



Wetlands

Wetlands are important waterways. They are sometimes called the ‘kidneys’ of the natural world because they filter nutrients and purify water.

They can also store water, prevent flooding, enhance water quality and provide a home to many plants and animals, including vulnerable native species.

New national legislation (a new National Policy Statement for Freshwater 2020 (NPSFM), and National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020 (NES-FW) has strengthened the protection of wetlands.

If you have wetlands on your property, you need to be aware of the new rules.

This factsheet will help you work out whether you have a wetland on your property, and if you do, what you need to do.

We are here to help.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like someone to come on site to help you determine if you have any wetlands, please call us on **0800 474 082** or email public.enquiries@orc.govt.nz

What is a wetland?

A wetland is an area of land that is wet, soggy or spongy all or some of the time.

Wetlands that are formed when the water table lies close to the soil’s surface.

They can be found in areas prone to flooding or ponding, or where natural springs come to the surface.

Some wetlands are permanent, but others come and go at different times of the year.

Frequently asked questions



Jennings Creek Swamp



Otago Peninsula

What is a Regionally Significant Wetland?

A Regionally Significant Wetland is any wetland that has one or more of the following values:

- Habitat for nationally or internationally rare or threatened species or communities
- Critical habitat for the life cycles of indigenous fauna which are dependent on wetlands
- High diversity of wetland habitat types
- High degree of naturalness
- Wetland scarce in Otago in terms of its ecological or physical character
- Wetland which is highly valued by Kai Tahu for cultural and spiritual beliefs, values and uses, including
- High diversity of indigenous flora and fauna
- Regionally significant wetland habitat of waterfowl
- Significant hydrological values including maintaining water quality or low flows, or reducing flood flows
- Any wetland over 800 metres above sea level (alpine wetlands).

It's important to know if you have a Regionally Significant Wetland on your property, as our Water Plan has specific rules that apply to these waterways. There is a list of Regionally Significant Wetlands at www.orc.govt.nz/wetlands

What is a “natural wetland”?

Under new national legislation (the NPSFM), a natural wetland means a wetland that **is not**:

- A wetland constructed by artificial means (unless it was constructed to offset impacts on, or restore, an existing or former natural wetland)
- A geothermal wetland
- Any area of improved pasture that, at the commencement date, is dominated by (that is more than 50% of) exotic pasture species and is subject to temporary rain-derived water pooling.

Can I put new drains in the wetland?

Sometimes you can, depending on certain circumstances in the NES-FW. Please contact our team on **0800 474 082** or public.enquiries@orc.govt.nz for advice and guidance.

Can I restore a wetland?

Yes, you can as long as you plant with native species that would be found naturally in the area.

There are also some national and regional regulations you may need to comply with, so please contact our consents team on **0800 474 082** or public.enquiries@orc.govt.nz to find out more.

Are there any current Water Plan rules that apply?

Yes, there are rules and regulations in Chapter 13 of the Water Plan which apply to Regionally Significant Wetlands.

Can I remove weeds from a wetland?

Yes, woody weeds such as broom, gorse and Old Man's Beard should be removed.



Sinclair Wetlands

I think I have a wetland on my farm – what do I need to do?

Under the new national rules, you need to keep beef and dairy cattle, deer and pigs out by fencing **5m out from the edge** of the wetland. There must also be no pugging in the wetland or any sediment discharges to water. You should also check with your district or city council in case any of their rules apply.



Butterfields Wetland near Hawea River

Can I maintain existing drains in the wetland?

Yes, but you can't alter the water level in the wetland and you can't widen or deepen the drain.

What are the benefits of restoring wetlands?

Restoring wetlands on your property improves water quality and helps to promote biodiversity.

Read more about restoring wetlands at:

www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/wetland-restoration

How do I know if I have a wetland on my property?

Have a look around your property and check for areas that:

- are wet and boggy all the time or regularly
- contain native plants and/or animals
- have a river or stream going through the area or nearby

These areas are likely to be wetlands.

You could also check www.orc.govt.nz/wetlands to see if you have a Regionally Significant Wetland on your property.

Contact our consents team to find out if you need consent for earthworks, damming or stream clearance near wetlands on your property.