

The River Murray System has seen significant changes over the past 10 – 20 years in both supply and demand for water. Collectively, these changes are making it increasingly difficult to move water to where and when it is needed. This is increasing the risk of a shortfall occurring.

How do I know when a shortfall is likely to occur?

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority includes information about the current risk of a shortfall in the Murray in its [River Murray System Annual Operating Outlook](#) and in its [River Murray Weekly Report](#).

How will I know when a shortfall occurs?

If a shortfall event occurs in your reach of the river, then your water corporation – either Lower Murray Water or Goulburn-Murray Water – will contact you to inform you about requirements to temporarily ration your water use.

Both water corporations are committed to providing you with the necessary information to help you minimise the impact of a shortfall to your business, and to remain compliant with water use restrictions during a shortfall event.

It is your responsibility to ensure your water corporation has up-to-date contact details so it can contact you during a shortfall event.

Will I be told if I need to restrict my water use?

Yes. If you need to be temporarily rationed, then the volume of water available to you during the period of rationing will be limited to a proportion of your **extraction share** (if you are a river diverter) or **delivery share** (if you are a district user). Your water corporation will inform you of the volume of water you can use.

Once you have been notified, it is your responsibility to limit your water use to the restricted volume for the specified period. The following page provides further details about how the volume of water available to you in a shortfall is determined.

How long will I need to restrict my water use for?

It depends how long the shortfall is expected to last for – it could last just a few days or up to several weeks. Your water corporation will advise you of the expected length of the shortfall, how long rationing will apply for, and when the event has concluded.

What is extraction share?

Extraction share is a condition on a works licence (the licence to operate a pump) that determines the rights of the licence holder to take a share of the water that can be delivered during a shortfall. In the event of a shortfall, water corporations can require works licence holders in the affected reach to restrict their use to a specified proportion of their extraction share, for a specified period of time. In effect, an extraction share provides river diverters with a share of what can be delivered in a shortfall.

What is delivery share?

A delivery share is an entitlement to have water delivered to land in an irrigation district. It gives access to a share of the available capacity in the channel or piped network that supplies water to the holder's property. During a shortfall, a delivery share provides the holder with a share of what can be delivered from the channel.

How do I know what volume of water I can take in a shortfall?

If you are a river diverter:

During a shortfall you will get a share of the available water in proportion to your **extraction share**. Your water corporation will inform you of the volume you have available, and over what period of time. For example, your water corporation may advise that your take over the next four days is limited to 4 ML.

Your extraction share is a condition on your works licence (or licence to operate a pump). See the example below of a works licence with a 2 ML/day extraction share condition. This condition has been on your licence since unbundling in 2007, or when your licence was granted, if thereafter.

Rosters and restrictions

- Water may only be taken through the works referred to in the works licence if, in a period of rationing or other restriction, it is taken in accordance with the share of the flow represented by the specified extraction share of 2 ML/day.

This licence has an extraction share of 2 ML per day. If, for example, there is a total extraction share in this reach of 2,000 ML/day this licence holder gets a 0.1% share of the water available during a shortfall ($2 \div 2,000$). If, in a shortfall, the water available in the reach is 1,000 ML per day, then the volume available to this licence holder will be 1 ML per day ($0.1\% \times 1,000$ ML). If the shortfall restriction applied for four days, this would mean 4 ML would be available to the works licence holder over that period.

To check your extraction share you can access a copy of record for your works licence for a fee of \$15 from the [Victorian Water Register](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-water-register) website. If you do not know your entitlement number, you should contact your water corporation. Some water corporations also make your extraction share available on your water portal.

If you are a district user:

During a shortfall you will get a share of the available water in proportion to your **delivery share**. Your water corporation will inform you of the volume you have available, and over what period of time. For example, your water corporation may advise that your take over the next four days is limited to 3.2 ML.

Your delivery share can be found on your fixed charges account, and on the front page of your delivery share copy of record. See the example below of a district user with a delivery share of 1 ML/day.

Delivery share description

Status: Active

Total delivery share: 1 ML/day

Annual delivery allowance: 180 ML

Water authority: Goulburn-Murray Water

This district user has a delivery share of 1 ML per day. If, for example, there is total delivery share in this district of 500 ML/day, this licence holder gets a 0.2% share of the water available during a shortfall ($1 \div 500$). If, for example, the water available to this district during a shortfall is 400 ML/day, then the volume available to this delivery share holder will be 0.8 ML per day ($0.2\% \times 400$ ML). If the shortfall restriction applied for four days, this would mean 3.2 ML would be available to this delivery share holder over that period.

To check your delivery share you can access a copy of record for a fee of \$15 from the [Victorian Water Register](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-water-register) website. If you do not know your entitlement number, you should contact your water corporation. Your delivery share can also be found on your fixed charges account, and for some water corporations on the ordering screen of your water portal.



Boat on the River Murray upstream of Mildura. Credit: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

What can I do to help prepare for shortfall risks?

It is important you plan for a shortfall and help minimise impacts to your property. Things you can do to ensure you're prepared for a shortfall include:

- Know your delivery share or extraction share, and understand how they are used if rationing is required.
- Monitor shortfall risk through [MDBA's Weekly Reports](#).
- Consider your on-farm storage levels during higher risk periods.
- Plan for how you might respond to various levels of shortfall. Consider whether you will cut supply to a part of your property (i.e. patches with lower yield potential), ration your supply across your property, or bring harvest forward if applicable. Agriculture Victoria has a series of [factsheets](#) on irrigating with less water. These can provide ideas on how you could manage your property during a shortfall.
- When developing or redeveloping orchards, be aware of your [delivery risks](#).

Will water corporations be monitoring usage during a shortfall?

Yes. Water corporations will use telemetry to monitor usage remotely during a shortfall. In areas where there is limited telemetry, water corporations will increase the frequency of manual meter reads. This means even small volumes of water use can be identified, enabling swift compliance action by water corporations. During a shortfall, it is your responsibility to closely monitor your use against your daily rationed volume.

What will happen to water users who take more than permitted during a shortfall?

Water users are expected to be able to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of the works licence and delivery share.

The Victorian Government and water corporations take a zero-tolerance approach to unauthorised take. Water corporations will carry out any necessary compliance and enforcement activities. During a shortfall event, this

may involve phone calls, site visits and advisory or official warnings. After an event, this may include issuing a penalty infringement notice, prosecution, or suspension or cancellation of a works licence.

If you are in doubt, please contact your water corporation:

- **Goulburn-Murray Water** on 1800 013 357 or compliance@gmwater.com.au
- **Lower Murray Water** on 1800 808 830 or 03 5051 3400 or contactus@lmw.vic.gov.au

If you see something, say something. If you wish to report known or suspected breaches of compliance, please contact your water corporation. GMW customers can complete an [online report form](#) and find more information via this [fact sheet](#). You can request to report anonymously.

Where can I find more information?

More information on preparing, understanding and managing shortfalls in the River Murray System can be found at the following links:

- [Victorian Water Register website](#)
- [Goulburn-Murray Water's website](#)
- [Lower Murray Water's website](#)
- [Managing delivery risks in the River Murray fact sheet](#)
- [Shortfalls in the Victorian Murray below Barmah fact sheet](#)
- [Agriculture Victoria fact sheets on managing with less water](#)
- [MDBA Weekly Reports](#)

More information on your water corporations' approach to compliance can be viewed on their website:

[Goulburn-Murray Water's website – compliance](#)

[Lower Murray Water's website – compliance](#)

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