

Community update for Menindee and Lower Darling-Baaka

Current Water Quality

The DCCEEW-BCS monitoring buoys located in Lake Wetherell (Figure 1) and the Darling River near Menindee township (Figure 2) are showing overall the water column is well oxygenated with levels above the 4 mg/L upper critical level for fish health. Over the last week, the average air temperature has been in the low 30's. This has caused some stratification in the water column at Lake Wetherell resulting in lower dissolved oxygen readings below 3m. Warmer water temperatures near the water surface is causing an increase in algal activity and higher dissolved oxygen during the day. Real-time water quality data from DCCEEW-BCS monitoring buoys can be accessed from the [Darling-Baaka River Health Project dashboard](#).

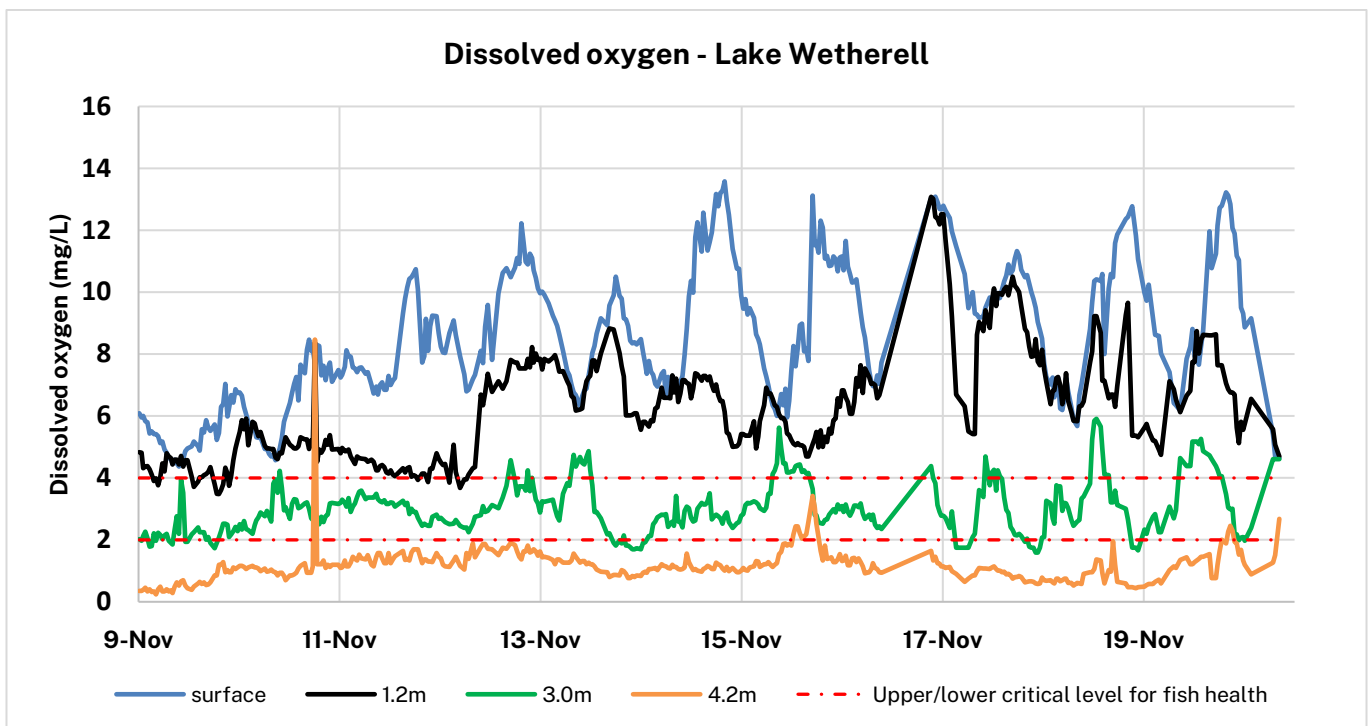


Figure 1: Dissolved oxygen (mg/L) in Lake Wetherell - 9 to 20 November 2024

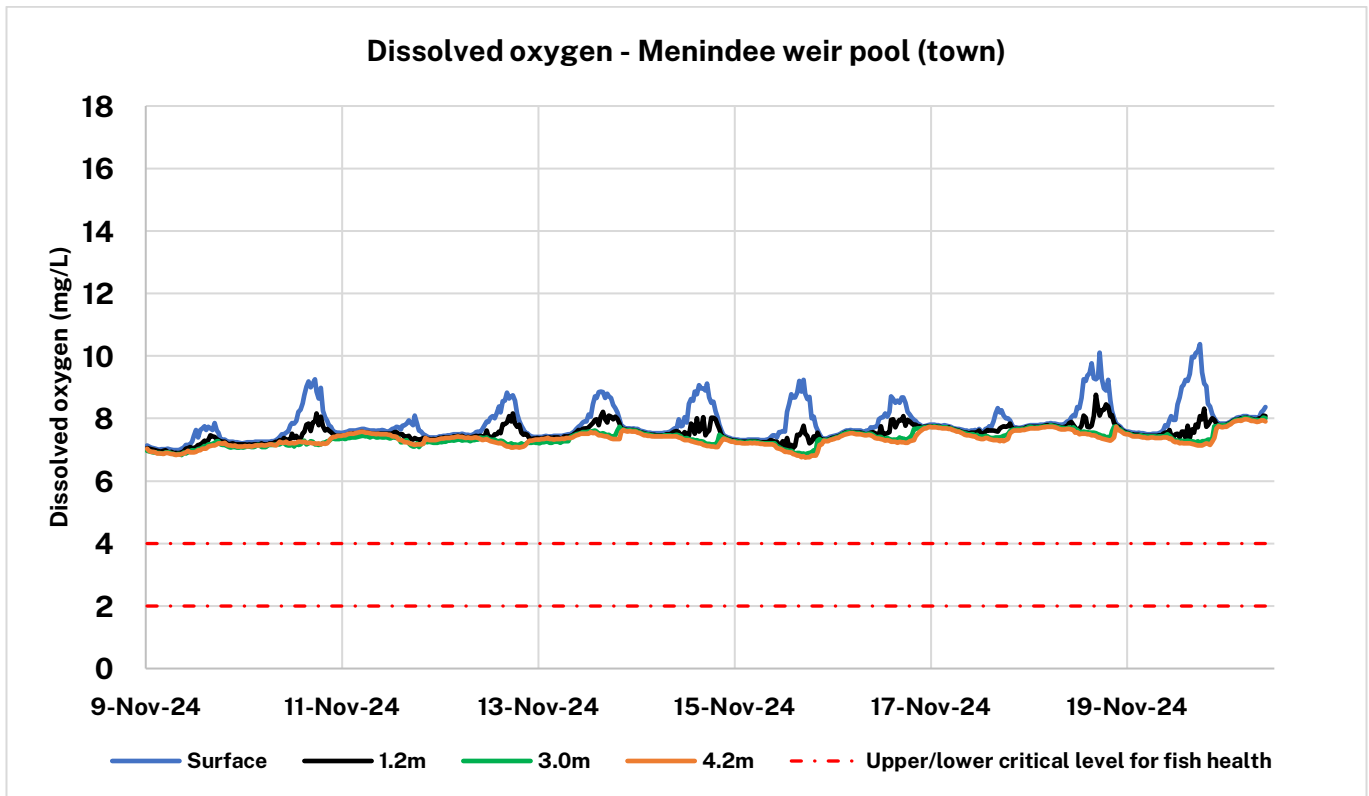


Figure 2: Dissolved oxygen (mg/L) in the Darling River at Menindee Town - 9 to 20 November 2024

Due to the increase in river height since September, the two WaterNSW monitoring buoys have been temporarily removed as a precautionary measure to prevent damage. They both will be returned once the water level has decreased. The fixed depth dissolved oxygen sensors located downstream of Lake Wetherell main weir, Menindee town and Weir 32 gauging stations remain operational with dissolved oxygen readings above 4 mg/L. Real-time data can be accessed at [WaterInsights](#).

