

# Draft Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse

## Environmental Land Management Allocations (ELMA)



### Environmental Land Management Allocations

Environmental Land Management Allocations (ELMA) are water allocations provided to landholders within the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area (LMRIA).

Entitlements are granted to landholders in the LMRIA to minimise the effects of cracking and soil salinity on irrigated pasture or on land that has been retired from irrigation. Since the Millennium drought, it has become evident that the application of ELMA helps to minimise oxidation of acid sulfate soils which can pose a water quality risk to SA Water offtakes.

Land within the LMRIA is low lying, typically below the level of the River Murray, and is a natural discharge point for saline regional groundwater. Soils are also clay based and prone to cracking when they dry out. Unlike many other soil types, LMRIA soils require active management in order to maintain their productive capacity, by regular irrigation (with ELMA), levelling and drainage.

Under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreements cap on diversions – 22.2 GL is set aside for use in the Lower Murray for the purpose of environmental land management.

### ELMA Review

The former SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board (the Board) committed to undertake a comprehensive review of ELMA following community feedback from the 2017 draft Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse (the plan).

As part of the review, the former Board commissioned the University of Adelaide to assess how much water needs to be applied to land to successfully leach salt from the root zone.

The review has re-confirmed ELMA is necessary in the LMRIA to effectively manage salts, acid sulfate soils, and soil movement and cracking.

The review also found the current ELMA application rates are not sufficient to achieve the environmental objectives of ELMA across the LMRIA, however environmental objectives for ELMA can be met by applying the “optimised” rates.

The optimised rates take into consideration rainfall and evaporation differences across the LMRIA and give all licensees equal ability to manage their land.

## River Murray WAP

The River Murray WAP currently sets aside 22.2 million shares for ELMA for use within the LMRIA. The entitlements and allocations are non-tradeable, not eligible for carryover, and expire and revert to the Minister for Environment and Water (the minister) upon the sale of land. These existing rules will continue to remain in place in the draft plan.

ELMA licences were originally granted to owners of ELMA eligible land for a set period of time. This was to enable the South Australian Government to review the effectiveness of ELMA. The minister retains ownership of ELMA and only grants ELMA to landholders in the LMRIA to apply to the land under specific terms and conditions. ELMA licences have been extended to 30 June 2021 to provide certainty for users whilst the review was undertaken.

There will be no change in current ELMA licence conditions until the these licences expire and new water licences are issued.

## What is the new policy proposal?

The proposed changes only affect ELMA (Class 8) water licencees.

The proposed changes, outlined below, aim to redistribute ELMA so that over time all licenseees will be granted optimised rates.

- 1) When granting ELMA (Class 8) entitlements, the minister will consider criteria including the history of use; whether the applicant has an ELMA eligible land parcel; and suitable infrastructure to take and use ELMA.
- 2) ELMA will be granted to eligible land parcels at the optimised rate (refer to Column 2 of Table 1) except where:
  - a) The current ELMA rate (refer to Column 3 of Table 1) is greater than the optimised rate and licenseees have used between 90 - 100% of their ELMA allocation in at least one of the water use years from 2015/16 to 2018/19 inclusive. In which case, the licensee will retain the current ELMA rate for up to 10 years (subject to conditions being met); or
  - b) Licensees who have not recorded any metered usage for any water use years from 2015/16 to 2018/19 inclusive will not be granted an ELMA entitlement unless significant financial or legal commitment can be demonstrated.
- 3) ELMA licencees will expire on a change in the owner or occupier of land, or at the end of each 5 year term.
- 4) Where land is sold and the new land owner applies for ELMA then the optimised rates will be granted. However if the sale of land is to an immediate family

member, and provided the current ELMA rates were previously held, then entitlements may be granted (upon application) at the current rate up to 30 June 2031.

- 5) If the total entitlement shares exceeded the 22,200,000 shares (22.2 GL) of ELMA available when licencees are initially granted then proportional reductions will be applied to all applicants.
- 6) At the end of the first (or any subsequent) 5 year term, any ELMA entitlements that the minister holds will be apportioned back to eligible licenseees (assuming proportional reductions were necessary initially).
- 7) When licencees first expire most likely on 30 June 2026), ELMA entitlements will be reissued at the same rate they were over the previous 5 year term (provided licence conditions were met)
- 8) When licencees expire on 30 June 2031, all applications for ELMA will be granted at the optimised rates.
- 9) It will be a condition of licence that:
  - a) an irrigation annual report will be submitted on request
  - b) ELMA must be applied to the entire ELMA eligible land parcel/s at least once within three water use years; and
  - c) infrastructure to deliver ELMA must be maintained in good working order and take of ELMA must be metered.

