

Implementing the policy

The NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy 2013 (the policy) signalled an important reform in floodplain water management. The policy will apply across NSW but is currently being implemented in five northern valleys where floodplain harvesting is most prevalent: the Border Rivers, Gwydir, Namoi, Barwon–Darling and Macquarie valleys. This is being done through the NSW Healthy Floodplains project—one of five key projects where the NSW Government is investing to secure a sustainable water future for NSW.

The policy provides a framework for licensing floodplain harvesting extractions. The full policy and a summary (contained within the fact sheet titled *Licensing of Floodplain Extractions*) are published on the NSW Department of Industry's website (www.water.nsw.gov.au).

Rainfall runoff

The intent of the policy is to capture all floodplain harvesting diversions within the licensing framework. Implementation of the policy has highlighted that the way floodplain harvesting is defined in the policy has led to some ambiguity in relation to the treatment of rainfall runoff. The NSW Department of Industry is now seeking feedback on options for the treatment of rainfall runoff.

Monitoring of floodplain harvesting

As there is currently no monitoring of floodplain harvesting diversions, the capacity to do so is one of the significant advantages of bringing these diversions into the licensing framework.

Following feedback from public exhibition of the draft floodplain harvesting monitoring policy in April 2017 and recommendations made by Ken Matthews, AO, in his final report *Independent investigation into NSW water management and compliance*, a staged approach to improving the monitoring of floodplain harvesting diversions is recommended.

The proposed staged approach to improving the monitoring of floodplain harvesting diversions has room for adjustment, and feedback sought as part of this consultation will be considered in the development of the broader Water Take Measurement Policy.

Proposed account management rules

Strict implementation of the specific account management rules for floodplain harvesting access licences set out in the policy is likely to result in unintended consequences, including an inability to effectively manage growth in use and an unequal distribution of impacts on individual floodplain harvesting users.

The NSW Department of Industry is now seeking feedback on a proposal to refine the policy to provide the flexibility for different floodplain harvesting account management rules to be developed and established on a valley-by-valley basis through the water-sharing planning process. Note that this process will include public submissions in conjunction with the development of water resource plans.

Have your say

The community is encouraged to provide feedback. These responses will be due by Sunday 15 April at 11.59 pm and can be submitted in a number of ways, including:

Online: www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au

Email: water.reform@industry.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform/consultation

Post: Water Renewal Task Force, Department of Industry, GPO Box 5477, Sydney NSW 2001