

# Mokoan -Return to Wetland Monthly Update November 2009

On Thursday November 26, amendments to the Broken and other Bulk Entitlement Orders, arising from the Decommissioning of Lake Mokoan, were gazetted.

These Amendments were made by Minister for Water, the Hon Tim Holding MP, after receiving an application from each of the River Murray and Broken System bulk entitlement holders to amend their bulk entitlements under section 44 of the *Water Act* 1989.

The amendments reflect the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan, the new operational arrangements for the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages and the resulting new environmental commitments for the Snowy and Murray Rivers.

The Mokoan Project was foreshadowed in the Victorian Government White Paper (Securing our Water Future Together, 2004) and has secured 50 billion litres of long-term water savings, which will be transferred to existing environmental bulk entitlements as part of Victoria's contribution to the Living Murray and the Snowy Initiatives.

## Bulk Entitlements

Bulk entitlements determine how much water an entity can take from a particular source (usually a regulated river system). A particular bulk entitlement specifies conditions about the use, management and supply of the allocated water. G-MW holds bulk entitlements for the Murray, Ovens, Broken, Goulburn, Campaspe and Loddon systems.

Other water corporations and organisations such as the Department of Sustainability and Environment also have bulk entitlements in these systems. The conditions of each bulk entitlement vary according to the system to which it applies, and this variation is most obvious in the volume available and the environmental flow requirements.

## The Cessation of Harvesting into Mokoan

Harvesting, or diversions, to Lake Mokoan from Holland's Creek and the Broken River have now ceased due to the fact that Amendments to the Bulk Entitlements mean that Lake Mokoan is no longer recognised as a part of the headwork's in the Broken System.

For the purpose of delivering project water savings, this step effectively means that Mokoan has been decommissioned.

## Mokoan Embankment Breach and Outlet Works

Detailed design of the embankment breach, to allow the future Winton Wetlands to overflow has been completed and the Environmental Management Plan approved by the DSE. The breach will consist of a 10m wide cut in the existing Mokoan dam wall. The base of the cut will be set at the full level of the future Winton Wetland. The completed breach will enable flows above the wetland full level to flow through the breach, without creating any erosion, into the existing Mokoan Outlet Channel, formerly known as Stockyard Creek. These flows will then pass downstream to the Broken River at Casey's Weir.

G-MW have recently advertised a request for tender for contractors to undertake works to complete the breach of the Mokoan Embankment and to Decommission the Outlet Works. It is expected that these works will commence in February 2010 with completion expected by May 2010.

## Rain Rejection / Re-regulating Storage

The section of existing Inlet Channel from the Broken River to Holland's Creek is to be retained to form the Inlet Channel Rain Rejection Storage. Structures along this channel will be modified and new structures constructed to allow this system to provide maximum operational flexibility.

A Rain Rejection or re-regulation storage provides the opportunity to capture and later release (re-regulate) surplus flows. The rain rejection storage has a relatively small capacity but when used a number of times throughout the irrigation season can reduce water losses from the system and assist in meeting downstream irrigator service requirements.

In conjunction with the high level of water entitlement purchase undertaken by Water for Rivers in the Broken River System, the scope of the Rain Rejection storage works has been modified. This

will reduce future costs of operating the system and will allow the decommissioning of the Inlet Channel, from Holland's Creek through to the future Winton Wetland. This will also allow the full decommissioning of Holland's Weir, thereby removing obstruction to fish passage along this important waterway.

The ceasing of diversion of water into Lake Mokoan now means that the Mokoan Inlet Channel can be decommissioned. Works on the Rain Rejection Storage will commence in early January 2010 with completion expected by April 2010

## Drainage Depression along Remaining Channel

Following decommissioning of the section of the Inlet Channel from Holland's Creek through to the future Winton Wetlands, all drainage inlets which flow into the current Inlet Channel will continue to drain into the channel.

The decommissioned channel will take the form of a shallower drainage depression which will carry all drainage flows through to the Winton Wetland. Design work and engagement with relevant parties as to the future ownership and management responsibilities for the drainage depression is nearing completion.

Also a means of providing alternative domestic and stock water supplies to a number of existing licensed diverters located along the decommissioned section of the Inlet channel has been developed and engagement with the affected parties has continued.