Update on Flows from Menindee Lakes

The flow target decreased from 3,000 ML/d at Weir 32 to 2,500 ML/d, on Monday 18th November 2024. Flows were reduced from Lake Wetherell to achieve the new flow target at Weir 32. Water will continue to be preferentially sourced from Lake Menindee, with the Lake Menindee outlet capacity maximised (current anticipated flow 1,000 - 800 ML/d). The difference will be made up from Lake Wetherell via the Lake Wetherell outlet (anticipated flow 1,500 - 1,700 ML/d). Releases are being optimised to maximise resource availability in the top lakes.

Blue-green algae alerts

Water temperatures are currently over 20°C, with forecasts indicating warmer air temperatures for the coming week. These conditions are expected to create favourable circumstances for blue-green algal growth.

Satellite images taken on 13 November show increased algae in Lake Menindee, but still at low-risk levels for recreational activities

Algae levels in Wilcannia have risen rapidly, and based on recent observations, the area is now on Red Alert.

Council is scheduled to collect water samples later this week, with updated results expected quickly. The algae bloom stretches from about 10 km upstream of Wilcannia to 20 km downstream and is moving downstream at around 5 km per day, likely heading toward Lake Wetherall. The situation is being closely monitored and tracked, so we can reassess risks if the algae passes from Wilcannia down to Lake Wetherell.

[View the algae alerts map on the Water NSW website.](#)

EPA in Menindee to discuss emergency management of mass fish deaths

The NSW EPA will be in Menindee on **Saturday 23 November 2024** to provide information about their work on Mass Fish Death Events. There is a free BBQ for the community to come together and talk about the work the EPA are doing. They will be joined by consultants who will support the delivery of the work and would like to hear from you.

Their work is focused on the emergency management arrangements for a Mass Fish Death Event and would really appreciate the community's feedback on:

- How you would like to be communicated with during a Mass Fish Death Event
- What information you would like to know during a Mass Fish Death Event
- Your previous experiences of Mass Fish Death Event's, including the clean-up process

BBQ Details:

Time: 8am -2pm Saturday 23 November 2024

Location: Menindee Boat Ramp

Catering: BBQ will be supplied

Update on the Menindee and Lower Darling-Baaka Fish Passage Program

Teams from DPIRD Fisheries, Public Works, WaterNSW and Murray-Darling Basin Authority were out on country last week to continue community engagement and site visits related to the Menindee and Lower Darling-Baaka Fish Passage Program. The team completed site visits at Lake Wetherell, Lake Pamamaroo, Lake Menindee, Menindee Main Weir, and other flow pathways in the Lower Darling-Baaka to inform future technical design and assessment works for the Business Case. The team was also joined by the Barkandji Rangers for the majority of the site visits, connecting with them to discuss the cultural heritage aspect of the work.

Additional information

- To notify the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of potential blackwater events email: water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- To view community updates issued, visit [Community updates and frequently asked questions | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- To report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface, or crayfish leaving the water please call the **NSW DPI Fisheries Phonenumber 1800 043 536** or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills-2019-2020/info-sheet>
- Information on recent fish deaths is available at: [Fish kills in NSW](#). When reporting, please include the name of the river/waterbody, location and date of your observation and provide photographs. If possible, please also record what species are affected and an estimate of number of each species observed.
- Further information on blackwater events can be found at the DCCEEW Water website at: [Hypoxic blackwater | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- Additional information is also available on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website at: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths>
<https://www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/infrastructure/menindee-lakes>
- Operational updates are available at: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#)
- Water quality data collected after the fish deaths at Menindee is available on the Environment Protection Authority web page at: <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill>