

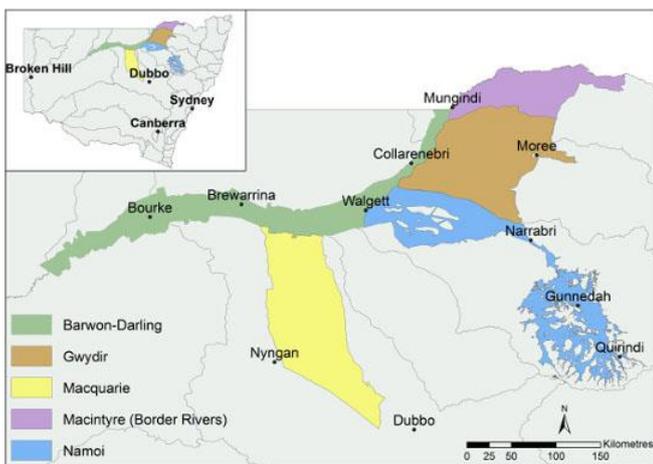
# Valley-wide Floodplain Management Plans

## What are valley-wide floodplain management plans?

Extensive areas of NSW floodplains are developed for irrigated crop production; these areas are important suppliers of food and fibre and contribute significantly to regional economies.

Valley-wide floodplain management plans (FMPs) are strategic documents for managing agricultural, public infrastructure and other developments that may affect the passage of flood waters. These plans differ from existing local FMPs in that they each cover a much larger area, the entire river system.

The *Water Management Act 2000* contains provisions for the development, approval and implementation of valley-wide FMPs. All of NSW will be covered by valley-wide FMPs, but initially, draft plans are in preparation for five northern river valleys, as shown below.



Source: NSW Office of Water [www.water.nsw.gov.au](http://www.water.nsw.gov.au)

## How do the FMPs work?

The new FMPs divide the valleys into four zones for management purposes. These are designated Management Zones (MZ) A, B, C and D; strict rules and conditions will apply to development within each of these zones.

- MZA represents core floodways and major drainage lines that convey water in virtually all flood events;
- MZB comprises areas that are flooded only during large flood events. These are important areas for temporary pondage and conveyance;
- MZC relates to naturally elevated areas and existing approved flood protection and other controlled works;
- MZD is environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands.

The vast majority of irrigation land and infrastructure will fall into MZA and MZB classifications *unless recognised as existing approved works*.

Within MZA, it is proposed that a height restriction of 150mm will apply to any new works or activities (for example, banks, roads or channels), or existing works seeking retrospective approval.

Works in MZB will be exempt from approval if they are less than 150mm high; works between 150 and 400mm high will require approval, and works more than 400mm will require advertising prior to approval. Any submissions made to the NSW Office of Water through this process must be



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taken into consideration when the application is being assessed.

## How will the approval process work?

When the new FMP for your valley is in place, the new rules will apply to both the approval of new works and to modifications to existing works or approvals. If you are planning to construct anything (for example, a flood protection levee or road) that is more than 150mm in height you will be required to provide comprehensive independent supporting technical data. This will probably include a detailed topographic survey, specialised flood impact modelling and a comprehensive environmental assessment.

### **The new rules will apply to any existing unapproved works and developments seeking retrospective approval once the valley-wide plan is implemented.**

It is therefore imperative that all of your existing works and developments are covered by your Works Approval, Water Use Approval and Part 8 Approval.

Farm infrastructure that may be affected by the new FMP rules includes roads, levees, channels, developed fields, pump sites and storages.

## How will I be affected?

Recent investigations show that there are significant gaps between existing approvals and actual on-ground constructions. The reasons for these variations include long outstanding applications still held by the department, organic minor variations to existing operations, legal oversights and in some cases, intentionally unapproved development.

If you have approval gaps, you should address these prior to the implementation of the new FMP. If you wait until the FMP is in place, you will need to apply under the new stringent rules and/or be made to remove or modify the infrastructure.

In several instances, MZA areas have been nominated as designated flood ways even though existing works have been in place at the location for many years. Land in these conflict areas could be removed from production, or at the very least have its production capacity significantly diminished by removal of its flood protection or other works and structures.

## Need help with floodplain licensing issues?

Western Land Planning (WLP) can assist you with the identification of licensing gaps and resolution of other licence discrepancies. Please refer to our Information Sheets “Licensing under the *Water Act 1912* & the *Water Management Act 2000*” and “Licensing and Approvals Gap Analysis” for additional information.

WLP works for the landholder, not the Department. WLP has a good working relationship with Departmental staff and knows and understands the Department’s requirements. WLP can help prepare information and/or documentation to meet Departmental criteria, and can also liaise with the relevant Government departments on your behalf. If you need advice on the management of remnant native vegetation, WLP is happy to meet with you to discuss your requirements.

## Need more information?

Further information about WLP’s services is available from our website: [www.wlp.com.au](http://www.wlp.com.au)

You can get more information about valley-wide FMPs, various types of water licences, fees and application forms from NSW Office of Water’s website: [www.water.nsw.gov.au](http://www.water.nsw.gov.au)

The *Water Act 1912* and the *Water Management Act 2000*” are available from NSW Legislation’s website: [www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au)