



# Lower Murray Water 2024 Winter Shutdown Schedule



## “What We Heard” Report

February – March 2024

## 2024 Winter Shutdown Schedule

Each winter, Lower Murray Water (LMW) schedules maintenance to our infrastructure while demand is lowest, so our services are available when customers need water most.

In 2024, the irrigation channels in the Mildura and Merbein districts will need to be shut down for longer than usual. This is necessary to allow the Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project (SWEP) works to be completed between April and September 2024. The shut downs will also be utilised by LMW work crews to undertake some other maintenance on the channels.

Funded by the Australian Government, the SWEP involves installing liners and pipelines to reduce the amount of water lost from the old, leaky channels. This winter, work will be on the Mildura channels not already lined. The channel near the Nichols Point Primary School will be replaced by a buried pipeline. Some work will also be undertaken in the Merbein district.

In order to balance the requirements to undertake the work while minimising impacts on water users, LMW needs to understand the needs of customers, including growers, irrigators, and domestic and stock users. It was important to communicate our plans for an unusually long shutdown well in advance so we could work with our customers to understand their needs and look for opportunities to modify the shutdown schedule where possible.

To this end, LMW initiated a communication and engagement campaign across February and March 2024. The details of these activities, the outcomes, and the final winter shutdown plan are captured in this summary.





## February – Draft Channel Shutdown Campaign

The draft shutdown plans were advertised in February 2024. The campaign included:

- **Draft winter shutdown plans.** A draft copy of the shutdown plan was published, showing which sections of the channel would be drained at what times.
- **Channel shutdown maps.** Typically, the winter shutdown schedule is presented in a table format. While professional growers and irrigators may be familiar with interacting with this table to understand how the shutdowns may affect their operations, there is an assumed level of knowledge required to be able to read it. To make this easier for a broader audience, a series of Channel Shutdown Maps were published along with the draft shutdown plans, showing channel names, pools, and cross streets.
- **Direct customer communication.** The February SWEP Project Update focused heavily on the planned shutdown schedule and helping customers locate their property on the system. Accompanied by a cover letter, the Project Update was sent to all customers in Mildura (2,000+ customers) and affected customers in Merbein (11 customers).
- **Broader community consultation.** In addition to direct communication with customers, we promoted the draft Channel Shutdown Schedule across local news outlets using a media release that was picked up by Channel 7's local news, MMM/Hiit Radio, and industry media.
- **Social media:** LMW also promoted the draft shutdown on social media linking back to the LMW webpage.



**SWEP**  
SUNRAYSA WATER  
EFFICIENCY PROJECT

**LOWER MURRAY  
WATER**

14 February 2024

Dear XXX,

Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project (SWEP) – Project Update

The channels that supply your water in the Mildura District will likely experience longer than usual disruption this winter as we work to deliver the Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project (SWEP). We have attached a Project Update with information about how you can look up the proposed Winter Shutdown Schedule and plan for your water needs this winter.

In 2023, the SWEP delivered more than 4 km of channel lining in the Red Cliffs and Mildura districts and removed almost 100 old Dethridge wheels from the system. All channel works were completed within the shutdown period and impacts on customers were minimised.

The SWEP team is now focusing on the 2024 winter shutdown. In 2024, the Project will:

- Replace 1.1 km of open channel near the Nichols Point Primary School with a buried pipeline.
- Line 15.8 km of channels in the Mildura and Merbein districts.
- Remove or upgrade more than 150 Dethridge wheels.
- Replace inaccurate Domestic and Stock (DS) flowmeters.

Please be aware that you will likely see LMW staff members, consultants and surveyors along channels near you over the coming months. If private land needs to be accessed to reach channels we will be in contact with you to arrange this.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on the delivery of this project.

Yours sincerely,

*Daniel Freitag*

Daniel Freitag  
Project Director - Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project  
Lower Murray Water

www.lmw.vic.gov.au | info@lmw.vic.gov.au | 1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team



**SWEP**  
SUNRAYSA WATER  
EFFICIENCY PROJECT

**PROJECT UPDATE**  
FEBRUARY 2024

**TURNING OFF THE TAPS TO SAVE WATER THIS WINTER**

Customers in the Mildura irrigation district are urged to pay close attention to the channel shutdowns planned for this winter.

