



Charging policy review

As we promised last year the basis for charging this year, 1999/2000, remains the same. That means we have kept consent processing and compliance monitoring charges static for three years now. A few annual charges will have changed where there has been an increase or decrease in monitoring. Our charge out rate has remained the same for the past three years.

This year the Wellington Regional Council will be reviewing its Charging Policy and will prepare a new policy for the 2000/2001 financial year. All consent holders will receive a letter inviting them to have input into any changes that are made to the Charging Policy. We intend to review the Charging Policy in February or March 2000 and, once finalised, it will be in place for another three years. Once you have received our letter you are invited to make a submission on the Charging Policy and then attend a Hearing. This is your chance to have your say and influence the Wellington Regional Council monitoring charges and consent processing charges.

Resource consent conditions appropriate

Resource consent conditions are fair, according to PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC). The Wellington Regional Council commissioned an audit of its resource consent conditions this year. PWC found of the 65 consents assessed, 63 (97%) had appropriate consent conditions and two had insufficient conditions (the Council had been too lenient on the applicant).

“These findings contradict, for the Wellington Regional Council, common wisdom that councils impose excessive consent conditions. We cannot be accused of favouring the environment at the expense of development. Rather, in a couple of cases, we are erring on the side of the applicant,” Environment Committee chair Ian Buchanan said.

The survey looked at resource consents from the Wellington and Wairarapa offices of the Regional Council. The reviewers were “uniformly impressed with the professional approach of each of the Consents Management staff we dealt with.”

They made recommendations for small improvements, including implementing a formal risk assessment procedure and continuing use of guideline conditions, which will be addressed.

How good is compliance?

- In Wellington and Kapiti 679 operations were inspected this year – five were singled out for excellent compliance and were given certificates by the Council.
- In the Wairarapa 418 operations were inspected with the majority complying well with consent conditions. In a number of cases continuing good performance means that inspections will be reduced. This will be recognised in a reduction in resource management charges.
- Juken Nissho, Colgate Palmolive, South Pacific Tyres, Winstone Aggregates – Belmont Quarry, and Unilever New Zealand Limited all had good compliance under their air discharge consents.

Stronger action taken

- To ensure compliance with consent conditions, 13 abatement notices were issued during the year – five in the Wairarapa and eight in Wellington/Kapiti.



Unilever's Neville Quéérée

- In the past year Council prosecuted Tranz Rail and Steam and Sand Limited for discharges of sandblasting material and lead based paint from the Paremata Bridge. Both companies were fined. Steam and Sand were fined \$600 on each charge and Tranz Rail \$500 on their charge.

Region cleans up sewage

People will increasingly be enjoying much cleaner seas as improvements to sewage treatment and discharges are set under new resource consents. In 1994/95 a WRC environmental attitude survey rated sewage treatment and water quality as the major environmental issues. Significant and visible improvements to water quality will soon become a reality.

Recent improvements include:

- Future high quality sewage treatment upgrades for Waikanae/Paraparaumu and Otaki sewage treatment plants.
- An upgrade and management change at Carterton which will greatly reduce river pollution.
- A resource consent requiring an upgrade programme for the Porirua sewage treatment plant. A disinfection process will discharge clean effluent into the coastal marine area.
- High quality effluent being discharged from Wellington's two sewage treatment plants at Karori and Moa Point.
- Preparation of a new modern sewage treatment plant for Hutt City is underway.
- A resource consent was granted for a major upgrade

of the Wainuiomata sewage treatment plant which will improve the water quality in the Wainuiomata river.

- The Greytown sewage treatment plant is currently going through a resource consent process which is likely to result in an upgrade, and investigation of summer land discharge.
- A detailed study of Masterton improvement options is underway with consent applications planned for 2001.
- Assessments underway for Martinborough and Featherston treatment plants.



Southern Wairarapa Coast

Awards

The Wellington Regional Council's performance in consent processing and compliance monitoring has been recognised externally through the presentation of two recent awards.

Last year the Council won a Resource Management Law Association 'Best Practice' award. It was given in recognition of the Consent Processing and Compliance Monitoring



Manual, a guide for staff on decision-making e.g. checklists on what to consider when deciding whether to notify a resource consent. This ensures the consent process is consistent and transparent.

Recently a Business Development Quality Award was made to Wellington Consents staff. This award was given in recognition of the business-like approach to consents management. Customer service focus and high quality staff were key ingredients for success.

Land-based dairy discharges preferred

Farmers are being encouraged to change their effluent disposal to land-based systems. Discharging to land avoids potentially high pollution into waterways and creates a fertiliser resource for pasture.

