



26 April 2012

Snowy Montane River Increased Flows to the Geehi River to commence

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss, today announced that environmental water releases to the Geehi River in the Upper Murray River catchment will commence at the beginning of May.

“These environmental water releases are part of the *Snowy Montane River Increased Flows Program* which is a requirement under the Snowy Water Licence 2002,” Mr Harriss said.

The releases will be made into Middle Creek Weir, a right bank tributary that joins the Geehi River immediately downstream of Geehi Dam, which then flows into the Swampy Plains River.

To date, Snowy Montane River environmental releases have been limited by the available water, with the priority for increased flows being to the Upper Murrumbidgee and Goodradigbee Rivers.

“Significant water is now available to release to other Snowy Montane Rivers.”

The releases to the Geehi River via Middle Creek Weir have been recommended by the Snowy Water Technical Advisory Group, as it was likely to have the highest ecological response to environmental water of the remaining Snowy Montane Rivers.

This advisory group is a multi-jurisdictional body represented by the three partner governments, (NSW, Victoria, and the Commonwealth) and Snowy Hydro Limited and the Snowy Scientific Committee.

“The Snowy Water Licence envisaged that an average annual release of 19.8 gegalitres per year, which is equivalent to 19 per cent of the average annual flow that would have occurred under natural conditions, will be returned to the Geehi River.”

“However, it’s important to note that the seasonal and annual flows via Middle Creek are highly variable, due to natural variation in rainfall and snowfall patterns.”

“Flows into the Geehi River will vary from year to year, with more water being released in wetter periods where higher amounts of water could be delivered and less in drier periods,” said Mr Harriss.

NSW Office of Water scientists, via the *Snowy Flow Response Monitoring and Modelling Program* will measure the response of the Geehi release.

NSW Office of Water Scientist, Simon Williams, said that the research aims to improve our understanding of the role of unregulated tributaries in assisting in the recovery of regulated rivers in the Snowy Mountains.

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