

Reclamation of a riverbed

Sometimes there is a need to reclaim the bed of a river, for instance, for the piping of a river. The [National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020](#) (NPS-FM) has strong direction to avoid loss of river values. Therefore, it's important that any reclamation is carried out appropriately and is only undertaken where considered necessary.

The [National Environmental Standard for Freshwater 2020](#) (NES-FW) requires a consent for any reclamation of the bed of any river. Consent may also be required under our [Regional Plan: Water](#) (RPW).

The following is advice on what you need to know about reclaiming the bed of a river

When considering a potential reclamation, it is important to consider the possible effects from the activity.

- Will there be adverse effects on river form (either upstream or downstream)?
- What will the effects be on river function in flood flow or low flow events?
- Consider the potential for subsidence and erosion
- Will the new channel lose more water to ground than the current channel does?
- Other potential effects could be on fish habitat and or passage, recreational or cultural values associated with the river

Definitions

National planning standards definition

Reclamation means the manmade formation of permanent dry land by the positioning of material into or onto any part of a waterbody, bed of a lake or river or the coastal marine area, and:

(a) includes the construction of any causeway; but

(b) excludes the construction of natural hazard protection structures such as seawalls, breakwaters or groynes except where the purpose of those structures is to form dry land.

Definition in the RPW

Reclamation is the permanent infilling of a water body or part of a water body with sand, rock, quarry material, concrete, or other similar material, for any purpose, and includes any embankment or causeway, but does not include any structure above water where that structure is supported by piles, or any deposition of material or infilling that is not permanent.

Choosing material for reclamation.

It is important when considering a potential reclamation to have appropriate materials for the job. We recommend using durable natural material if reclamation is to occur. The material used should not result in a discharge to water.

Durable natural materials include sand, gravel and rock, that is free of soluble materials and are therefore not subject to biological or chemical breakdown. Please note this does not include demolition materials.

Reinstating the bank of a river

The RPW allows you to reinstate the bank of a river that has been eroded by a flood event as a permitted activity. The key criteria are that:

- There is no change in the scale of the bank prior to the flood event
- The works are carried out within twelve months of the flood event
- Works within the wetted bed do not exceed 10 hours in duration

There are other provisions that need to be met as well. If you need to reinstate a bank please look at [Rule 13.5.1.4 of the RPW](#).

Reclamation associated with placing a structure

Similar to reinstating a bank, there are permitted activity provisions in the RPW related to reclaiming the bed of a river associated with the placement, extension, alteration, replacement, reconstruction, repair or maintenance of a structure ([rule 13.5.1.3](#)). Only cleanfill can be used. If the permitted activity provisions cannot be met resource consent will be required.

Other activities

Depending on the method of works, additional consents may be required for any damming and diversion of water, any alteration of the bed and any discharges. Please seek advice from the Consents Public Enquiries Team for more information on this by emailing public.enquiries@orc.govt.nz