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Roadmap for water for the environment

A roadmap for delivering water for the environment to rivers and wetlands across Victoria for the next 12 months has been released by the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH).

The Seasonal Watering Plan 2019-20 sets out where and when water for the environment could be delivered under different climate scenarios – from drought to dry, and average to wet.

Specific water deliveries for individual rivers and wetlands will be driven by seasonal conditions and water availability across the Gippsland, Central, Northern and Western regions of Victoria.

In releasing the Seasonal Watering Plan, VEWH Co-CEO Beth Ashworth said water managers were expecting a dry start to 2019-20.

“We saw very dry conditions and low flows into major water storages across most of the state in 2018-19, and at this stage that’s predicted to continue,” Ms Ashworth said.

Ms Ashworth said water management tools like carryover helped water entitlement holders, including the VEWH, manage water in dry times, particularly in the north and west of the state.

“Carrying over some water from the previous year means we can ensure reliable supply for critical environmental needs in the early parts of the year, giving the rivers and wetlands a much-needed drink in spring even if there are low water allocations,” Ms Ashworth said.

“Spring is a very important time for plants and animals, because it is when they are at their most active – breeding, feeding and growing. Even when conditions are dry, watering for the environment is very important to provide the flows needed to maintain our native fish and bird populations and help them survive.”

The VEWH Seasonal Watering Plan 2019-20 has been developed with waterway managers across the state, together with local communities and increasingly, input from Traditional Owners.

“The Seasonal Watering Plan is based on good science, strong local knowledge and implemented with the primary aim of optimising environmental outcomes across the state,” Ms Ashworth said.

“The flow on benefits to communities from healthy environments are enormous, including for recreation, tourism and local connections with waterways.”

“There have been fantastic contributions from the community, particularly Traditional Owners, to this year’s environmental flow planning for waterways across Victoria, which has significantly enriched our appreciation for the value of these sites and the outcomes we’re seeking to achieve.”

The Seasonal Watering Plan 2019-20 can be found at <http://www.vewh.vic.gov.au/watering-program/seasonal-watering-plan>.

Media contact: Bruce Paton, Acting Team Leader Communications and Engagement
T:03 9637 8132, E: Bruce.Paton@vewh.vic.gov.au