

March 2026 Water for the Environment Newsletter

Despite some areas of the catchment receiving average rainfall over the last month, the relief has been unfortunately short-lived and with minimal influence on streamflow in the Glenelg River. Throughout February, we were still heavily reliant on releases of environmental water to the Glenelg River. Consistent baseflows and fresh releases over Summer have sustained water quality and connectivity, with a final fresh for the season released on February 10, peaking at 250ML/day on February 18, before dropping back down to baseflows by February 26. Baseflow releases will continue into the Glenelg River for the remainder of the season.

Fish Monitoring

The positive effects of environmental water have been demonstrated by Arthur Rylah Institute's (ARI) most recent fish monitoring survey along the Glenelg in March (Figure 1). This fish survey is undertaken annually to paint a picture the health of our native fish species over time. During the recent survey, 284 Blackfish were either observed or captured, including many juvenile fish, aged 0+ and 1+ years of age. This indicates continued positive recruitment for a species dependant on good water quality. During these dry years, we can attribute much of the success of this species to environmental water releases from Rocklands Reservoir.

Meanwhile, the length of Tupong was similar to last year with many of the fish being adults. This indicates continued high survival of the 2023 year-class but no recruitment in that last 2 years. The lack of juveniles is to be expected during these dry years, as Tupong spawning is triggered by largescale natural rainfall events in Autumn or Winter, which we have not seen since 2022. Without this trigger, Tupong do not migrate to saltwater to breed so there is no positive recruitment. Nonetheless, environmental water plays a part in maintaining conditions for the survival of adult species through maintaining connectivity throughout the system.

The following fish species were also recorded: Flatheaded Gudgeon, Southern Pygmy Perch, Variegated Pygmy Perch, Australian Smelt, Common Galaxias, Obscure Galaxias, Estuary Perch, Black Bream, Smallmouth Hardyhead, Common Yabby and Glenelg Spiny Crayfish. Five non-native species were also captured or observed, including Gambusia, Carp, Redfin Perch, Rainbow Trout and Goldfish. Freshwater Catfish, that occurs naturally within the Murray-Darling Basin was also captured.



Figure 1 Frank and Lauren from Arthur Riler Institute surveying a section of the Glenelg River using electrofishing techniques. This survey is repeated annually, providing an overview of changes over time for native and exotic species abundance and distribution.

Environmental Flows for the Glenelg

Flows at Balmoral

The February fresh event released from Rocklands Wall peaked at 61ML/day on February 11, resulting in a streamflow at Weavers Gauge of around 50ML/day on February 19. As with other fresh events in Reach 1a, the summer/autumn fresh target was slightly undershot to manage flooding risks associated with Frasers Swamp, while maintaining water quality and connectivity in this section of the river (Figure 1).

