

Making the most of your water - Record-keeping factsheets

Factsheet 1 | Version 1 | April 2015

New conditions are being added to all water licences that will require you to keep records to demonstrate compliance. DPIPWWE has developed some factsheets to assist you in understanding how planning, recording and reviewing your water use can assist you in being compliant with your water licence.

The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE), is reviewing and standardising water licences to make them easier to understand and comply with. As part of this process, the following condition is being added to allocations:

"The licence holder must maintain records that demonstrate the quantity of water taken. When directed by the Minister, the licence holder must provide the Minister with the records in a manner specified by the Minister."

Who needs to keep records?

If you take licensed water then you will need to keep records on how much water you have used, where you have taken it from and when you took it. Confirm your need to keep records considering the following questions:

1. Do you have a water licence* issued by DPIPWWE?

Yes - Go to question 2

No - You do not need to keep records for compliance purposes

**If you are unsure if you need a water licence then see the Water Licences: Do's and Don'ts factsheet*

2. Do you take water for commercial purposes or do you have non-riparian stock and domestic allocations?

Yes - You will need to keep records

No - You do not need to keep records and a simple diary entry each year may suffice.

Many farmers may already have systems in place they use to manage their businesses. Such systems may also be useful to record water use and demonstrate compliance.

If you don't currently have a system to record your water use, or want to find out more, then this series of factsheets may be of use.

¹The word "taking" is a legal term defined in the *Water Management Act 1999*. Measuring take can be difficult.

In order to provide a practical approach to measuring the amount of water taken in many cases the amount of water used can be a surrogate for take. Generally, if your records show your use (as distinct from take) of any allocation does not exceed that allocation you are licensed to take, we will consider you as compliant.

²Riparian means land that adjoins a watercourse or through which a watercourse runs, or that adjoins a lake or on which a lake is situated.

The factsheets

These factsheets are aimed at assisting water licence holders to account for the water they use. They are centred on providing various options for different situations. Depending on your circumstances, knowledge and experience you may choose to use the ones relevant to you.

- If you do not use any of your licensed allocations you do not need to keep records. A simple diary entry each year may suffice.
- If you do use any of your licensed allocations, then you will be required to demonstrate compliance by keeping records. There are a number of methods you can use.

DPIPWE does not prescribe how records should be kept, however, these factsheets offer some options that are being used by some farmers and may be useful to you.

Factsheet 1 - Record-keeping factsheets

This, the current factsheet, explains who needs to keep records, the benefits of keeping them, and a description of what self-assessment may entail. The information in the other three factsheets build upon this one.

Factsheet 2 - Planning your water use

This provides simple water budgeting examples and templates that could be utilised in planning your water use for any given season. This includes information on preparing a water budget and an operational plan, along with blank templates for you to fill in.

Factsheet 3 - Recording your water use

Here, a series of tools have been developed that may assist with recording your water use. Whilst it is not a definitive list, it does include information and templates for recording irrigation amounts, recording meter readings and using pump hour records. Blank templates of each of these are provided for you to utilise.

Factsheet 4 - Reviewing your water use

Reviewing your water use is as simple as comparing how much water you use with how much you have available. In simple terms, to be compliant, your water use must not be greater than what is available to you. This factsheet explains how to prepare a water balance and includes questions you can ask to see how your budgeting and record keeping have worked. This process may also provide information for future planning of water use in preparing financial budgets.

Why keep records?

Keeping water use records need not be an onerous task, and may have many benefits for your business. By knowing the amount of water you are using and how you are using it you may have:

1. The potential to more efficiently use available water.

The planning and monitoring of irrigation water requirements should allow you to:

- maximise production from existing allocations or rights;
- make informed decisions as to when purchased water will be needed to be used in a season;
- identify any unused water (including the potential for carrying over unused winter water held in storage for the next year's crops).

You need to take account of likely river restrictions, total available allocated water versus forecast water requirements and the amount of purchased water. There may be approvals required and lead times for ordering the delivery of purchased water.

