

Lower Ovens GMA

The Lower Ovens Groundwater Management Area (GMA) covers the Ovens Catchment downstream of Myrtleford. This includes the Buffalo and King Rivers, and extends north along the floodplain to the River Murray.

Groundwater resources in the Lower Ovens GMA are managed under a local management plan (the Plan) approved by Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) in 2012.

Allocations

Groundwater levels in the Lower Ovens GMA are managed through allocations. In 2015/16 allocations were 100% for deep lead groundwater users in both the Murray Zone and Ovens Plain Zone as three-year rolling average groundwater recovery levels were well above trigger levels (Figure 1, Figure 2).

Based on the three-year rolling average of recovery levels, allocations for the 2016/17 season will be 100% for all zones.

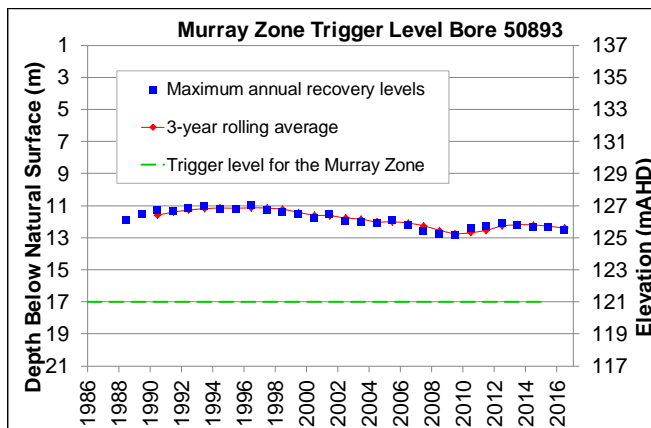


Figure 1 Murray Zone – Three-year rolling average of recovery level compared with trigger level

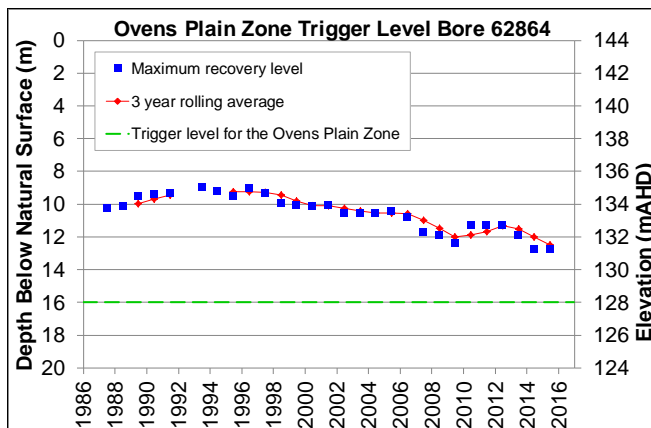


Figure 2 Ovens Plain Zone – Three-year rolling average of recovery level compared with trigger level

Groundwater entitlement and use

Metered use in the Lower Ovens GMA in 2015/16 was above the historical average and similar to the previous three years. The total metered use across all zones was 5,494.3 ML, or 28% of licensed entitlement (Table 1, Figure 3). Use was up from 2014/15 when total metered use across all zones was 24% of entitlement

Table 1 Licensed groundwater entitlement and use in the Lower Ovens GMA in 2015/16

Management zone	Entitlement (ML/yr)	Use (ML)
Ovens Plain	3,114.0	1,308.7
Mid Ovens	11,836.4	3,400.5
Bedrock	1,322.6	329.6
Murray	3,632.0	455.5
Total	19,905.0	5,494.3

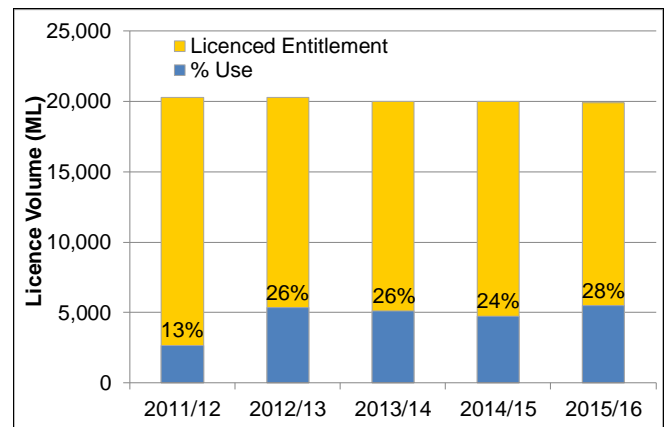


Figure 3 Metered groundwater use in the Lower Ovens GMA

Licence holders are reminded not to extract more than their licence volume without written approval from GMW.

Licence holders seeking to trade groundwater entitlement should visit Watermatch – an online trading forum where people can advertise – at www.watermatch.com.au.

Groundwater trading

Customers may transfer entitlement on a permanent or temporary basis in the Lower Ovens GMA.

