

Goolwa – where the river runs dry



Picture: LEON NEAD

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THE River Murray will stop flowing from Lake Alexandrina through to the Goolwa channel by the end of April because there is not enough water to keep them connected, the State Government says.

If the drought continues through winter, a 1km stretch of bare ground will run from the mainland to Hindmarsh Island east of Clayton, about 17km upstream of the Murray Mouth by September.

It would be the first time

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on record the River Murray would not flow through the channel from upstream.

The Government's water security technical group chairman Andrew Beal said there would be a little water movement between the lake and the channel by the end of April, but it would not be enough to maintain the water level of the Gool-

wa channel. He said a full disconnection, expected in spring if below-average rainfall occurred in winter, would cause a silt bar to form between Lake Alexandrina and the Goolwa channel and no water would pass through.

"Unless we have major rainfall over the Lakes or a major sourcing of water from elsewhere in the basin, it's unlikely to change," he said.

Goolwa Regatta Yacht Club Commodore Keith Parkes said boats already had trouble navigating Murray waters because of

shallow water in parts. He said the only boats which would be able to sail when the lake and channel were disconnected would be very small personal watercraft, which users would have to carry over mud flats and put in the water themselves.

"Once the level of the river gets down to that level, we will have no means (to get boats to the water), the boat ramps won't be usable, the water will be too shallow."

The mayors of River Murray councils will meet their metropolitan counter-

parts at Adelaide Town Hall this Friday to discuss the River Murray crisis.

The low water levels have also forced the organisers of Goolwa's biggest event, the South Australian Wooden Boat and Music Festival, to devise a new plan and marketing strategy.

Publicity officer Wendy Watson said pontoons would be brought in, to allow boats to moor for public display during the three-day March event, because the area usually used was mostly dry.