2. Increased confidence in the availability of water in dry years.

Reviewing the water available against the actual water used at the end of a season provides you:

- with increased confidence as to exactly how much water is needed in similar circumstances;
- with an accurate starting point to plan for following seasons;
- with information to identify early in the planning stage if extra water is required in a dry season.

This will also help identify any need to source more reliable water to offset the risks if required.

Including options such as increased on farm storage or the purchase of water from other sources.

3. Better information to support future budgeting and planning.

Reviewing the water you have used against that available at the end of the season may assist you in planning for the next season with an increased understanding of water requirements.

4. Consistent data for any benchmarking activities.

Accurate and consistent records of water used for different production systems and crops can be used to assist in the comparison of total input costs and profitability. This can then be used to assess maximum return per megalitre of water.

5. The ability to monitor water shared between farmers who share a dam.

Accurate records by all farmers allow each party to demonstrate they are compliant with allocations or rights from a shared resource. This enables individuals to show that neither party is being disadvantaged, an essential requirement should a dispute arise.

6. The ability to demonstrate accountability through simple tools.

Whilst there is benefit for you to understand your inputs and associated financial overheads, planning, recording and reviewing your water use will enable you to demonstrate compliance with your water licence.

What is self-assessment?

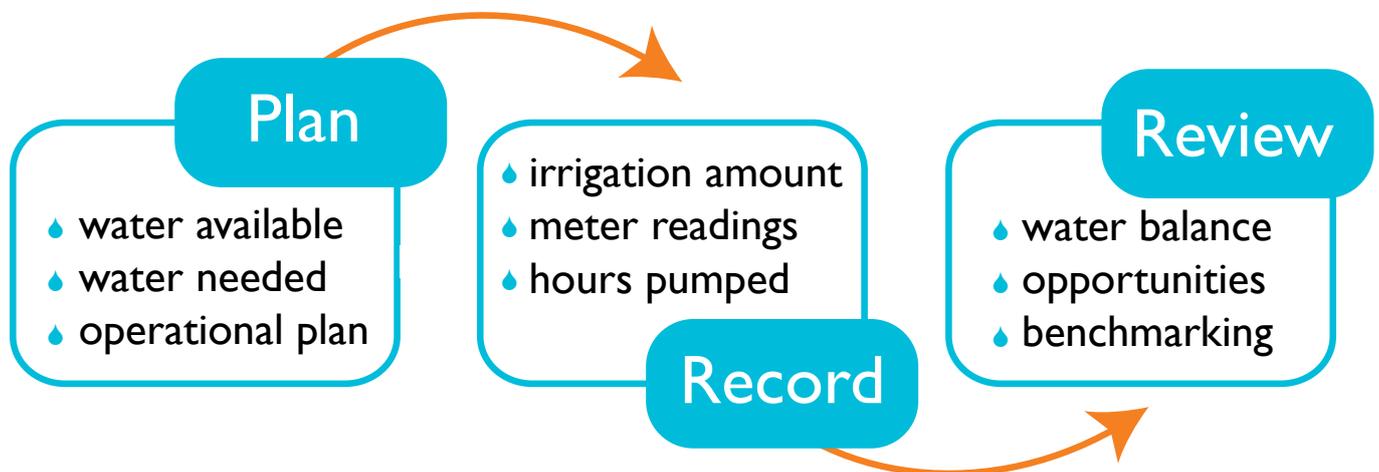
The self-assessment of water use process

DPIPWE has been working with farmers and industry representatives to develop a suite of tools that may help farmers undertake self-assessment of their water.

Information was sought about what water licence holders are:

- doing to keep track of their water inputs;
- recording and analysing for decision making;
- doing to be accountable.

While few farmers covered all aspects completely, what was found to be useful and effective was the following process:



If you want to find out more about how you could do these steps in your business, then read the other three factsheets. These provide information, examples and templates that, if used, can help you be compliant with your water licence.

- Factsheet 2 - Planning your water use
- Factsheet 3 - Tracking your water use
- Factsheet 4 - Reviewing you water use