

Snowy River Mail

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Snowy estuary monitoring plan

The Snowy River will be one of a number of Gippsland rivers to receive environmental water in 2016-17.

Environmental water will be provided to Snowy, Latrobe, Thomson and Macalister rivers to benefit native fish including black bream and estuary perch.

Details have been released in the Victorian Environmental Water Holder's (VEWH) annual plan for watering in 2016-17. The VEWH is an independent statutory body responsible for making decisions on the most efficient

use of Victoria's environmental water.

VEWH chairman, Denis Flett, said watering in Gippsland would also include flows for the Snowy River.

The annual Snowy River Increased Flows Program is developed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries – Water on behalf of three partner governments; the Commonwealth, Victoria and NSW.

The total volume planned for release in 2016-17 (including contributions from water savings in Victoria and New South Wales) is

131,071 megalitres (million litres).

Environmental watering in the Snowy aims to mimic the unique natural flow pattern of the mountainous river system.

This flow pattern is important to maintain the shape of the Snowy River channel, which has suffered from years of dwindling water flows caused by river regulation.

During 2016-17 the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA), with assistance from the Department of Environment, Land and Water Planning, will install equipment in the Snowy

River estuary to monitor the impact of the environmental flows in the estuary.

Environmental water officer with the EGCMA, Liz Brown, says this data will show how the salinity and water temperature changes as a result of the flows.

"This is important in helping us understand the potential impacts of the flows on fish in the estuary," Ms Brown said.

In 2015-16, 27 rivers and 73 wetlands in Victoria received environmental water.

The VEWH plans for a range of

scenarios – from drought to wet seasonal conditions – adjusting environmental water deliveries according to conditions.

The Seasonal Watering Plan 2016-17 is based on proposals from Victoria's waterway managers, which recommend the most effective watering activities for their region based on the best-available science.

The plan scopes potential environmental watering in Victoria using water held in reservoirs, set aside to be returned to rivers and wetlands for plants and animals.