Future discharges to water consents are likely to involve greater costs to upgrade systems and higher ongoing monitoring and compliance costs. If farmers wish to continue to discharge to water, many will have to upgrade their existing system within the next 2-3 years to meet discharge standards.

The outcomes of this year's inspections of agricultural effluent discharges were:

- 39 out of the 270 dairy farms inspected were not operating satisfactorily.
- 24 farms have been re-inspected to ensure that consent holders had made the requested changes.
- Two abatement notices were issued.
- In the Wairarapa, groundwater bores sampled showed the average nitrate level was significantly higher than in previous years. Three of the bores exceeded the NZ Drinking Water Standard for nitrate.

28 farms were discharging to water at the time of inspection. The rest were either discharging to land, or effluent was held in storage or oxidation ponds. There was a measurable and significant deterioration in average water quality, including faecal coliforms, downstream of these discharges.



Appropriate farm effluent disposal is important because of the volumes involved:

- The entire Wairarapa dairy herd in 1998 was 52,440 cows
- The entire human population was 38,500
- Each cow produces approximately the waste equivalent of four people
- Therefore, the dairy herd produces the waste equivalent of at least 210,000 people
- This is equivalent to more than half of the Region's human population.

Swing mooring inspections required

Swing moorings for boats require resource consents. All swing mooring consents have a condition which requires that they are inspected annually and the results sent to the Regional Council.

Less than a third of swing mooring holders have complied with this condition. If you have not inspected your swing mooring within the last 12 months and/or provided the results to the Regional Council please do so as soon as possible.

If you do not comply with this condition you will be liable for any damage caused by your boat should it break loose in a storm. You could be prosecuted for any damage caused by your boat to other boats or other people's property.

Additionally, we will charge you the cost of the Harbour rangers recovering your boat. Furthermore, your insurance company may not cover you for any damage caused because you have not complied with the terms of your consent.

The requirement to inspect your mooring is there to protect you so it's important that you do so every year.

Irrigation topic of study

How much water is needed for efficient irrigation? The Wellington Regional Council is undertaking a study to determine actual water needs in order to improve irrigation effectiveness and efficiency on the soils of the Wairarapa plains.

Current water allocation for resource consents is based on demand and evapotranspiration losses, rather than actual need for water. The Council believes the study may bring about more efficient irrigation practices that would be better for the environment as well as the wallet.

The study will evaluate factors that determine water need, such as hydraulic properties of various soils, water needs for different land uses, how different irrigation schemes apply water to different land uses and the way they respond on various soils, and climatic characteristics of a particular site.

The study, undertaken in partnership with the Victoria University of Wellington, started last summer in the Greytown area. More intensive research is being completed this year. It is hoped that guidelines for allocating water will be developed to assist both the WRC and consent holders. We will keep you informed about the findings of the study.

Low flows bring bans

Low river flows last summer and autumn meant water use restrictions. In some cases irrigation bans, were put in place across the Region.

Below average rainfall in most parts of the Region led to the low river flows. The Tararua Ranges had lower than average rainfall and consequently the larger rivers of the Region that originate there were lower than normal. The Kapiti Coast had below average rainfall for many months of the year.

Many rivers and streams in the Wairarapa basin and the Kapiti Coast fell below their mean annual low flow. In particular, flow in the upper Ruamahanga River fell below a one-day ten-year low flow (the average flow recorded over one day that occurs once every ten years). The Otaki and Wainuiomata Rivers reached one-day five-year low flow levels.

As a consequence of the low flows many water use restrictions, and in some cases irrigation bans, were applied in various catchments. Restrictions and bans were imposed on the Kopuaranga, Ruamahanga, Waingawa, Parkvale, Taueru, and Otakura catchments in the Wairarapa. The level of compliance during restriction periods was very good. There were no instances of non-compliance with restrictions imposed during these periods.

The weather patterns of the past year were caused by the La Nina climate phenomenon. La Nina is predicted to continue through this summer, although not as strongly, and similar weather is predicted. Rainfall will be below average, temperatures will be average to above average, and sunshine hours will be above average. This will result in below average soil moisture and river levels again this summer.

The Council will continue to monitor river levels throughout the coming summer and decide if restrictions are necessary.



How to contact us

The Wellington Regional Council has a 24 hour Pollution Response Service

Phone **0800 496 734**

0800 4WN REG

For consent information phone
The Environment Help Desk

04 384 5708

or your Account Managers **Paula Bullock** and **Stephanie Livick**.

For Wairarapa information

Phone **06 378 2484**

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