Stuart Murray Canal Upgrade

Temporary lowering of Lake Nagambie

What is the Stuart Murray Canal upgrade?

Between May and August 2016, we are upgrading the Stuart Murray Canal near Nagambie.

The $1.9 million project, funded by GMW, will strengthen the canal’s drainage subway and increase the main offtake structure’s stability; ensuring the long term reliable and safe supply of water to our customers.

The upgrade includes:

- Replacing a 100-year-old drainage subway with one that meets modern design standards, is safer and more reliable.
- Improving the canal’s main offtake and decommissioning its vertical drive gates to better protect the water stored in the Goulburn Weir pool and Lake Nagambie.
- Maintenance on eight bridges crossing the canal to increase safety and stability.

To maximise our ability to capture water during the upgrade, we plan to temporarily lower the water level in Lake Nagambie and the Goulburn Weir pool by up to one metre.

The water level will return to normal once the upgrade works are complete.

Will the Stuart Murray Canal be dewatered?

Yes, to safely replace the subway, improve the offtake structure and decommission the vertical drive gates the water must be removed from the canal.

We regularly drain the canal for maintenance works outside the irrigation season.

Why will the water level in Lake Nagambie be impacted?

We intend to temporarily lower the water level in Lake Nagambie and the Goulburn Weir pool to maximise our ability to capture water during the Stuart Murray Canal upgrade.

The water level will return to normal once the upgrade is complete.

Will Lake Nagambie still be accessible to boats?

The lowering of Lake Nagambie may result in some areas of the lake being temporarily unnavigable to boat traffic.

Boat ramps in shallower areas of the lake may become temporarily inaccessible.

While the works period is traditionally a quiet time for recreational anglers, it is during the Murray Spiny Crayfish season that opens on 1 June 2016 and runs until the end of August.

We are working closely with Fisheries Victoria, Victorian Recreational Fishing and local angling clubs to inform recreational users about the potential changes to lake access and there is signage in place at the main boat ramps.

Will the Goulburn Weir still be accessible?

Yes, the Goulburn Weir structure and recreational area will remain open and accessible throughout the upgrade.

For safety reasons, the canal’s offtake structure, walkover and adjoining carpark will be closed from 1 May until 1 August 2016.

What about businesses that operate on and around Lake Nagambie?

We have engaged directly with the businesses operating on and around the lake and have specifically chosen the winter period to undertake the works so as to minimise impact.
What is the potential for erosion and bank slumping?

As the water level in the Lake Nagambie and the Goulburn Weir pool reduces, it may expose an area of foreshore. Heavy rainfall could cause water to run over the exposed dirt and into the lake, potentially causing erosion.

It would require significant rainfall for this to occur. The Bureau of Meteorology is currently only forecasting rainfall between 50mm (93 per cent chance) and 150mm (17 per cent chance) in the region from April to June 2016.

We will monitor bank condition throughout the upgrade and will implement management processes if there are signs of environmental impacts, bank slumping or decreased water quality.

What will the impact be on aquatic vegetation and fish health?

In scoping and developing the Stuart Murray Canal upgrade, we have engaged with Fisheries Victoria and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority to minimise any impact on aquatic vegetation and animals.

Lowering the lake may result in aquatic animals, including fish and the Murray Spiny Freshwater Crayfish, entering smaller areas where they can be exposed to higher recreational fishing exploitation, natural predation and competition for resources.

Fisheries officers will be on hand during the season to carry out inspections and ensure bag limits are strictly adhered to.

Further, research indicates that lowering the lake may assist to control invasive aquatic weeds that don’t tolerate exposure to air.

We will closely monitor the lake during the works and will implement management processes to address environmental impacts.

Will the lowering of Lake Nagambie impact the Tahbilk Lagoon and the Tandanus Catfish?

The wetlands and lagoon at Tahbilk support a rich biodiversity, including the Freshwater Catfish or Tandanus Tandanus, which is now rare in many areas.

In the interest of protecting the Freshwater Catfish, we will isolate the lagoon with drop bars to ensure the lowering of the lake doesn’t impact the lagoon’s water level.

Will there be any impact on the Murray Spiny Freshwater Crayfish?

The temporary lowering of the lake takes place during the Murray Spiny Freshwater Crayfish season that opens on 1 July 2016 and runs to the end of August.

Temporarily lowering the lake may result in the crayfish, along with other aquatic animals, moving to smaller areas.

Fisheries Victoria enforces a strict bag limit on the Murray Spiny Freshwater Crayfish and Fisheries officers will be on hand during the season to carry out inspections.

More information

For more information about the Stuart Murray Canal upgrade:
- phone our Customer Service Centre on 1800 013 357
- email us at reception@gmwater.com.au