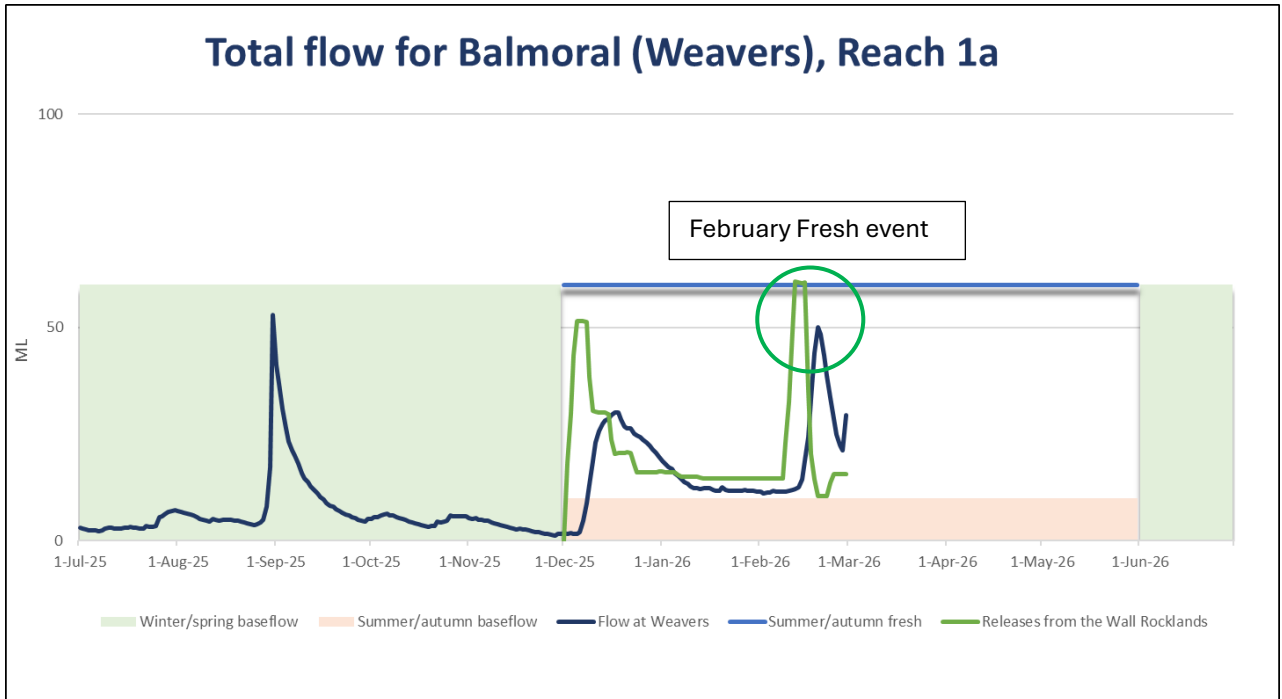


Figure 1 Total flow for Balmoral (Weavers) Reach 1a for the 2025-2026 watering year up to February 28, 2026. (Data collected via Water Management Information System and GWM Water, accurate as of 23/03/2026).

Flows at Harrow

Both the summer/autumn baseflow and fresh targets were met in Harrow, with streamflow at Reach 1b peaking at 145ML/d on February 24, just in time for the Johnny Mullagh Long Weekend event on March 8 (Figure 2). The river level rose by approximately 50cm during this time, making ideal conditions for recreational users to enjoy water activities on the Glenelg. The water level gradually reduced as the fresh event moved downstream and releases began returning to baseflows again. The gauge at Harrow is currently malfunctioning and undergoing maintenance.

