



Farm dams

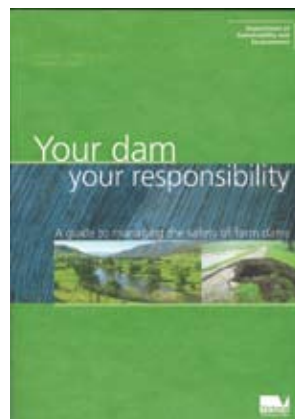
The registration and licensing of commercially used dams will help Victorian water corporations protect the rights of existing users, including the environment and you, by helping to ensure that water use across the state is sustainable.

This fact sheet provides information about some of the rights and responsibilities relating to owning and operating dams that collect rainfall run-off or water from a spring or soak. Methods of calculating dam volumes are also discussed.



These dams also require an operating licence under section 67 (1A) of the Water Act.

To find out more about your obligations and practical ways to ensure your dam is safe contact GWMWater today for a FREE copy of *“Your Dam, Your Responsibility”*.



“Your Dam, Your Responsibility” provides guidelines for preparing Emergency Management Plans and gives step-by-step instructions for monitoring farm dams.



Is your dam potentially hazardous?

Dams that are poorly constructed or not maintained run the risk of failing, potentially resulting in wasted water, expensive repairs and even loss of life. Dam owners are liable for any damage their dam causes to others, including the environment.

Some dams pose a greater risk than others. The Water Act requires owners to prepare an Emergency Management Plan and Surveillance Program for dams fitting the following criteria:

- > Dams with a wall of 5 metres or more high and a capacity of 50 megalitres or more.
- > Dams with a wall of 10 metres or more high and a capacity of 20 megalitres or more.
- > Dams with a wall of 15 metres or more high regardless of the capacity.

Remember, it's YOUR responsibility

GWMWater staff inspected hundreds of catchment dams as part of the registration process. Some dams appeared to be in good condition. Others were riddled with trees, or rabbit holes, or were showing signs of erosion.

It's important to maintain the integrity of your dam.

- > Tree roots eventually rot and leave holes in dam walls.
- > Rabbit holes pave the way for tunnel erosion.
- > Poor compaction can lead to slumping.

It's also important to check that any valves and outlets are in good working order, so that you can manage an emergency situation should it arise.

Did you know?

- > Vegetation such as perennial grasses and shrubs growing in the catchment area of a dam are beneficial as they filter nutrients and sediment from run-off into the dam.
- > If the water in your dam is clear this may indicate the water is saline.

The only construction work that can be done without a specific works licence is cleaning out the dam, providing the original volume is not increased.

Standard vs Registration

If you wish to transfer (sell) your entitlement you will need to 'upgrade' your registration licence to a standard licence. This may be done at any time by contacting GWMWater's Water Resources Division on 1300 659 961.

Constructing a new dam

In order to construct a new dam for irrigation or commercial purposes, you will need to apply to GWMWater for a construction licence and a licence to take and use water.

Constructing a new dam for stock and domestic purposes does not require a licence unless the dam will be constructed on a 'waterway'.

Managing farm dams

The GWMWater publication 'Managing Farm Dams' discusses some of the issues dam owners face in the Wimmera and Mallee regions, including water quality. Whilst focussed on stock and domestic dams, most of the information is also relevant for commercial users. Contact GWMWater for your FREE copy of the handbook.

Dam volumes

There are a number of formulae available for calculating dam volumes. GWMWater applied the most appropriate formulae to determine the volume of dams across the region, depending on their general shape and location.

If you believe GWMWater's calculation of your dam's volume is incorrect you may elect to have the dam surveyed at your own expense by a suitably qualified surveyor, or submit your own set of calculations to GWMWater for review. As long as the dam/s have not been altered since the application / inspection and GWMWater is satisfied with the information provided the dam volume will be altered accordingly on your licence.

How much water can I use?

The volume of water available from your dam is likely to differ each year due to varying rates of rainfall, run-off, evaporation and seepage. Although you are entitled to use the full volume of your dam/s in any year, we urge you to manage your water use based on these factors.

Can I enlarge my dam?

Your licence states the maximum volume of water you may use in any year, based on the volume of your dam(s).

To use any water in excess of the licensed volume for irrigation or commercial use requires a separate licence. If you wish to:

- > Enlarge an existing irrigation or commercial dam in order to harvest more water for irrigation or commercial purposes, you must apply for a construction licence and a standard licence to take and use water.
- > Enlarge an existing irrigation or commercial dam for purposes other than irrigation or commercial use, you must satisfy GWMWater that you will not increase your use of water for irrigation or commercial purposes (eg. fix a water meter to your irrigation pump)

What is a waterway?

The Water Act provides a number of definitions for a waterway. The definition most commonly applicable in the area managed by GWMWater is:

- > An area where water naturally flows in a confined way where the area either has a catchment of 60ha or more or is fed by a spring or soak.

Change of ownership

If you decide to sell your property contact GWMWater and we will change over the licence to the new owner.

Land title

Please be sure to check your land title details on your licence. Crown Allotments may be changed due to sub division of properties after the application period.

If you find your details are incorrect contact GWMWater so your details can be updated.