

Proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region

What it means for wetlands



The wetlands in the Wellington region are valued for the role they play in storing water, recycling nutrients, stabilising shorelines and providing flood protection. These areas also support rich biodiversity, with more bird species than any other type of habitat in New Zealand. Wetlands are also valued for bird-watching, hunting, sport fishing and tourism.

Wetlands historically covered about 122,000 hectares in the Wellington Region. They provided important resources for early Māori – for kai, building materials, clothing and remedies. Wetlands have been drained or filled for farmland, urban development and roads. Today there are less than 3,000 hectares left (2.3percent of the original extent).

The Proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region (proposed Plan) contains provisions that encourage landowners to develop Restoration Management Plans for wetlands on their property. The Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) will help landowners develop and use Restoration Management Plans for their wetlands.

Some activities in wetlands are permitted in the proposed Plan, including removal of pest plants, planting appropriate wetland species, maintaining, repairing or removing existing structures, and building new maimai and jetties, as long as specific conditions are met. All other activities in wetlands require resource consent from GWRC. This is a shift from the current regional plan rules.

If you are considering undertaking works within a wetland, contact the Environmental Regulation team at GWRC for advice on whether your activity is permitted or resource consent is required. District plans may also contain rules on activities in wetlands. District plans are administered by your local or district council. Contact your local or district council to check if your proposed activity is affected by a district plan.

To protect what remains of our wetlands, the proposed Plan contains provisions for three types of wetlands:

Natural wetlands support natural ecosystems of plants and animals adapted to wet conditions. They may or may not have rich biodiversity, but they play an important role in the water cycle. Wetlands that have formed in or around ponds or dams or that were man-made for other purposes are not considered 'natural wetlands'. Activities in these non-natural wetlands are not managed by the proposed Plan



What is the Proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region?

The Proposed Natural Resources Plan (the proposed Plan) is a new regional plan designed to integrate the Wellington Region's five existing regional plans-- the [Regional Coastal Plan](#), [Regional Freshwater Plan](#), [Regional Soil Plan](#), [Regional Air Quality Management Plan](#) and [Regional Plan for Discharges to Land](#). Regional plans are developed under the Resource Management Act to set out the objectives, policies and methods for people and organisations that use a region's resources for a variety of purposes:

The proposed Plan was developed following a review of the five existing regional plans from 2011 to 2015. Until the GWRC decides to adopt the proposed Plan, resource users must comply with rules in the proposed Plan and rules in the five existing plans.

There is a lot of information in the proposed Plan and a lot to understand, so if you need help to figure out if your activity is permitted, or requires a resource consent, or if you have any questions at all, please contact us for more information 0800 496 734 or regionalplan@gw.govt.nz

Permitted: no resource consent is required provided you comply with the conditions in the rule.

Controlled, discretionary or non-complying: a resource consent from Wellington Regional Council is required. Conditions may need to be met.

Prohibited: cannot be undertaken at any time.

Significant wetlands are areas containing diverse plant or animal communities, rare or threatened species, or are representative of wetland ecosystems that used to be widespread. Most natural wetlands in the region are also significant, and are identified in Schedule F3 in the proposed Plan. Many significant wetlands are candidates for restoration, such as planting, pest plant control or management of water levels. Livestock, other than sheep, need to be excluded from significant natural wetlands within three years.



Outstanding wetlands have the highest biodiversity values of the natural wetlands in our region. Outstanding wetlands receive the highest level of protection and are identified in Schedule A3 of the proposed Plan. The GWRC will work with landowners, iwi, the Department of Conservation and others to develop plans to restore (where necessary) and manage the water and biodiversity of each outstanding wetland.



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www.gw.govt.nz/regional-plan-review
0800 496 734
regionalplan@gw.govt.nz


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