

St George Water Supply Scheme

Information bulletin and feedback form

Reconciliations when the volume stored within Beardmore Dam is equal or less than its minimum operating volume

August 2023

Sunwater, Balonne Shire Council and Mallowa Irrigation have been working together to proactively explore ways of alleviating water supply shortages in St George during critically dry periods when Beardmore Dam is at or below its minimum operating volume (such as last occurred in December 2019).

This information bulletin sets out a proposal that has been developed by Sunwater (as the St George Water Supply Scheme Resource Operations Licence holder) and Mallowa Irrigation (as the St George Channel Scheme Distribution Operations Licence holder) as a means of being prepared should such a situation occur again in the future.

The issue

- In December 2019, Sunwater, Mallowa Irrigation and the Balonne Shire Council were alerted to a problem that occurs in the continuous sharing water account calculations when the volume of water in Beardmore Dam drops to its minimum operating volume (3,120 ML).
- Customers noticed that during December 2019, a volume for evaporation was deducted each day of December 2019 from those water accounts that had a positive account balance. At the end of that month when the dam was still below its minimum operating volume, there was a small positive reconciliation volume that was then distributed across all water accounts in proportion to their share size. This resulted in a very small volume of water being added to each water account.
- This meant that water account holders who were seeking to conserve their remaining balances during that very dry period bore all of the daily evaporation losses through December 2019, but then gained only a very small proportion of the volume that was redistributed in the end of month reconciliation. The Balonne Shire Council was particularly impacted in this way.
- At the time, customers approached Mallowa Irrigation to question whether the sharing rules might be changed during periods when Beardmore Dam was at or below its minimum operating volume to address this issue.

The proposal

- Sunwater, Mallowa Irrigation and the Balonne Shire Council have developed a proposal to change the way that a positive reconciliation balance might be applied to water accounts but only when the dam is below its minimum operating volume. The St George Water Supply Scheme Resource Operations Licence defines Beardmore Dam's minimum operating volume to be 3,120 ML.
- At such times, instead of distributing a positive reconciliation volume between all water accounts in proportion to their share size, the proposal is to distribute the volume between

just those water accounts that have a positive water account balance on the day of the reconciliation, and in proportion to their water account balance as a percentage of the total of the positive water account balances on that day.

- There would be no change in the way that a negative end of month reconciliation would be applied or to the way that evaporation is applied each day during the month.
- There would also be no change to the operation of the water account for environmental, stock and domestic water.
- There would be no increase in the total amount of water that may be taken, no change to the overall water balance for the scheme, and no impacts to downstream stock and domestic or environmental flows. The Condamine Balonne Water Plan's environmental flow objectives (EFOs) and water allocation security objectives (WASOs) would not be impacted.
- Whenever the dam is above its minimum operating volume at the time of an end of month reconciliation, the normal reconciliation rules would apply.

Changes to the St George Water Supply Scheme Operations Manual

- Changes would be required to clause 17(3) of Sunwater's Operations Manual for the St George Water Supply Scheme as follows:

(Current wording):

17(3) Where the water volume difference calculated under subsection (2) is greater than zero, the water available must be shared amongst continuous share water accounts—

- a) for water allocations— in accordance with section 9(2); and*
- b) for the environmental stock and domestic water account— in proportion to the volume of water held in the account at the time of the reconciliation.*

(Proposed wording):

17(3) Where the water volume difference calculated under subsection (2) is greater than zero, the water available must be shared amongst continuous share water accounts—

- a) If the volume of water in Beardmore Dam is greater than its minimum operating volume –*
 - i. for water allocations— in accordance with section 9(2); and*
 - ii. for the environmental stock and domestic water account— in proportion to the volume of water held in the account at the time of the reconciliation or*
- b) If the volume of water in Beardmore Dam is less than or equal to its minimum operating volume – in proportion to the volume of water held in the accounts with positive water account balances at the time of the reconciliation.*

Other considerations

- It should be noted that under Queensland's Water Act 2000, the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water has the power to declare a water supply emergency. The Minister may take such action if satisfied that there is a water supply emergency or that one is developing. A water supply emergency might be declared if extended drought conditions are presenting a demonstrably serious risk that essential water supply needs such as for domestic purposes or essential services would not be met. This means that whether or not the change as proposed above is implemented, the Minister may consider declaring a water supply emergency in response to such a risk.

Have your say

- Sunwater, Mallowa Water and the Balonne Shire Council are canvassing the views of water allocation holders and other interested stakeholders about whether the rules should be changed or not.
- If stakeholders indicate a clear preference for the change, an amended Operations Manual with the changed rules will be submitted to the department for their consideration and approval.
- Note that the current rules will continue to apply unless and until the department approves a change.
- To provide your feedback:
 - Access the online form by scanning this QR code with your smart phone camera



- **OR** print the form on page 4 of this bulletin, scan/photograph, then email to customersupport@sunwater.com.au
- Feedback (whether online or manual) must be received prior to close of business on 29 September 2023.
- If you have any questions, please contact any of the following:
 - Mallowa Irrigation customers– Rohan Thorogood:
 - email rohan.thorogood@mallawairrigation.com.au
 - mobile: 0437 626 151
 - Sunwater customers:
 - email customersupport@sunwater.com.au
 - customer call centre: 13 15 89
 - River customers – Ian Todd:
 - email ian@toddfarming.com.au
 - mobile 0417 731 533
 - Balonne Shire Council – Cr. Samantha O’Toole
 - email Samantha.OToole@balonne.qld.gov.au
 - mobile 0428 887 100

Feedback form

1. I am a (please tick one or more of the following):

- holder of a water allocation supplied by the St George Water Supply Scheme
- holder of a stock and domestic water allocation
- holder of an unsupplemented water allocation
- stakeholder with an interest in this proposal
(please specify): _____

2. My preference is to (please tick one of the following):

- change the rules as described above to apply only when Beardmore Dam is at or below its minimum operating volume
- not change the rules
- I am unsure and would like someone to contact me to discuss it further
(my phone number): _____

Signature (required): _____

Name (required): _____

Customer Number: (if applicable) _____

Date (required): _____

NOTE – while communication has been sent to all contacts on an account, only one response is per account please.