying climate. Recent water scarcity due to a number of consecutive dry years has highlighted the importance of reliable and affordable water sources for people, industry, agriculture, amenity, cultural values and ecosystems.

The Barossa Water Security Strategy includes actions to achieve a water secure future, such as increasing the volume of imported water available to the region, demand management measures, modification of dams to increase flows through catchments, and other complementary actions.

Investigations are currently underway around bringing additional volumes of imported water into the Barossa via the Barossa New Water Project, either from the Bolivar Wastewater Treatment Plant, or via the River Murray through the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline. Additional water could help take pressure off the local water resources.

All water projects aim to underpin the needs of the Barossa community, for the benefit of people, the local economy, amenity, industries, cultural values and the environment

More information

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