

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Proposed Plan Change 2 (Regionally Significant Wetlands)

Proposed Plan Change 2 (Regionally Significant Wetlands) seeks to better protect Otago's significant wetlands. It also aims to meet the wetlands-related requirements of the recently released National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2011. New Zealand has lost more than 90% of its wetlands and this plan change aims to protect the best of those remaining in Otago. In summary, the plan change proposes more accurate maps for Regionally Significant Wetlands and requires consents for activities that could damage or destroy a wetland.

What is a Regionally Significant Wetland?

A Regionally Significant Wetland is one listed in Schedule 9 of the Regional Plan: Water for Otago or which is higher than 800 metres above sea level.

The wetlands in Schedule 9 contain one or more of the values listed in Policy 10.4.1 (e.g., "high degree of naturalness" or "scarce in Otago") and are mapped in the Water Plan maps. These mapped areas were determined by an aerial and satellite survey. Many were visited by helicopter and/or on the ground with landowners.

What if I think a wetland identified as regionally significant isn't?

You can make a submission on the proposed plan change to the council. The closing date for submissions is 29 July at 5pm. See the end of this document for further details.

Can I put a new drain in a Regionally Significant Wetland?

New drains in a Regionally Significant Wetland have previously required consent and will continue to do so after 2 July 2011

Can I maintain an existing drain in a Regionally Significant Wetland?

An existing drain in a Regionally Significant Wetland can continue to be in place and drain water without a resource consent until six months after the plan change is made operative.

After 2 July, any clearance or alteration of a Regionally Significant Wetland or a drain in a Regionally Significant Wetland will require consent.

Is a wetland just water?

A wetland can be both open water and land which is permanently or occasionally wet. Sometimes, like with fens, bog and marshes, the water table is below the ground level and there isn't any open water. This means the rules for Regionally Significant Wetlands apply to the whole mapped area of any Regionally Significant Wetland, both the water and the land.

Do I have to fence the wetland? Are stock banned from wetlands?

There is no requirement to fence wetlands. Stock are permitted as long as they follow conditions such as no obvious pugging, slumping or erosion, or damage to habitat. Some wetlands may not be able to handle stock, while for other areas it may be fine in dry times. You may wish to fence a wetland to prevent stock access if the conditions can't be met.

Can I oversow or cultivate the wetland?

The introduction or planting of any New Zealand native plant is a permitted activity, with conditions. Any other planting will require a consent.

Can I enhance the wetland?

Planting of native vegetation and removal of exotic vegetation are permitted activities. Pesticide spraying, changing the water level, or altering the wetland will require a consent.

Where can I get funding or help with the wetland?

- Department of Conservation (www.doc.govt.nz) offer a number of funds:
 - Nature Heritage Fund
 - Biodiversity Advice Fund
 - Biodiversity Condition Fund
 - Nga Whenua Rahui fund
 - Matauranga Kura Taiao fund
- Honda TreeFund (www.honda.co.nz/environment/treefund)
- Speight's Brewery Environmental Fund (www.speightsfund.co.nz)
- World Wildlife Fund (www.wwf.org.nz/what_we_do/community_funding)
- Sustainable Farming Fund (www.maf.govt.nz)
- Sustainable Management Fund (www.mfe.govt.nz)
- Lotteries Environment & Heritage (www.dia.govt.nz)
- QEII National Trust offers some funding for fencing and survey costs when establishing Open Space covenants.
- Local government authorities provide rates relief for some covenanted land (QEII covenanted land is included) and may offer funding.

What about other wetlands (i.e., ones that aren't regionally significant)?

Wetlands not considered regionally significant are not addressed in the proposed plan change. The Water Plan already controls the taking of groundwater within 100 metres of a wetland and contains general rules on taking, diverting, discharging and damming water bodies.

How do I find out more about the proposed plan change and make a submission?

The proposed plan change and submission forms are available at ORC offices in Dunedin, Alexandra, Queenstown and Balclutha, on the ORC website (www.orc.govt.nz), by phoning 0800 474 082, or by emailing policy@orc.govt.nz.

Submissions close at 5pm on Friday 29 July 2011.