Starting from April, as part of our SWEP project, LMW will be undertaking a significant program of works. These works will include repairing and installing a liner in all Mildura channels not already lined. The channel near the Nichols Point Primary School will also be replaced by a buried pipeline.

There are also works planned on the Merbein channel which will require shutdowns.

These works will save water which is currently lost through the leaky channels.

LMW needs to drain the channels to allow these works to happen. While channel shutdowns happen most years, due to the significant scale of works this winter, there will be more shutdowns this year than usual.

We understand the implications of the channel shutdowns are working hard to ensure that customers are aware of the shutdowns so they can plan accordingly. We will also be working with the construction contractors to ensure the works are completed as quickly as possible to reduce impacts to customers.

For some, the shutdowns this winter may mean considering what to plant. For others, it may mean filling your tanks and dams ahead of time.

A draft version of the channel shutdown plan has been made available on the LMW website. The plan will be finalised and published in April. Please use the QR code below to view the schedule and begin planning early.

If you require assistance understanding where your property sits on the shutdown schedule, or if you need us to understand something particular about your water needs this winter, our team would be happy to hear from you.

Please email the team at [swep@lmw.vic.gov.au](mailto:swep@lmw.vic.gov.au) or call 1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team.

In addition to the channel works, we will also be removing old Dethridge wheels this winter. There will be localised, short shutdowns needed for these works, which will be coordinated directly with those affected at the time.

This work is being delivered thanks to \$37.9 million in funding from the Australian Government under the QF-farm Efficiency Program.


*Daniel Freitag*  
Daniel Freitag - Project Director

**SCAN THROUGH TO VIEW**

DISTRICT MAPS AND WHERE YOUR PROPERTY SITS ON THE SYSTEM.

Or visit [www.lmw.vic.gov.au/irrigation-services/irrigation-management/irrigation-season-dates](http://www.lmw.vic.gov.au/irrigation-services/irrigation-management/irrigation-season-dates)

www.lmw.vic.gov.au | info@lmw.vic.gov.au | 1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team



**WHICH CHANNEL DO YOU LIVE ON?**

LMW have published Shutdown Maps for the Mildura L, Mildura K, and Merbein channels.

The maps will help identify where your property sits on the channel system and what the shutdowns will mean for you this winter.

Use the QR code to view the 3 district maps and understand where your property sits on the system.

**SCAN THROUGH TO VIEW**

Or visit [www.lmw.vic.gov.au/irrigation-services/irrigation-management/irrigation-season-dates](http://www.lmw.vic.gov.au/irrigation-services/irrigation-management/irrigation-season-dates)

**YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

I'm a Domestic and Stock user in Mildura – will I have interrupted supply this winter?

Almost certainly. The channel shutdown will be longer than usual this year.

If you have one available, we recommend filling your tanks fully before the shutdown starts.

I'm worried about my plantings, who should I speak to about the planned shutdowns?

Please contact the SWEP Operations and Surveillance Manager, James Collett, in the first instance. Call 1800 808 830 and ask to speak to James in the SWEP team.

I have an old Dethridge Wheel – will SWEP be removing it as part of this project?

The SWEP team have removed more than 100 old Dethridge wheels to date. We have over 150 more wheels to remove this coming winter across the Red Cliffs and Merbein Districts.

We have been contacting landowners with these wheels to arrange the work. If your wheel is planned to be removed, you should have received a letter from us previously. We will be in contact ahead of the works to arrange shutting down your supply and undertake the works.

www.lmw.vic.gov.au | info@lmw.vic.gov.au | 1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team

## Early March – Last calls for input on the draft shutdown Campaign

In early March, a final push for customer feedback was sent to customers inviting them to review the draft channel shutdown plans and contact the LMW team to discuss any concerns. The direct messaging directed customers to the LMW Irrigation season dates webpage, where they could access district maps and schedule information.