To view the science report go to:

<https://landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/water/water-allocation-plans/river-murray-wap/elmareview>

## How does this affect entitlements

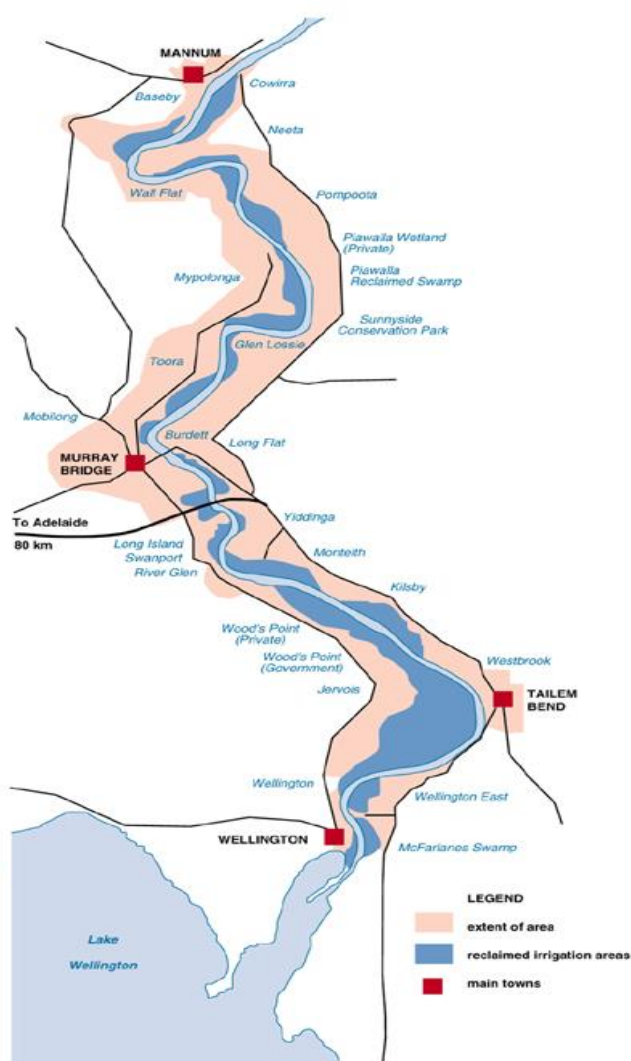
Where current entitlements are less than the optimised rates and ELMA has been used, then new entitlements will be issued at the optimised rates upon application.

Where current entitlements are more than the optimised rates and between 90 – 100% of ELMA has been used at least once during the relevant period, then the current ELMA rate will be issued and may remain unchanged for up to 10 years (subject to licence conditions being met).

Where entitlements are more than the optimised rate but the allocation has not used at 90% or more during the relevant period, then the optimised rate will be issued.

If no water has been used for any of the years during the relevant period, then ELMA will not be granted unless significant financial or legal commitment to use ELMA can be demonstrated.

The draft ELMA policy can be viewed in full in the draft Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse, found at <https://landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/water/water-allocation-plans/river-murray-wap>



## Optimised and Current ELMA Rates

**Table 1: Optimised and current ELMA application rates for each irrigation area**

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Irrigation Area	Optimised rates (ML/ha)	Current rates (ML/ha)
Cowirra	4.489	6.35
Baseby	4.489	6.30
Neeta	4.489	6.10
Wall Flat	4.489	5.93
Neeta North	4.436	6.01
Pompoota	4.420	5.74
Mypolonga	4.354	5.38
Paiwalla	4.354	5.04
Glen Lossie	4.192	4.99
Toora	4.140	4.77
Mobilong	4.140	4.58
Burdett	4.140	4.46
Long Flat	4.097	4.37
Long Island	4.097	4.13
Swanport	4.097	4.06
Yiddinga	4.097	4.04
River Glen	4.097	3.90
Monteith	4.048	3.79
Kilsby	4.173	3.53
Woods Point	4.049	3.50
Westbrook	4.037	3.39
Jervois	4.042	2.90
Seymour	3.969	2.28

You will need to re-apply for ELMA to make sure that your water licences are in place for the 2021-22 water use year. You will be notified when it is time to submit your application.

**There will be no change to your current water licence until it expires on 30 June 2021.**

For more information go to:

[www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/elmareview](http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/elmareview)

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[www.environment.sa.gov.au/licences-andpermits/water-licence-and-permit-forms](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/licences-andpermits/water-licence-and-permit-forms)

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