



## Upper Barwon River Seasonal Watering Proposal 24-25 Comments Register

The Upper Barwon River Seasonal Watering Proposal 2024-25 was presented and distributed to EMAC, WTOAC and UBSWAG in March 2024. Individuals had two weeks to provide feedback to Corangamite CMA. See the feedback and associated response from CCMA below.

Who	Comment	CCMA Response
<b>Brett Smith on behalf of the Geelong Field Naturalist Club</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1: table 1 p4 - There seems to be little explanation why the priorities of the previous year have been so extensively reduced or in fact, dropped altogether. They included Upper Barwon west branch low flows of 3 to 30ML/day between December–May, 5 x 20-30 ML/day freshes in the Upper Barwon west branch over 6 days between December-May; and Maintain Upper Barwon west branch low flow of 20-30ML/day between June-November. It seems these have been significantly reduced to just West branch low flows 3-15ML/day throughout the year. On page 25 it states "In this proposal, the expected availability of water for the environment is less than previous years." Is this sufficient explanation?</li> </ul>	<p>Yes, the magnitude of the priority watering actions for the west branch have been reduced since last year's Seasonal Watering Proposal. Agreed, the explanation is not sufficient and will be expanded in the "scope of environmental watering" and "scenario planning" section of the final proposal.</p> <p>The Upper Barwon River Environmental Entitlement was established in 2018. Every year since the entitlement was established, we capture new information about the east and west branch of the upper Barwon. Since the last Seasonal Watering Proposal was written we've learnt more about where the water flows once it leaves the West Barwon Reservoir, and the impact that constrictions and break outs from the main river channel are having on our ability to deliver environmental water. In the short term, we adjust the watering actions accordingly to reduce the risk of inundating private land. This is one of the reasons why we submit a new proposal every year, because it gives us the ability to be adaptive in how we manage the entitlement.</p> <p>In the long term we are working towards addressing constrictions and break outs through activities happening as part of the Barwon Flagship Project. These activities include working with landholders to remove weed constrictions, erosion mitigation and</p>

		<p>bank stabilization, fencing and revegetation. Corangamite CMA is also in the process of gathering more data on the channel capacity in different sections of the river so we can identify what parcels of land are most vulnerable when the low flow recommendations are delivered (30ML/day in the west). This data will help us to generate flood maps at different flow rates and identify constrictions that should be prioritized to enable the provision of environmental water to the east and west and downstream reaches. These maps will be an important engagement tool when working with landholders to deliver higher flows to the east and west branch of the upper Barwon.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2: table 2 p10 - states "The upper Barwon River predominantly flows through private property which is sometimes used for farming purposes." I would have thought that the land is often or mostly used for farming purposes , not just sometimes.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree with this feedback. Corangamite CMA will update the text to "mostly used for farming purposes".</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3: table 5 p28 - states "With a low flow of 30ML/day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an adequate depth of permanent water in the channel to promote the recruitment of aquatic and streamside plants and to limit the encroachment of terrestrial species</li> <li>• Provide minimum velocity to mix and flush pools". Presumably given that there is no intention of providing more than 3-15ML/day in the west branch then these Expected Watering Effects will not be met and therefore most of the Environmental Objectives will not be achieved.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Thanks for this feedback. This was missed when we made changes to the magnitude of the watering action.</p> <p>The Upper Barwon, Yarrowee and Leigh Rivers FLOWS study provides recommendations for the timing, volume and duration of flows in order to achieve expected watering effects and environmental objectives. Due to weed constrictions, breakouts and the risk of inundating private land, the magnitude of flows that the FLOWS study recommends cannot be achieved at this point in time. You raise an issue that Corangamite CMA have also been discussing and that is, if the magnitude of flows is lower than what is recommended in the FLOWS study, what expected watering effects and environmental objectives are we actually able to achieve.</p>

		In the short term, Corangamite CMA will edit the expected watering effects and environmental objectives to be more conservative in what can be achieved with a lower magnitude watering action.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>p17 states " The 2024-25 proposed watering actions have not changed from those that appear in the 2023-24 Seasonal Watering Plan." Is this accurate given that there is a change in priorities and a significant drop in amounts of flow or is it just a generalisation to mean releases are to the east and west branches?</li> </ul>	Corangamite CMA failed to update this sentence when changes were made to watering actions. It has been deleted and has been replaced with a sentence that reads "The 2024-25 proposed watering actions have changed from those that appear in the 2023-24 Seasonal Watering Plan." This will be followed by an explanation about why the watering actions have been changed.
	<p>Noting the previous advice in your email of 25 Jan 2024 that the report will not contain reference to confounding factors and knowledge gaps, where will these relevant environmental details be conveyed in documentation? Obviously they are negative but to ignore them is not painting an accurate picture of the unmet intention of making environmental releases for the benefit of the whole Upper Barwon River, not just reaches 3 and 4. The Authority knows that the water "disappears" downstream as stated in last year's report "The river appears to have been disappearing to ground in the mid-Barwon between Winchelsea and Inverleigh gauges; the cause is unknown, but it is likely the water is going underground." I suggest that the confounding factors and knowledge gaps as pointed out last year should be addressed</p>	<p>Thanks for this feedback. The revised Seasonal Watering Proposal Guidelines prepared by the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEHW) aim for a more streamlined approach to improve consistency between proposals and the Seasonal Watering Plan, reduce resourcing effort, and continue to meet legislative requirements.</p> <p>Since receiving your feedback, Corangamite CMA has revisited the scenario planning narrative in the Seasonal Watering Proposal and have made sure that any delivery constraints, confounding factors or knowledge gaps that have a material effect on the watering actions are described. As recommended by the VEWH, we have also attached an updated version of the delivery constraints, confounding factors and knowledge gaps chapters of the previous proposal.</p> <p>Being the first year using the revised guidelines, Corangamite CMA will spend some time at the end of the water year reflecting on how the proposal engagement process went and how we might continue to document and address delivery constraints, confounding factors as part of the delivery of the Upper Barwon River Environmental Entitlement.</p>

	and considered to be essential to the watering actions.	
--	---	--

*healthy and productive lands and waters  
cared for by thriving communities*

