

Proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region

Household wastewater and septic tanks



Households and household activities generate different categories of water, each of which needs to be disposed of differently to maintain good public and environmental health and the stability of the land. If not managed correctly, wastewater and stormwater discharges can contaminate ground water and rivers and streams with bacteria including E. coli and other pathogens that affect human and environmental health.

What different types of wastewater are there?

Black water

Blackwater is contaminated wastewater from kitchen sinks and toilets which drains into sewer systems and septic tanks.

Greywater

Greywater includes contaminated wastewater from showers, hand basins and washing machines. While this water generally drains into the sewerage system, systems can be installed to recycle it for other uses within the home such as toilet flushing or irrigating gardens.

Stormwater

Stormwater is rain collected and channelled by hard surfaces such as roads, roofs, driveways, and concrete pads. It should flow into the soil or into stormwater drains and can only enter a waterway if the water is the same quality as the waterway (such as rain water into a river), otherwise consent may be required. Stormwater drains should never be connected with sewerage systems because high volumes of water can cause significant capacity issues in sewerage systems and treatment plants.

When stormwater is not collected, it should follow natural run-off patterns and be stored if necessary to reduce peak volumes and flows of water which can help to minimise the risks of flooding or erosion. Creation of permeable surfaces such as lawns and planted areas are encouraged as they absorb and slow the impact of stormwater on drainage infrastructure and streams, rivers, lakes and the coastal environment.

Water from swimming pools or spa pools can be discharged into waterways as a permitted activity under Rule R44 however, there are conditions to meet such as the discharge cannot contain filter backwash water, salt water, chemical treatments or heavy metals. Check out Rule R44 for the full list of conditions.

Septic tanks, pit latrines and composting toilets

The Proposed Natural Resources Plan includes rules on the installation and management of septic tanks, pit latrines and composting toilets to prevent contamination of fresh water and ground water resulting from inappropriate discharges. It is important that on-site systems are well maintained. See Rules Rxxx for details.

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.

Can I install septic tanks or on-site household wastewater systems?

Raw sewerage cannot be discharged directly to waterways. On-site household wastewater systems (including septic tanks) collect, store, treat and dispose wastewater in accordance with local bylaws and New Zealand standards (AS/NZS 1547-2012). The discharge of wastewater from a new septic tank or on-site household wastewater system is permitted under Rule R75 and must meet various conditions, including that the discharge does not occur within a community drinking water supply protection area, or it doesn't enter groundwater or a waterway either by pipe, or by flowing over or through the ground. Check with your local district council to see if any building consents are also required.

What about long drops and composting toilets?

Pit latrines (long drops) and composting toilets are permitted under Rule R71 and R72 provided they meet various conditions, including that the discharge is more than 50m away from water bodies, gullies or the coastal marine area. Pit latrines are permitted in areas without sewerage connections, and must be at least 600mm above the highest seasonal water table and backfilled after use with at least 300mm of material. Odours or other nuisances from pit latrines or composting toilets that travel beyond the property boundary are not allowed. Again, check with your local district council to see if a building consent is also required.