

# Cooma Region Waterwatch Update

FEB/MAR 2012



## Our catchments in February– What does your data say?

February has seen water– and lots of it- in every one of our rivers, resulting from much higher than average rainfall across the region. As the hydrographs to the left show, we have experienced flood conditions at the end of February and into March in our main rivers.

Corresponding with the high water levels has been elevated turbidity and phosphate readings in some of our streams. Turbidity was highest at the northern end of the Murrumbidgee River, which naturally accumulates sediment from the Numeralla and Bredbo River catchments as they discharge. Turbidity indicates active erosion in catchments, especially for upland streams such as ours which should be low in turbidity.

If you know of any active erosion sites that may be contributing sediment to our waterways please let Waterwatch know as this is of interest to the current ACWA project, facilitated by the MCMA. This project aims to identify priority erosion areas in the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment so funding can be sought to address turbidity source points.

Phosphate sources include soil particles to which phosphates are bound, organic matter (such as animal wastes) and fertilisers. Fertilisers, if applied just before runoff occurs or if over-applied, can also run in or be leached into waterways and so raise nutrient levels. This highlights the importance of wide, healthy and diverse riparian zones which can trap organic matter in run-off and take up nutrients as they move through the soil profile as leachate.

### Weather (as at Cooma Visitor's Center) for Feb

(Source: [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au))

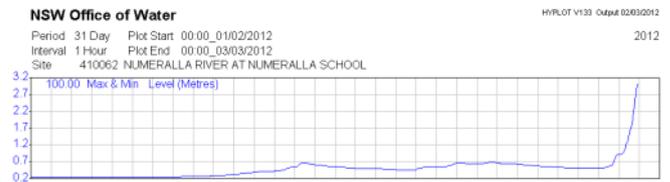
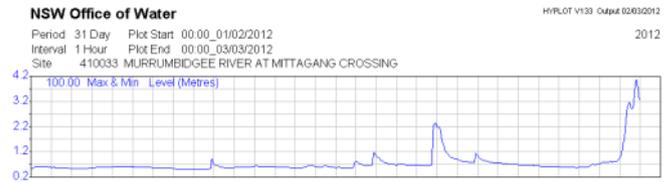
Total monthly rainfall: = 285 ml

Long term av. monthly rainfall: 62 ml

Maximum temperature for Feb: 30.0 °C

Minimum temperature for Feb: 5.7°C

### River heights (Source: [www.realtimedata.water.nsw.gov.au](http://www.realtimedata.water.nsw.gov.au))



### Water quality parameters tested by Waterwatchers in our local waterways

Turbidity– measure of 'murkiness', can be an indicator of sediment pollution. Levels above 10 NTU can affect aquatic life if occurring on a regular basis, low levels are desirable.

pH- measure of acidity. Levels between 6-8 pH units are suited for aquatic life. Levels near 7 pH units are desirable.

EC– electrical conductivity is a measure of dissolved solids or 'salts'. EC levels greater than 1000uS/cm are excessive and warrant attention. Lower EC levels are desirable.

DO– dissolved oxygen. Levels below 4mg/L cause stress to/death of aquatic life. Higher levels are desirable.

Nitrates/nitrites/phosphates– these refer to bio-available nutrient levels which will influence algal growth and productivity in stream. Excessive nutrient levels are not desirable.

**Our Waterwatch data comes from our team of dedicated volunteers. Without them this program would not be possible! Thanks to all volunteers that have contributed data this month.**

**If you would like to find out more or become involved in the Waterwatch program please contact your local Waterwatch Coordinator.**



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## Murrumbidgee River Environmental Flows Workshop

In spring 2011 two environmental flow releases were made to the upper Murrumbidgee River. These releases were scheduled to encourage the spawning of Macquarie perch (*Macquaria australasica*). The flows are significant as they are the largest, most targeted releases that have been made for the upper Murrumbidgee River since the establishment of Tantangara Dam. The effects of these releases were monitored in cooperation by a range of stakeholders.

A workshop will be held on the 14th March at the Snowy Hydro Visitors Centre (9:30am to 1pm) to present the preliminary observations of the data collected and discuss potential benefits of environmental flows for river health. It also provides an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the results and consider options for future releases. To attend, please RSVP Antia on 6452 3178 or [antia@coomawaterwatch.org.au](mailto:antia@coomawaterwatch.org.au) by 9th March.

## Willow Control Workshop

These last few wetter years have worked wonders for the growth of riverine and riparian vegetation in our catchments. This unfortunately has included introduced plants and weeds. Young willows in particular are establishing in many areas and given further good conditions will soon grow into sizable trees. Mature willows can have negative impacts on our waterways and therefore have been declared a Weed of National Significance.

Early detention and control is therefore important to prevent the spread of willows, particularly before they grow into large trees and become expensive to manage. Ongoing monitoring and control of young willows is also essential where large scale control has been carried out in the past.

For those that would like to learn more about the impact of willows on our rivers and how to best control them, the Murrumbidgee CMA will be offering a free willow control workshop for landholders learn about what control options are available to tackle this problem, including demonstrations of best practice methods.

The workshop will be held on the 3rd of April (1-3pm), Murrumbidgee River south of Bredbo (directions to site given on RSVP). RSVP by 29th March to Felicity Collins 6452 4150 or [felicity.collins@cma.nsw.gov.au](mailto:felicity.collins@cma.nsw.gov.au)

### Coming Up.....

- ◆ **Next Waterwatch sampling weekend**– 17/18th March
- ◆ **Murrumbidgee River Environmental Flows Workshop**– 14th March (9:30am-1p), Snowy Hydro Visitors Centre, RSVP essential, contact Antia Brademann on 64523178 or [antia@coomawaterwatch.org](mailto:antia@coomawaterwatch.org)
- ◆ **Cooma Show**– 10th March, Cooma Showground
- ◆ **Murrumbidgee CMA Next Generation Catchment Action Plan consultation meetings**– 15th March (2pm) Cooma Ex-servicemen's Club. Email [yourcap@cma.nsw.gov.au](mailto:yourcap@cma.nsw.gov.au) or call 1800 243 433 for more details
- ◆ **CFOC Community Action Grants**– Grants of up to \$20,000 for community groups for sustainable farming/environmental works projects. Applications close 27th March. See [www.nrm.gov.au/funding/cag/index.html](http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/cag/index.html) or call 1800 552 008 for more details
- ◆ **Willow Control Workshop**– 3rd April (1-3pm), Murrumbidgee River, south of Bredbo. RSVP to Felicity Collins on 64524150 or [felicity.collins@cma.gov.au](mailto:felicity.collins@cma.gov.au)
- ◆ **Draft (Murray Darling) Basin Plan consultation**– submissions close 16th April. Go to [www.mdba.gov.au](http://www.mdba.gov.au) for more details

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