



Reservoir operating rules

The recent completion of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline has meant the way some of the Grampians Bulk Water Supply Reservoirs and other in-stream assets are managed in the future will change.

In anticipation of this change, GWMWater commenced the Future Use of Reservoirs review project in 2006. This earlier project proposed future operating scenarios for 32 reservoirs and weirs with the eventual completion of the pipeline. The process attracted 165 written submissions in response to a series of discussion papers released for public comment.

Key components

A key part of that earlier process was the establishment of a Stakeholder Working Group, which included Northern Grampians and Southern Grampians Shire Councils, Horsham Rural City Council, VR Fish, Fisheries Victoria, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, Parks Victoria, Environment Victoria, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and three local community representatives. The working group reviewed the 165 submissions and made final recommendations on the future operation of each asset which were adopted by GWMWater in August 2008.

Key outcomes included:

- > That some of these assets would be maintained in the future for water supply purposes, while others were no longer required for water supply but their historic use for other purposes such as recreation was recognised;
- > No decisions would be made that were irreversible; and
- > The decisions would be reviewed after five years to take into account operating experience gathered under the pipeline system.

The next stage

With the completion of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project, the Wimmera and Glenelg Bulk Entitlements were altered in October of 2010. This was done to reflect the sharing arrangements as agreed between government and the region for water savings resulting from the project.

As part of these alterations, GWMWater was appointed by the Minister for Water as the Storage Manager, and GWMWater is now required to establish a set of rules to manage and operate the reservoirs and associated works of the Wimmera-Mallee supply system:

- > ensure integrity of the headworks system
- > meet entitlement holders' needs in accordance with their entitlements
- > maximise community benefits
- > enhance environmental benefits
- > deliver a safe and reliable water supply
- > manage water quality
- > provide opportunities for recreation
- > mitigate flood risks.

Reservoir operating rules are to be developed by GWMWater in consultation with all entitlement holders to achieve these objectives.

The starting point for the development of the operating rules is the scenarios established from the previous Future Use of Reservoirs review project. A process to establish the future operating rules for Lake Bellfield, Lake Fyans, Lake Lonsdale, Lake Wartook, Moora Moora Reservoir, Rocklands Reservoir, Toolondo Reservoir, Taylors Lake (including Wimmera Inlet Channel), Dock Lake, Pine Lake and Green Lake (near Horsham) has now commenced.

All Wimmera-Glenelg Bulk Entitlement and Environmental Entitlement holders (Coliban Water, Wannon Water, GWMWater and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder) are involved in the process, with the final rules developed by GWMWater to be approved by the Minister for Water.

It is important to understand that where a reservoir is required for water supply purposes (including storage and release of environmental water), the benefits of recreation and flood mitigation cannot always be guaranteed as supply purposes will always take priority.

Rich Avon Weir and Lake Batyo Catyo have not been included as they are being dealt with separately. Draft management plans for these two water bodies will be released shortly for public comment.

Call for submissions

Given the changed roles that some of these reservoirs will play, and the competing uses that may occur at times, it is important that the views of all stakeholders are considered in developing operating rules for these reservoirs.

A series of ten (10) discussion papers have been prepared explaining the way the reservoirs are intended to be operated into the future. Because of their necessity for water supply purposes, some of the proposed operating rules are not able to be changed, and these are identified in each discussion paper with an asterisk, *.

All proposed operating rules not marked with an * are open to discussion and we now invite public submissions on these particular rules. Submissions will be presented by the Storage Manager (GWMWater) to the entitlement holders for consideration as part of finalising the Reservoir Operating Rules for approval by the Minister for Water.

A series of community information forums will also be held to explain the proposed operating rules and to assist with the submission process. These sessions will be held in Dimboola, Balmoral, Horsham, Stawell, Warracknabeal and Laharum during September 2011. Watch the local media for more information.

Written submissions should be addressed to:

Reservoir Operating Rules
GWMWater
PO Box 481
HORSHAM 3402

Submissions close on Friday 30 September 2011.

Further information is available by contacting Andrew Barton at GWMWater on 1300 659 961.

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