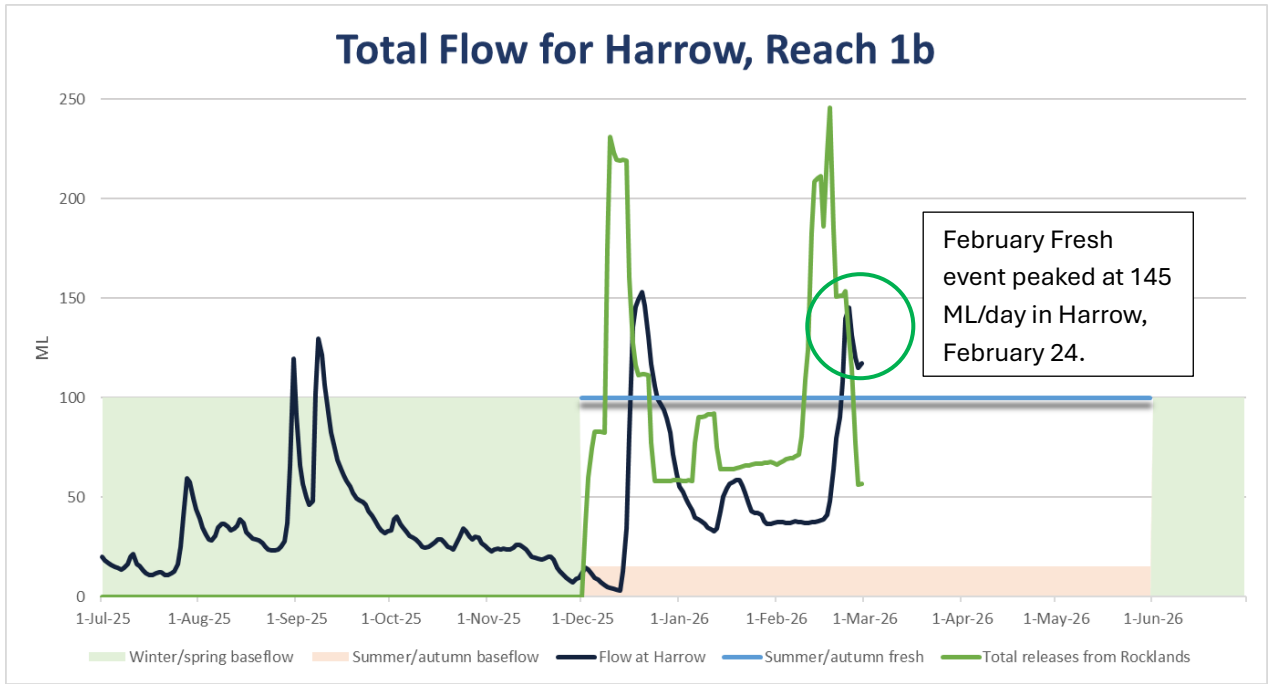


Figure 2 Total flow for Harrow, Reach 1b for the 2025-2026 watering year up to January 31, 2026. (Data collected via Water Management Information System and GWM Water, accurate as of 23/03/2026).

Flows at Dergholm

Similarly to Harrow, both summer/autumn baseflow and fresh targets were met in Dergholm, with the fresh nudging the target at 152ML/day on February 28, 11 days after the peak release of 246ML/d on February 18. As we've seen, these conditions are perfect for blackfish recruitment and other native aquatic species in the Glenelg.

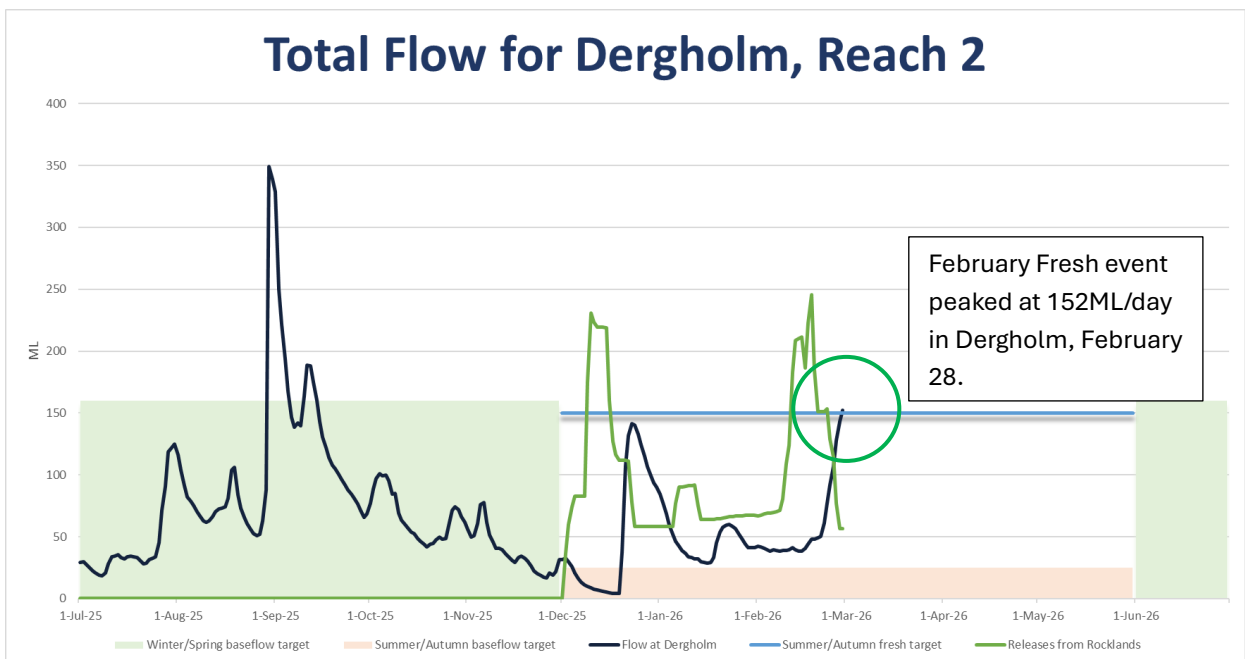


Figure 3 Total flow for Dergholm, Reach 2 for the 2025-2026 watering year up to February 28, 2026. (Data collected via Water Management Information System and GWM Water, accurate as of 23/03/2026).

