



**GWYDIR
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTINGENCY ALLOWANCE
OPERATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Managing Environmental Water

STATE OF THE WETLANDS REPORT – November 2014

This State of the Wetlands (SoW) Report is intended to provide the Landholders in the Mallowa and Gwydir Watercourses, ECAOAC members and interested parties with the following:

1. **Soil Moisture, Vegetation and Surface Water** as measures of current wetlands state;
2. Advice on the likelihood of an Environmental Water Delivery;
3. Other local matters eg. cropping state and local risks;
4. Current rainfall predictions and most recent Southern Oscillation Index chart.

1. State of the Wetlands

Wetland Measure	Present state is good and likely to remain so for at least 3 months	Present state is moderate and likely to decline over the next 3 months	State is poor and in decline or in period of natural drying / dormancy
	Description		Colour Code
Soil Moisture	<p>Since September report, daily temperatures have quickly moved into the high 30s and more recently 40 + Degrees.</p> <p>In the upper wetlands areas, where water was delivered prior the early October (start to the harvest), there is good soil moisture store across much of this area. (Upper Gingham and eastern Lower Gwydir Wetlands areas).</p> <p>The Mallowa Watercourse has only received a small volume prior to harvest, but in these areas, soil moisture store is retained.</p> <p>Soil moisture store will now diminish quickly, given nil rainfall and high daily temps that continue as the season unfolds.</p>		
Vegetation	<p>The addition of water at the start of the season, has supported vegetation growth and development well in the eastern areas. Continued support via water flows is now required until the end of season (March/April 2015). The continued delivery of water across the Lower Gwydir Nature Reserve is required to support the restoration strategy, following extensive fire last season across the entire wetlands area. This strategy has been endorsed by ECA committee.</p>		
Surface Water'	<p>Upper Gingham Wetlands (Tillaloo/Bunnor) and eastern areas in the Lower Gwydir (Old Dromana Ramsar parcel are retaining some water. Limited surface water elsewhere. Gingham & Boyanga waterhole dropping quickly. Little Lagoon &, Racecourse Lg. dry on Glendarra. Wondoona WH small volume and dropping. Mallowa Crk generally dry, although eastern areas retaining some water. Eastern Mallowa farm dams mostly full.</p>		

2. Environmental Water Delivery Advice

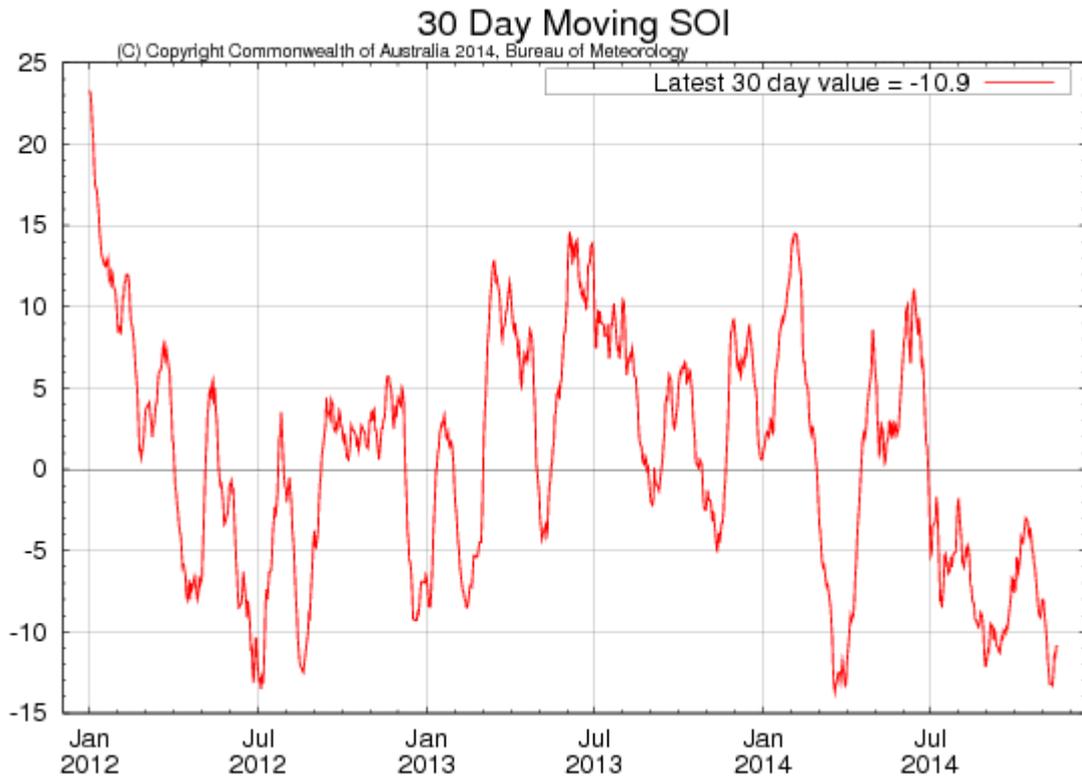
<p>Environmental Deliveries are planned to restart on or before end of 3rd week or early 4th Week in November 2014.</p> <p>Mallowa E. flows are likely to commence later in the season, in line with planned bulk irrigation deliveries into the Mehi River system.</p>	<p>Now that the local harvest is complete in all areas close to the wetlands and watercourse channels, environmental water deliveries will recommence soon.</p> <p>The approved approach, in consultation with ECA Members and local landholders is to:</p> <p>GINGHAM AND LOWER GWYDIR WETLANDS <i>Support where possible a 'whole of season' watering goal to achieve at least five to six months of continuous wetland inundation across a large portion of the remaining Gingham and Lower Gwydir Wetland areas.</i></p> <p>Therefore until further notice, environmental flows will be delivered into the Lower Gwydir at a maximum of 250 ML per day, at the Millewa gauge.</p> <p>Flows into the Gingham Watercourse will begin at 250 ML per day at the Teralba gauge, for an initial period of 5 days then increase to a maximum of 450 ML per day for 3 days.</p> <p>It is hoped that by repeating this pulsing of flows (250/450 ML) into the Gingham Watercourse that the wetlands will inundate further and more quickly over the remaining season. This is needed to achieve the desire above outcome by end of season and to catchup from the harvest, when flows were greatly reduced for that period.</p> <p>NSW OEH will also determine, in consult with State Water, how best to manage the delivery of ordered water in situations when larger natural flows from storm events etc coincide in the system.</p> <p>Any queries concerning these planned flows please contact myself or Jane in the Moree office on 6751 2713.</p>
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3. Other Local Matters

<p>Environmental water deliveries</p>	<p>S&D pipeline works is currently underway in the Mallowa Watercourse. As a result, environmental deliveries will need to work around the requirements of this project and the bulk deliveries planned for later in the season (Dec/Jan).</p>
<p>Gwydir Wetland Nature Reserve (trial opening)</p>	<p>The NPWS Gwydir Wetlands (SCA) reserve @ Waterbird Lagoon, will remain open to the public until the end of November 2014. It is hoped that this site will reopen in 2015, for public viewing. More information will be sent out to all as soon as more is known. Stay tuned.</p>
<p>Long Term Intervention Monitoring (LTIM) project</p>	<p>The Ecological/ University (UNE) team will be out in the wetlands monitoring a number of indicators for this project over summer. Vegetation diversity monitoring in the Gwydir and Gingham wetlands is being undertaken in the first week of November, with Bird surveys planned in conjunction with OEH staff in the first week in December. Microcrustacean and water quality monitoring is planned for mid-December in both the channels of the lower Gwydir system and the wetlands, with monthly sampling trips to follow while environmental flows are delivered. Fish sampling will take place in March/April next year.</p> <p>Any queries or concerns that you might have please contact: Dr. Mark Southwell - Senior River Scientist on (02) 8081 2688.</p>

4. Current Climatic Information - Southern Oscillation Index:

The Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) continued to drop during the past fortnight before rising slightly after reaching -13.3. The latest 30-day SOI value to 16 November is -10.9. Sustained positive values of the SOI above +8 may indicate a La Niña event, while sustained negative values below -8 may indicate an El Niño event. Values of between about +8 and -8 generally indicate neutral conditions.



<p>Colonial or Migratory Water Birds</p>	<p>Many generalist waterbirds across the wetland areas, particularly in remnant water-bodies including plumed whistling ducks and native hens.</p> <p>Flocks of Glossy Ibis and Egrets throughout the wetted areas in both Lower Gwydir and Gingham.</p> <p>Brolga are now a common site both in the wetlands and adjoining farming areas.</p>
<p>Any confirmed nesting or preparing to nest</p>	<p>Nil Colonial Waterbirds nesting at this stage</p>

Any queries concerning the material provided pls. contact

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