The last calls campaign included:

- **WaterNOW portal reminder.** A prompt was added to the WaterNOW portal, where customers order irrigation deliveries, to alert of the longer than usual shutdowns planned for this winter. This prompt recommended that customers contact LMW as soon as possible if they need to discuss impacts on their planned operations this winter.
- **SMS reminder.** An SMS was sent to all Mildura customers, reminding them of the longer than usual planned shutdowns for this winter, and containing a link to the draft shutdown plan and maps.
- **Email reminder.** An email was sent to all Mildura customers, reminding them of the longer than usual shutdowns planned, and calling for them to contact LMW as soon as possible if they foresee impacts on their planned operations.
- **Website.** During early March, the draft shutdown plan and maps remained available to be viewed at the LMW website and contained contact information.

Media Release  
20 February 2024



**Major Winter Works Planned for Sunraysia**

Customers in the Mildura irrigation district are urged to pay close attention to the irrigation channel shutdowns planned for this winter.

As part of the \$27.9 million Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project (SWEP), funded by the Australian Government under the Off-Stream Efficiency Program, Lower Murray Water will be undertaking a significant program of works this winter. These works will include repairing and installing a liner in all Mildura channels not already lined. The channel near the Nichols Point Primary School will also be replaced by a buried pipeline.

The irrigation channels will need to be shut down for longer than usual to allow the works to be completed.

LMW has released an early version of the channel shutdown schedule for this winter to give as much notice as possible for customers.

There are also works planned on channels in Merbein which will require shutdowns.

LMW needs to drain the channels to allow these works to happen. While channel shutdowns happen most years, due to the significant scale of works this winter, there will be more shutdowns this year than usual.

A draft channel shutdown plan has been published on the LMW website. The schedule will be finalized ahead of the shutdowns starting.

Some channels in Mildura will have limited supply from early April. Full shutdowns of the channels will commence in May, with some extending as late as September. Shutdowns will last up to six weeks.

LMW customers, including Domestic and Stock users, are encouraged to check out the schedule early and start planning for this winter. This would include planning to fill tanks and dams ahead of the shutdowns starting.

The SWEP team are offering assistance to understand where customer's properties sit on the shutdown schedule or in planning for an unusually long shut down. Customers are encouraged to email the team at [swep@lmw.vic.gov.au](mailto:swep@lmw.vic.gov.au), or call 1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team.

**Quotes attributable to SWEP Project Director, Daniel Freitag**

"There is around five times more channel lining work to be delivered this winter compared to what the team completed last year under the Project."

"For some, the shutdown this winter may mean considering what to plant. For others, it may mean filling your tanks fully before shutdown, even if it has not seemed as important in previous years."

"The Sunraysia community knows the value of making every bit of water go as far as possible. That's why projects like the Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project are so important."

www.lmw.vic.gov.au/swep  
swep@lmw.vic.gov.au  
1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team



Media Release  
20 February 2024



"It will be a busy time in town for everyone. Lots of trades and specialists chipping in to get it done."  
-ends-

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www.lmw.vic.gov.au/swep  
swep@lmw.vic.gov.au  
1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team



Lower Murray Water  
February 23 at 10:00 AM

Irrigation customers in the Mildura and Merbein irrigation districts can now view the winter schedule online at <http://www.lmw.vic.gov.au/irrigation-season-dates/>. At this stage, there are no lengthy scheduled works for Red Cliffs irrigation customers this winter. For further information, please see the WaterNow ordering website.



You, Lauren Ware, Mallee Catchment Management Authority and 3 others 1 share

Like Comment Share

Write a comment...



## Who We Heard From

As described, LMW undertook an extensive engagement to promote the draft winter shutdown program and call for customers to get in contact if they had concerns around potential impacts on their plans over winter.

This campaign was successful, with more than 25 individual customers contacting LMW over this period to discuss the shutdowns and their circumstances.

In some instances, we were able to confirm immediately that the customers would not be affected by the proposed shutdowns.

In other instances, we followed up with customers through calls, emails and where appropriate, visited growers at their property, to discuss in more detail their circumstances and potential options for minimising impacts this winter.

## What We Heard

Across the growers who we spoke to, the themes of the feedback was:

- Some of the shutdowns would be more manageable if there was a short break between shutdowns, or slightly reduced length of the shutdowns, to allow more regular irrigations to occur.
- The shutdowns proposed on the end of the Mildura K channel would have less impact on vegetable growers if they were delayed from starting until June (originally proposed for May).

