



## Warren-Donnelly August 2023

## Water update

Welcome to the August 2023 issue of the Water Update newsletter for Warren-Donnelly landholders and licensees.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (department) undertakes licensing, planning and measurement activities in the Warren and Donnelly river catchments to support the equitable and sustainable distribution of water for commercial, domestic and public water supply and environmental needs. The department does this with input from the Warren Donnelly Water Advisory Committee (committee). This newsletter provides an update on some important local water issues and questions raised by the committee, licensees and the community.

### 1 Water licence renewals

Most licenses are issued for a period of 10 years. It is understandable that, over that time, a licensee may not remember when their licence is due for renewal. However, it is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that an application to renew their licence is submitted before the current licence expires.

To assist, the department endeavours to contact licensees before their licence expiry date to request that they submit an application for their licence renewal.

Applications to renew a licence to take water must be submitted before the licence expiry date. It may not always be possible to reinstate an expired licence. It is recommended that renewal applications are submitted 60 to 90 days before the expiry date to enable continuity of the licence.

Applications to renew a licence are assessed within the requirements of the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* (RIWI Act), along with licensing policies and water allocation plans. During the assessment process, the department may request further information needed to support an application.

The licence renewal process provides an opportunity to review and modernise the terms, conditions and restrictions of a licence. This may include the inclusion of new conditions, amendment of existing conditions, or removal of redundant conditions.

To renew a licence for another term, please apply via [Water Online](#).

### 2 Spring exemptions guideline

The department has published the *Guideline: Spring exemptions* to help landowners and occupiers of land understand the spring exemption under Part III section 5(1)(a) of the RIWI Act. The

development of this guideline followed a five-month public consultation period, which closed on 31 May 2022. A complementary *Field guide: Spring exemptions*, which contains chapters 6 and 7 and Appendix 2 of the guideline, has been developed to assist in the spring exemption self-assessment process.

The documents provide guidance on the requirements for determining whether a spring rising on a property is exempt from regulation, clarifying interpretation of section 5(1)(a) of the Act. They also establish a voluntary self-assessment process to guide landowners or occupiers of land through the sometimes-complex hydrological considerations required to determine a spring exemption.

There is no change to existing legislation on the spring exemption.

The spring exemptions guideline, field guide and a consultation summary report capturing feedback from public consultation can be accessed by visiting the department's [water resources webpage](#).

Stakeholders with any queries or who require any further information on the guideline should contact the [regional department office](#) local to their property. Hard copies of the guidelines and field guide are also available at the Manjimup office, co-located with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions on Brain Street, Manjimup.

The department is working with the committee to support licensees in using the guideline. As part of this, several educational workshops will be undertaken in Pemberton and Manjimup in November 2023. Further details will be provided to the community when available, with instructions on how to register for a session. Workshops will be limited to 20 people per session.

### 3 Healthy Rivers update

In March 2023 the department's River Health team was back in the Warren-Donnelly catchments undertaking sampling for the Healthy Rivers program. This sampling is done every three years and is designed to gather information on ecosystem needs and to assess whether our rivers are staying healthy under the various pressures they face. The March sampling was focused on the summer refugia permanent pools within the catchments' river systems, some of which have permanent flowing water while others are disconnected for extended periods of time.



A total of 10 sites in the Donnelly catchment and nine in the Warren catchment were sampled over a two-week period. Each standard site assessment is extremely detailed and consists of monitoring aquatic biota (fish and crustaceans), fringing vegetation, hydrology, water quality, the catchment's physical form and catchment disturbances, as depicted below:



Members of the Warren Donnelly Water Advisory Committee were invited to join the department's Aquatic Science team as they undertook sampling activities. Committee member Mr Kim Skoss (pictured right in the photos below) joined the team at the Chappel's Bridge sampling site.



All the data from the two-week sampling program, along with data for numerous other catchments, is currently being compiled into a report and will be available before December 2023 on the department's [Healthy Rivers website](#).

The data is also available to access early by [contacting](#) the department's River Science branch.

#### 4 Allocation plan evaluation statement progress

The department has started its review of the 2012 *Warren-Donnelly surface water allocation plan* by preparing an evaluation statement of the plan to date. The evaluation statement assesses how well water resource management, as guided by the plan, has performed against the allocation plan's objectives.

In February 2023 the draft evaluation statement was presented to the committee, allowing them to provide input and consider whether community concerns had been addressed. The presentation covered:

- the purpose of the evaluation statement
- irrigated agriculture
- the environment
- public water supply
- salinity.

The final evaluation statement is being prepared and will make recommendations for a new water allocation plan for the Warren-Donnelly area. The evaluation statement will be published on the department's website when finalised.

The department will ensure there is opportunity for the committee and the broader community to provide input into the new allocation plan.

## **5 Southern Forests Irrigation Reference Group update**

Funding of up to \$15.3 million will be invested by the Government of Western Australia (State Government) to support water security measures in the Manjimup-Pemberton region, with the allocation of funding to be informed by recommendations from the Southern Forests Irrigation Reference Group. The State Government will continue to work closely with the Australian Government to explore future co-funding.

Following its appointment in October 2022 to provide advice on water security measures in the region, the reference group delivered its final report to the State Government on 10 February 2023. The final report makes 15 recommendations across eight areas, grouped under the three key objectives in its terms of reference: infrastructure, water use efficiency, and sustainable water policy.

Visit the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's [Water Security for Southern Forests Horticulture Industry](#) webpage for more information.

As part of its response to the reference group's report, the State Government has indicated it intends to appoint Ms Jane Kelsbie MLA, Member for Warren Blackwood, as the new chair of the Warren Donnelly Water Advisory Committee.

The department will be working with Department of Primary Industries and Rural Development on the approach to funding any measurement initiatives proposed under the \$15.3 million.

## **6 Water resources management legislation**

The department is working with the Parliamentary Counsel's Office to draft the Water Reform Bill which will combine combining six Acts into one. The Bill will streamline and simplify water resource management legislation in Western Australia, making it easier to understand and administer.

The draft documentation is undergoing extensive legislative review. It is anticipated that the process will be completed by the end of 2023, depending on resourcing and other legislative priorities. The consultation process will then follow, and work will start on associated regulations.

## 7 Bunbury office relocation

The department's Bunbury office has moved to 71 McCombe Road (previously 35–39 McCombe Road). The office hours at the new premises remain 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.



## 8 More information

We will continue to keep licensees informed of developments as they occur through future Water update newsletters. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact us:

For general licensing matters, please contact the Manjimup office on (08) 6364 7925 or the Bunbury office on (08) 9726 4111.

For contact details of members of the Warren Donnelly Water Advisory Committee, please contact the Bunbury office on (08) 9726 4111.

### Committee members

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation: Simon Taylor (Chair), Adam Maskew

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development: Neil Guise

Shire of Manjimup: Kim Skoss

Warren Catchments Council: Julian Sharp

Community: Di Fry, Bill Rice, Lynn Daubney, John Omodei, Alexandra Rey, Donelle Buegge

Alternatively, visit our website: [www.dwer.wa.gov.au](http://www.dwer.wa.gov.au).

## 9 Rainbow Trail and Strickland cumulative flow graphs as at 8 August 2023

See pages below.



