

Gunbower Forest lower floodplain

Water for the Environment

Winter/spring 2022



Fact Sheet

As part of an ongoing program to protect and enhance Gunbower Forest now and for future generations, water for the environment will begin to flow onto the lower floodplain wetlands from late May, with the Hipwell Road regulator operating later in June.

As an internationally important wetland, Gunbower Forest includes one of the most significant remaining areas of river red gum forest in Australia. It is a special place for locals, Traditional Owners and visitors and valued for its recreational, social, cultural and environmental benefits.



Aquatic vegetation, important for fish and birds, needs regular water to thrive (Reedy Lagoon, December 2021)

Despite recent wet conditions, there are areas of the Gunbower Forest floodplain that haven't had any water on them for almost four years.

Iconic stands of river red gum are struggling, and the aquatic understorey which makes Gunbower so unique lies dormant, waiting for the next flood.

Water for the environment delivery

The lower floodplain is thirsty and it's time to give it a drink.

The forest no longer floods as often or for as long as it used to. For example, without Murray River regulation, rainfall and streamflow records indicate that water would have flowed onto the floodplain

from July 2021 to January this year. Regular and long periods of flooding, as often as 7 years in every ten, is vital for the health of the forest's trees, wetlands, and wildlife.

Delivering water for the environment enables parts of the forest that depend on flooding to receive the right amount of water at the right time.

Volume and duration

Up to 74 GL will target the full environmental water footprint, which is about 4,500 hectares, or 23 per cent, of Gunbower Forest.

Water will continue to be released through the channel, and through smaller regulators on the lower Gunbower Creek, until early November. If needed, much smaller volumes of water may be delivered to specific wetlands to support waterbird breeding and other ecological values. Water levels across the forest will gradually recede over late spring and summer.

About 40 per cent of the water put on the floodplain is expected to flow back out to the Murray River, taking with it some of the best fish food in the Basin.

Refer to the map to see expected watering inundation (Figure 1).

Forest access during watering

There are plenty of areas to access the forest during the watering however some tracks will be closed for safety reasons. The tracks will be monitored during the watering.

Volunteers at the Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre at Cohuna will know about track closures and spots to visit during the watering so forest users can plan their trip as early as possible. Or you can visit:

- DELWP: www.facebook.com/DELWPLoddonMallee or phone 136 186.
- Parks Victoria: www.parks.vic.gov.au or call 13 19 63 for information on Gunbower National Park.
- Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre: 90 King George Street, Cohuna, (03) 5456 2047

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Figure 1. Map of potential watering inundation and possible track closures