Table 2 Temporary groundwater transfers in the Lower Ovens GMA

Management zone	Temporary transfer from (ML/yr)	Temporary transfer to (ML/yr)
Ovens Plain	0	256
Mid Ovens	301	45
Bedrock	0	20
Murray	5	5
Total	306	326

The 2015/16 season saw a decrease in the volume of licence entitlement transferred (Table 2), with 326 ML/yr temporarily transferred compared to 542 ML/yr in 2014/15. One 20 ML/yr temporary transfer occurred from the Upper Ovens GMA to the Lower Ovens GMA Bedrock Zone.

There was one 5 ML/yr permanent transfer in 2015/16 from the Mid Ovens Zone to the Ovens Plain Zone, compared to 60 ML in 2014/15.

The volumes of temporary licence transfers into the Ovens Plain Zone show increased use within the Ovens Plain Zone deep lead which was an aim of the Plan.

Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels are monitored in 67 State observation bores within the Lower Ovens GMA.

Groundwater levels during 2015/16 in the Murray Zone remained relatively steady (Figure 4). Minor seasonal fluctuations in groundwater levels are seen in this bore due to seasonal climatic variations.

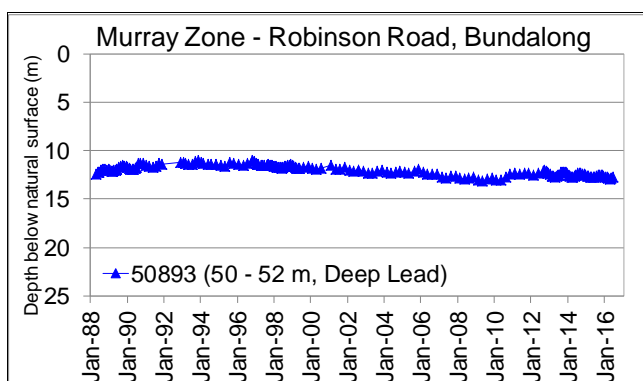


Figure 4 Murray Zone trigger level bore

Groundwater levels in the Ovens Plain Zone continued a slow decline with reduced rainfall in recent years (Figure 5). The larger seasonal variation in the Ovens

Plain Zone trigger level bore is likely due to licenced extraction within the deep lead aquifer.

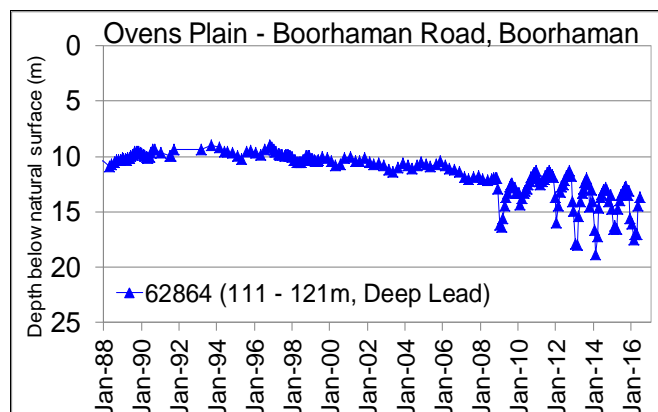


Figure 5 Ovens Plain Zone trigger level bore

The groundwater response in the Mid Ovens Zone is similar to the Ovens Plain Zone, with a seasonal drawdown caused by rainfall and groundwater use (Figure 6). Groundwater levels show a gradual decline since the bore was drilled in 2011.

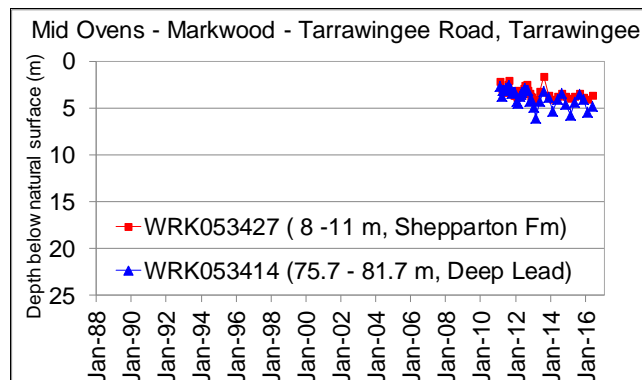


Figure 6 Mid Ovens Zone nested bore site

Future Plan amendments

The Plan has been in place since 2012. Since implementation, opportunities for improvement to the Plan have been identified. These include:

1. Extending the boundary to incorporate the area to the north-east of the Lower Ovens GMA, and the Barnawartha GMA; and
2. Considering the introduction of carryover.

GMW will consult with groundwater users on proposed amendments.

Where can I get more information?

You can download a copy of the Lower Ovens Groundwater Management Area Local Management Plan from the GMW website www.gmwater.com.au or call GMW on 1800 013 357 for any further information.