

Cooma Region Waterwatch Update

March/April 2012



Our catchments in March

March has seen water levels returning to base flows (see river heights to right) in the absence of large rain events later in the month. In many stream and rivers good solid base flows are being maintained from the groundwater which continues to seep out of the landscape after the good soaking rains we have had. Such flows are generally low in turbidity.

There are reports that there has been some changes in river channels as a result of flooding in Feb/March. This is part of the natural channel forming function of flooding flows, but in areas where banks are fragile new erosion has also occurred. In some instances existing erosion points have also further eroded in the landscape, while in other cases new erosion points have sprung up. It is a good idea to identify and monitor active erosion point carefully as these are the point sources for turbidity pollution in our catchments. Remediation should be considered under advice from a suitably qualified expert. Another emerging issue are the large piles of willow debris that have washed downstream, especially along the Murrumbidgee River. This debris has piled up in and along the river channel. If debris has to be removed, these piles should be moved off the floodplain and burnt there. Burning debris within the river channel will create a point source of water pollution and so needs to be avoided. Also it is a good idea to check for young willow sprouting from piles and control them as these can establish and grow very quickly into mature trees.

Weather (as at Cooma Visitor's Center) for March

(Source: www.bom.gov.au)

Total monthly rainfall: = 175 ml

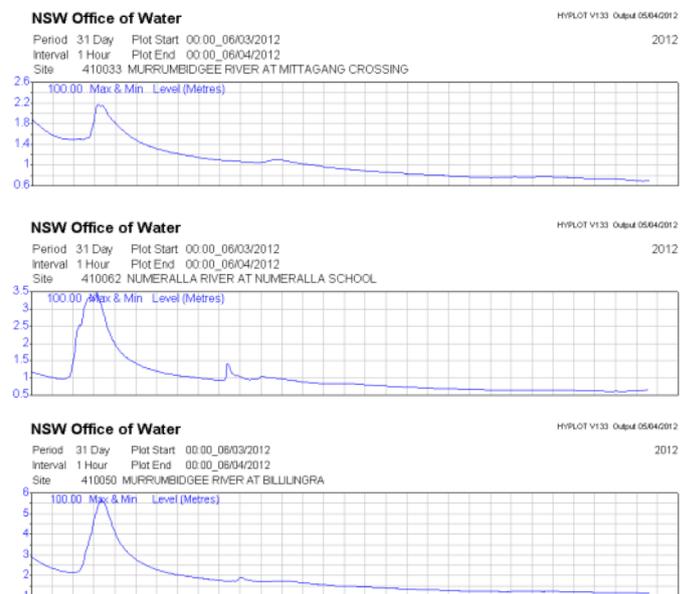
Long term av. monthly rainfall: 59 ml

Maximum temperature for March: 27 °C

Minimum temperature for March: 3 °C

River heights in March 2012

(Source: 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 in upland streams.

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 is generated by our team of dedicated volunteers. Without them this program would not be possible! Thanks to all our supporters for the ongoing support of the program in the region.

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



COOMA REGION WATERWATCH CONTACT:

Antia Brademann
Cooma Region Waterwatch Coordinator
Monaro High School, Mittagang Rd
Cooma NSW 2630
Ph: 02 6452 3178
Mob: 04279778633
E: antia@coomawaterwatch.org.au
Web: www.coomawaterwatch.org.au

We have regrettably lost our facilitator Tanya Noakes

Many of you may know by now that we recently lost our regional Waterwatch facilitator, Tanya Noakes. Because of personal issues, she has regrettably had to return to the USA. We have lost a fantastic advocate for Waterwatch in our area. Tanya was instrumental in establishing the 'Action for Clean Water Alliance', a network of organisations from NSW and the ACT aiming to tackle the ongoing turbidity issues in the Murrumbidgee and its tributaries. Tanya also worked closely with ActewAGL to establish Waterwatch in the Cooma region. She also maintained a strong media presence and was tireless in lobbying for the growth in support for our programs by ACT and Federal governments.

For volunteers the immediate effect will be the reduction in region wide facilitation support that Tanya provided and which we have enjoyed. The existing team of four Waterwatch coordinators will endeavour to fill the gaps, but there will be some noticeable delays and reductions until the ACT government recruit a replacement. We do not envy them as Tanya left very big shoes to fill.

Upper Murrumbidgee River environmental flows workshop

The Upper Murrumbidgee Environmental Flows Seminar, held on 14th of March in Cooma, heard a range of expert speakers present their research findings in relation to monitoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River 2011 environmental flow releases. Speakers including representatives from NSW Office of Water, ActewAGL, ALS and the University of Canberra. Dr Jane Roberts (Chair, Snowy Scientific Committee) and Mr Charlie Carruthers (Coordinator, Native Fish Strategy) also presented on the background and context for setting environmental flow targets in the Upper Murrumbidgee River. More information about the seminar will be available on the Cooma Waterwatch website soon.

Source Water Protection Program grants available

ActewAGL's SWP Program aims to raise awareness about and help facilitate the protection and enhancement of ACT drinking water catchments to protect water quality in upstream catchments so that they remain suitable for drinking water consumption (with use of normal drinking water treatment processes). This is an issue of concern for all river water users as river water quality will affect how such water can safely be used. As a catchment community upstream of the ACT and with the possibility of future ACT water use from the Murrumbidgee River, the SWP program now offers its support to address drinking water quality issues in our area.

Under the program, grants of up to \$25,000/year are available for government/non-government organisations, community groups and or individuals to carry out projects which aim to address and or raise awareness about drinking water quality issues in our catchments. The Stockyard Creek Tip Remediation Project carried out by Numeralla Landcare late last year was made possible through funding by this program. For further information please contact sourcewater@actewagl.com.au, applications are considered on an ongoing basis.

Coming Up.....

- ◆ **Next Waterwatch sampling weekend**– 21st/22nd April.
- ◆ **Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch QA/QC**– 21st April, 2pm, Lions Youth Haven, ACT. Contact Antia for more details on antia@coomawaterwatch.org.au or 02) 6452 6178.
- ◆ **International Mother Earth Day**– 22nd April. Go to www.un.org/en/events/motherearthday/ for further details.
- ◆ **Landcare for singles speed planting event**– 22nd April, 10am, Bullock Paddock Rd, Uriarra Forest. RSVP to actlandcare@act.gov.au or phone Sally McIntosh on 02) 62052913.
- ◆ **Cooma Community Garden Open Day**– 22nd April, 11am. Cooma Community Garden, Soho St Cooma, Come and see the garden, renew memberships, share produce. All welcome.
- ◆ **Environmental Trust Grants**– various closing dates (April/May), see www.environment.nsw.gov.au/grants/grantsintro.htm for more details.
- ◆ **Southern Tablelands Koala Surveys**– various dates in April/May. Volunteers welcome to assist. Please email Danny.Corcoran@environment.nsw.gov.au for details.
- ◆ **SWPP Grants**– applications ongoing. For more info email sourcewater@actewagl.com.au

We proudly support and are supported by:

