

Media Release



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning

Friday 6 July 2018 | Media contact: Chris McNamara | 0417 345 124

Low pH levels continue in Boundary Creek and upper Barwon River

Community members and landholders along Boundary Creek and the Barwon River near Birregurra are advised that there are still changes to water quality in local rivers and creeks.

Regular monitoring has detected a continuation of low pH levels in Boundary Creek.

Low pH is also still being recorded in the Barwon River near Birregurra (downstream of Boundary Creek), although there is a slight improvement since last week.

Monitoring further downstream at Winchelsea showed that pH is within the normal range for the Barwon River. The low pH water has not travelled further downstream than Winchelsea.

The source of the low pH water is likely to be acid sulphate soils in Big Swamp that have previously dried out and then been soaked by heavy rainfall, flushing low pH water into Boundary Creek. The low pH water has then flowed into the upper Barwon River.

Barwon Water recently formed a community and stakeholder working group to develop a remediation plan for Big Swamp and Boundary Creek to improve river flows and water quality.

Low pH is a measure of water acidity and people may also notice visual changes to local waterways such as unusually clear water.

No significant fish death events have been reported.

There is no threat to reticulated drinking water supplies in the region because of this change in water quality. The reticulated water is sourced from the West Barwon reservoir, which is well upstream of the affected area, and the reticulated water is treated.

People should always avoid drinking untreated river water, and are advised to avoid direct skin contact with the affected water in this area until further notice as this may cause eye or skin irritation.

Dogs should be kept away from swimming in or drinking river water in affected areas. The recommended guidelines for livestock water is for pH levels of 6.5 - 8.5. However, livestock can drink lower pH water but alternative water supplies should be considered if stock are noticed to refuse affected river water.

Barwon Water, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA), Colac Otway Shire, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Southern Rural Water, Environment Protection Authority Victoria and Agriculture Victoria are continuing to work together to monitor the situation and keep communities informed about the situation.

Barwon Water is monitoring pH levels in affected waterways twice a week so that appropriate action and advice to communities and landholders can continue to be provided.

Monitoring results can be accessed on the Corangamite CMA webpage www.ccma.vic.gov.au or by calling (03) 5232 9100.

If people in the region are concerned or require further information, please get in touch with CCMA CEO Graham Phelps on (03) 5232 9100 or 0427 386 246.