

Lower Ovens GMA

The Lower Ovens Groundwater Management Area (the GMA) covers the Ovens River 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 GMA are managed by the potential to restrict water extraction through seasonal allocations of less than 100% of licence volume. Restrictions were not applied in 2016/17 as the three-year rolling average groundwater recovery levels were above trigger levels (Figure 1, Figure 2). The 2017/18 seasonal allocation is 100% for all zones.

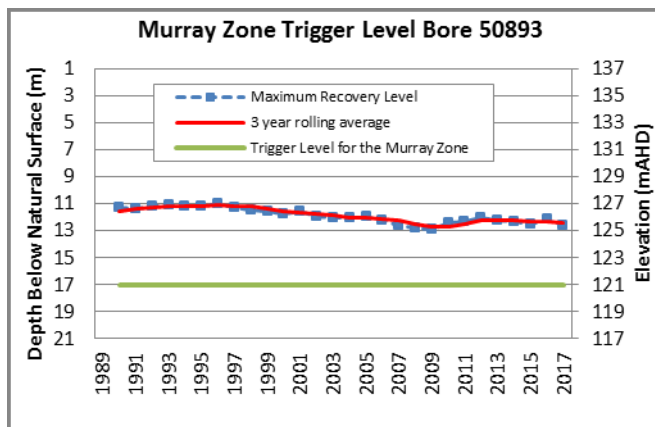


Figure 1 Murray Zone – Three-year rolling average of recovery level compared with trigger level

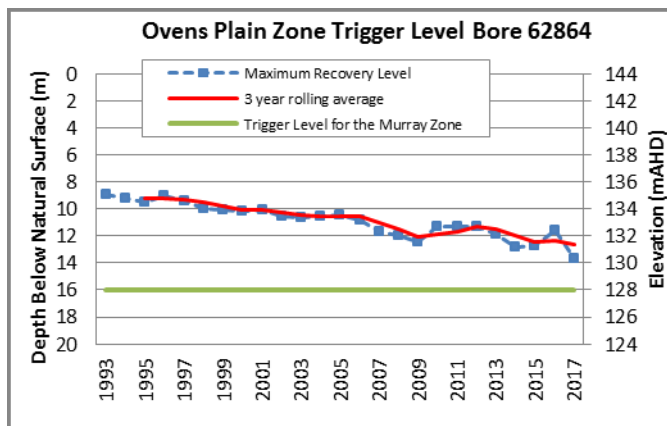


Figure 2 Ovens Plain Zone – Three-year rolling average of recovery level compared with trigger level

Groundwater volume and use

Metered use in the Lower Ovens GMA in 2016/17 was above the historical average and similar to the

previous three years. The total metered use across all zones was 5,838.7 ML, or 29% of licensed volume (Table 1, Figure 3). Use was up from 2015/16 when total metered use across all zones was 28% of volume.

Table 1 Licensed groundwater volume and use in the Lower Ovens GMA in 2016/17

Management zone	Volume (ML/yr)	Use (ML)
Ovens Plain	3,184	1,429.9
Mid Ovens	11,690.4	2,955.5
Bedrock	1,398.6	281.2
Murray	3,632	1,172.1
Total	19,905	5,838.7

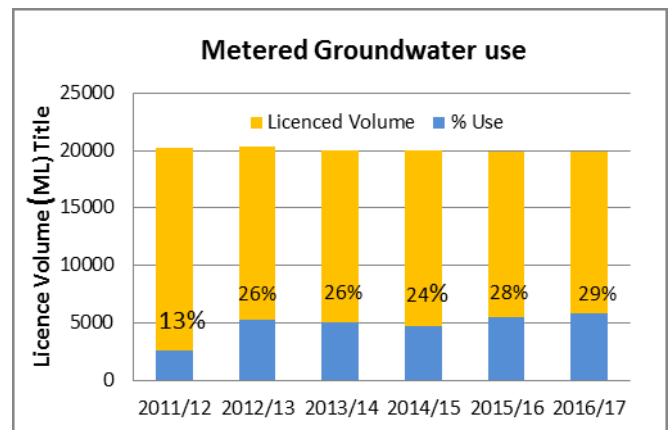


Figure 3 Metered groundwater use in the Lower Ovens GMA

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

Groundwater trading

Licence Holders may transfer licensed volume on a permanent or temporary basis in the GMA.

Table 2 Temporary groundwater transfers in the Lower Ovens GMA in 2016/17

Management zone	Temporary transfer from (ML/yr)	Temporary transfer to (ML/yr)
Ovens Plain	0	250
Mid Ovens	253	3
Bedrock	0	25
Murray	35	35
Total	288	313

The 2016/17 season saw a decrease in the volume of licence volume transferred (Table 2), with 313 ML/yr temporarily transferred compared to 326 ML/yr in 2015/16. There was one temporary transfer of 25 ML from the Upper Ovens Management Zone 1 (1085) into the Lower Ovens Bedrock zone.