## Actioning customer feedback

Taking onboard the feedback received during the engagement campaign, LMW worked to find opportunities to shape the Winter Shutdown Schedule in a way to accommodate as many known customer needs as possible.

In total, the shutdown windows across seven of the affected channel pools were altered in response to customer input.

The following lists the adjustments made to the 2024 Winter Shutdown Schedule:

### **L Channel**

- Bakers Pool shutdown shortened by 4 days to accommodate a customer's watering needs for customer vegetable crops

### **K Channel**

- Irymple South & Tex Pearts shutdown brought forward, from early July to early May, with shutdown periods reduced from 3 weeks to 2 weeks at a time to better accommodate regular watering needs.
- Dow Pool shutdowns reduced in length and increased the number, to better accommodate regular watering needs.
- Sandilong and K Extension shutdown pushed back, from early May to mid-June, with reduced lengths and increased number. The later start allows most of the watering to finish before the shutdowns start, and the reduced periods better accommodates regular watering needs.

### **Wargan Channel**

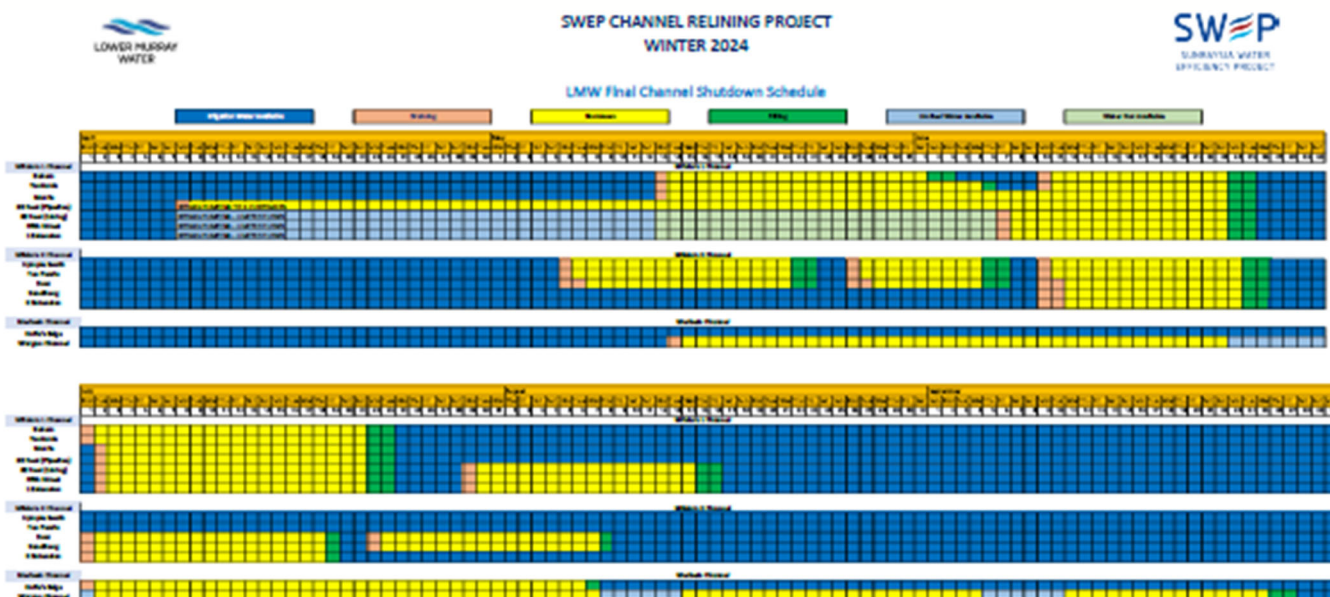
- Consideration given to potential for bypass pumping to accommodate specific customer watering needs between June and September

## The Final 2024 Winter Shutdown Schedule

The 2024 Winter Shutdown Schedule (in day-by-day detail) has been finalised adopting customer-prompted adjustments.

This schedule has been made available on the LMW website on 19 March 2024 to allow customers time to plan their water use for the season ahead.

[www.lmw.vic.gov.au/irrigation-services/irrigation-management/irrigation-season-dates](http://www.lmw.vic.gov.au/irrigation-services/irrigation-management/irrigation-season-dates).



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