Flows at Dartmoor

Summer/autumn baseflow and fresh targets in Dartmoor followed a similar pattern to previous months, with baseflows tracking shy of targets during February, noting the CMA does not target Dartmoor with a baseflow release. The Fresh event in the Glenelg River is not evident in the graph below but will likely fall short of its target. Flows to Dartmoor (reach 3) are usually met via natural runoff or groundwater as tributaries downstream increase the volume of water arriving at this section of the river.

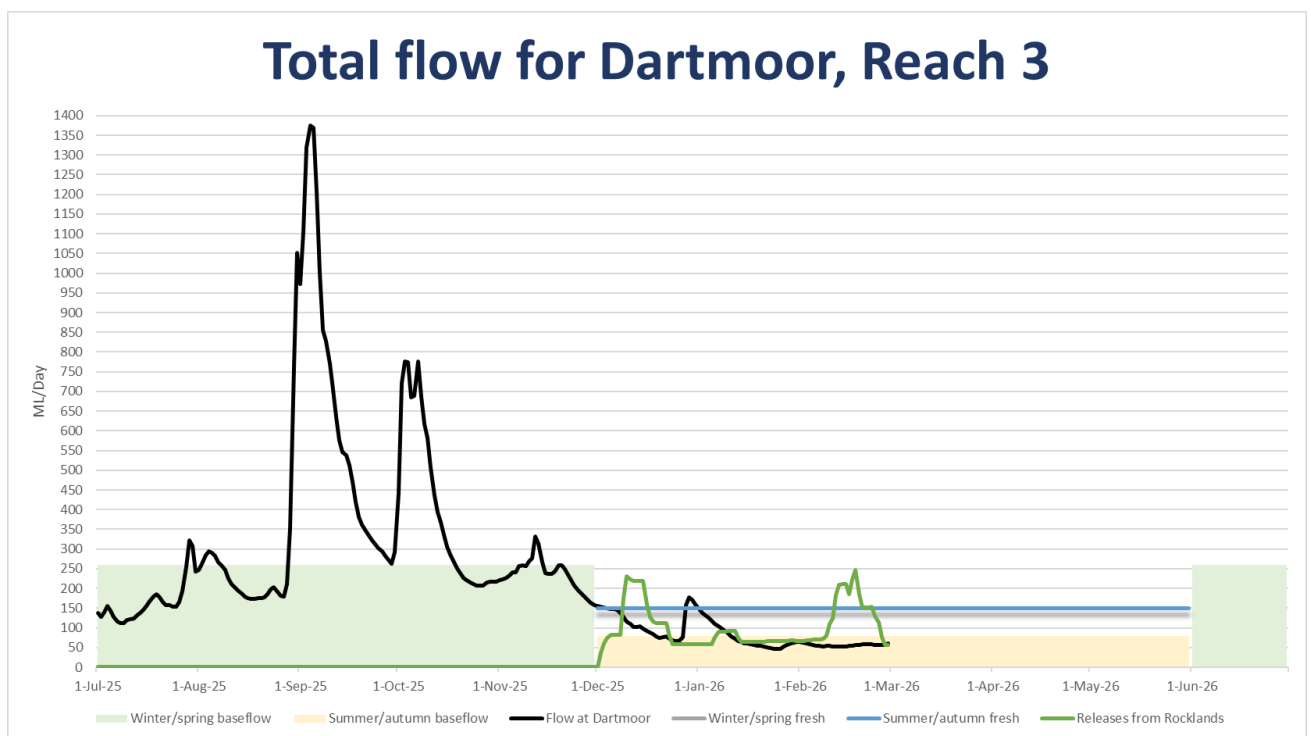


Figure 4 Total flow for Dartmoor, Reach 3 for the 2025-2026 watering year up to February 28, 2026. (Data collected via Water Management Information System and GWM Water, accurate as of 23/03/2026).