Table 3 Permanent groundwater transfers in the Lower Ovens GMA in 2016/17

Management zone	Permanent transfer from (ML/yr)	Permanent transfer to (ML/yr)
Ovens Plain	0	70
Mid Ovens	302	321
Bedrock	0	10
Murray	19	19
Total	321	420

The 2016/2017 season saw an increase in the volume of licence volume transferred (Table 3), into the Ovens Plains Zone with 70 ML/year permanently transferred compared to 5 ML/yr in 2015/16.

Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels are monitored in 61 State observation bores within the Lower Ovens GMA.

Groundwater levels during 2016/17 in the Murray Zone remained relatively steady (Figure 5). Minor seasonal fluctuations in groundwater levels are seen in this bore due to seasonal climatic variations.

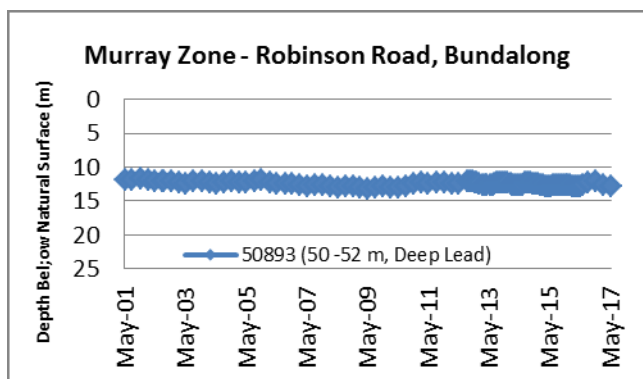


Figure 5 Murray Zone trigger level bore

Groundwater levels in the Ovens Plain Zone have increased over the past year with increased rainfall (Figure 6). The larger seasonal variation in the Ovens Plain Zone trigger level bore is likely due to licenced extraction within the deep lead aquifer.

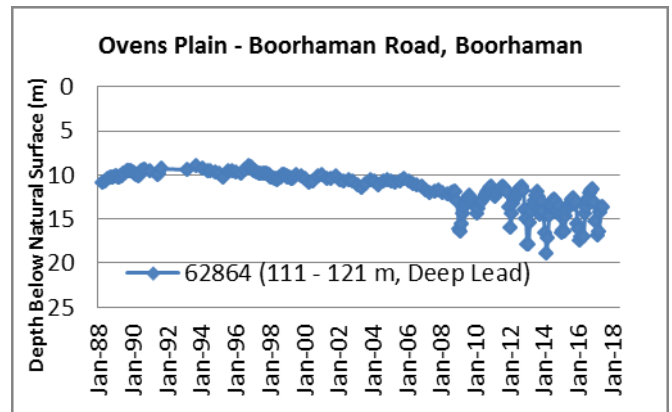


Figure 6 Ovens Plain Zone trigger level bore

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 7). Groundwater levels show an increase over the last year which can be attributed to increased rainfall for the 2016/2017 season.

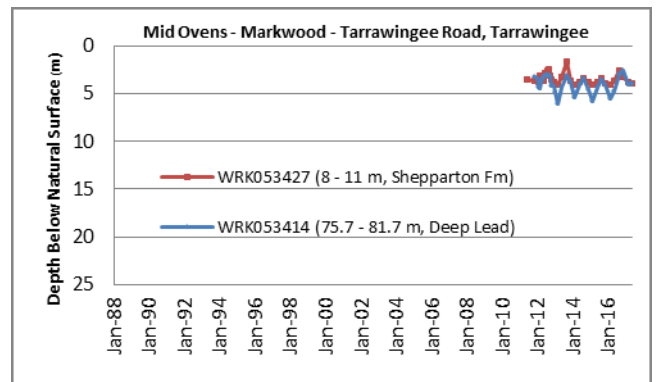


Figure 7 Mid Ovens Zone nested bore site

Future Plan amendments

The Plan has been in place since 2012 and will be reviewed in 2017/18.

GMW will consult with groundwater users on proposed amendments which will likely include changes to the plan boundaries and opportunities for carryover of unused licence volume.

Looking to buy or sell licensed volume?

Watermatch is an online forum where licence holders can advertise their interest to buy or sell licensed volume; either groundwater or unregulated surface water.

Visit www.watermatch.com.au

Where can I get more information?

You can download a copy of the Lower Ovens GMA Local Management Plan from the GMW website www.gmwater.com.au or call GMW on 1800 013 357.