

## Reliability Offset Package and Entitlement Purchase

Discussions held over more than a year with the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and a sub-committee of Broken System irrigators continued.

Recently a proposal, by the VFF and the irrigator sub-committee, for targeted water entitlement purchase from willing sellers in selected areas, was assessed. The reason for this targeting of certain areas is that it will enable improved delivery control and reduction of water losses. In turn, this may reduce the extent of offset works.

A meeting was held at the end of January to discuss the findings of an assessment of this reliability offset proposal. Following this meeting, the VFF was informed that the proposal would require significant additional funding for which there is no identified budget. The Minister will now consider all available options and confirm a path for finalising the reliability offset package.

## Core Offset Measures

The Broken Diversion Meter program is underway with approximately 70 sites having new flow meters and remote monitoring equipment installed and commissioned.

The installation of meters and telemetry on a further 20 sites is on hold, subject to the outcome from the VFF/ irrigator targeted entitlement purchase proposal.

The Lake Millahecoote remote control and monitoring sites have been commissioned and this system is now operational.

The use of a section of the existing Mokoan Inlet Channel for a rain rejection storage, to assist future system operations, has been approved to proceed to detailed design. The design for this system is scheduled to be available by May, with implementation planned to occur between June 2009 and January 2010.

## Non Core Offset Measures

These measures are also subject to the final volume of entitlement purchase and consideration of the VFF proposals.

## Lake Diverter Pipeline

The \$14.5 million Lake Mokoan Diverter pipeline, which Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) started construction of in August 2008, is now over 95 per cent complete.

Major components of the project have been completed, including installation of 28km of pipeline, construction of the 75ML capacity operational pondage and the 24ML/d capacity pump station.

Installation of fittings of farm outlet, electrical and control system elements, as well as the pipeline connection to the pump station, will all be completed during March.

The final stage of channel deepening is currently working both upstream and downstream of the Benalla-Yarrowonga Road. This work includes the removal of silt to facilitate backflow from the Broken River at Casey's Weir, up the channel to the new pump station.

The operational storage dam earthworks and bank building activities are now finished, with rock armouring to protect against wave action anticipated to be completed in early March. The inlet and outlet structures are currently under construction, with an anticipated completion date also in early March.

Work still to be completed on the main pipeline includes the connections between the pipeline and diverters' pumps.

Despite pipe fitting supply delays and difficulty in accessing water for construction purposes, along with extreme heat conditions and fire risk, the program for delivery of this project is well ahead of schedule regarding its function post decommissioning and has been accelerated to meet the needs relating to the drought.

Final commissioning of the automated scheme operation is now expected to occur in April. In the interim, provision is being made for manual operation of the system to deliver water to pipeline customers throughout March.

## Asset Decommissioning

Proposals have been invited from consultants to provide designs for the decommissioning of assets. These are to include a 10m wide breach in the existing Mokoan embankment and removal of the dam outlet structure.

Investigations are continuing regarding the options for decommissioning the section of Inlet Channel not being retained as the Rain Rejection Storage. These investigations will review the possible modification and retention of this section as a drainage depression, as well as an access link between Benalla and the future Winton Wetlands. Additionally, discussions with relevant agencies regarding future ownership options are also ongoing.

## Community Engagement

An open day, with free bus tours of the Lake Diverters Pipeline Scheme, was held for users of the scheme and neighbouring property owners on February 20. This provided an opportunity for the works to be viewed first hand, with questions on the scheme construction, operation and any other matters relating to the Mokoan project to be answered.

## Future Winton Wetlands

The arrangements for appointment of members to the Winton Wetlands Committee of Management are being finalised and an announcement of membership will be made as soon as possible following approval by Cabinet.

## Other Matters

The now near empty Lake Mokoan has impacted on the fish population. A multi agency group involving EPA, DPI, DSE and G-MW is implementing a coordinated response plan. Efforts are continuing to reduce the fish population by relocating these fish to other storages in the area. To date, over 2 tonne of Murray Cod and Golden Perch have been saved over the past 18 months. Over 500 native fish have been moved in advance of the works to deepen the Outlet Channel.



The building and civil construction phase for the pump station is also nearing completion, with all pump and pipework installed and the electrical cable, switchboards and control panel installation in progress.

MEMBERS