

Implementing the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy: consultation outcomes

What we heard

The NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy consultation paper sought feedback on how the NSW Government could address issues identified during the implementation of the policy.

The paper posed a series of questions about the management of rainfall runoff, the monitoring of floodplain harvesting and the proposed approach to establishing account management rules for floodplain harvesting.

There was wide stakeholder support for incorporating rainfall runoff in floodplain harvesting licences to inform a robust modelling and assessment process. There was also comprehensive agreement from stakeholders that the licensing framework should have the flexibility to ensure that contaminated runoff does not reach waterways.

Numerous stakeholders were also supportive of the staged process of implementation of floodplain monitoring, starting with gauge boards and calibrated storage curves. A number of stakeholders were also supportive of looking at opportunities to use remote sensing technology.

Stakeholder feedback was varied on the proposal to develop specific floodplain harvesting account management rules on a valley-by-valley basis. Some stakeholder groups were in favour of flexibility, while others noted that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate the need for flexibility and that such flexibility may compromise the transparency of the process.

Where to from here

Based on feedback received during consultation, the proposed policy responses include:

- **clarifying that the policy includes the capture of rainfall runoff in the definition of floodplain harvesting**, meaning eligible rainfall runoff will be factored into any floodplain harvesting licence entitlements
- **amending the *Water Management Act 2000*** to allow the capture of contaminated water under floodplain harvesting licences when water users have insufficient account balance remaining. The relevant water sharing plan will define when water can be taken. This water take will be debited from the respective accounts when future water allocations are made.
- **clarifying the policy to make it clear that there will be a staged approach to the implementation of floodplain harvesting monitoring.** Water users will at a minimum be required to use gauge boards and calibrated storage curves during the first three years of implementation. This approach will be evaluated within this time, with a program for improving the measurement of floodplain harvesting developed and published by 30 June 2019.
- **providing up to \$3 million for the installation of gauge board and storage capacity surveys** to allow implementation of monitoring when licences commence in the Northern Basin in July 2019
- **developing a floodplain harvesting compliance and enforcement strategy** by 30 June 2019
- **clarifying the policy to allow development of floodplain harvesting licence account management rules on a valley-by-valley basis.** Public consultation will occur on the proposed rules as part of the water-sharing and water resource planning process.

Further information about next steps for floodplain harvesting can be found in the healthy floodplains project fact sheet and the *Implementing the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy: consultation outcomes* paper at www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform.

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