

CONCEPT SHEET 7

Wetlands

Wetlands are permanent or temporarily wet areas that provide habitats for plants and animals adapted to wet conditions. Wetlands, such as estuaries, bogs, swamps and shallow lakes, have a vital role in maintaining the health of the region's natural environment.

Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands perform vital ecosystem services such as improving water quality and controlling floods, erosion and sediment. They are also some of the most diverse ecosystems in the world and support a variety of animal and bird life.

Wetlands are highly valued by tangata whenua and local communities for their aesthetic, scientific, cultural and recreational values. The natural, conservation, cultural and scientific value of wetlands mean that their protection and enhancement is essential.

Wetlands in Taranaki

Historically, Taranaki has lost an estimated 92% of its wetland area. As has happened on low-lying fertile land across the country, wetlands have been drained to make way for farming and urban development. Remaining wetlands have also suffered continued degradation from invasive plants, introduced animals and contaminants from surrounding land use.

Today, Taranaki has an estimated 1,200-plus wetlands. The Taranaki Regional Council has previously identified 76 of these as Regionally Significant Wetlands because of their size or special values.



The Council works with landowners to reduce the loss of wetlands and improve the health of those that remain. All Regionally Significant Wetlands are part of the Council's Key Native Ecosystem programme, under which landowners are assisted with measures to maintain and improve biodiversity values such as species composition, habitat structure and ecosystem functions.

Practical measures include fencing, the control of pest plants and pest animals and restoration planting. The Council promotes wetland protection through education, advice and information. Managed sites are responding well to these programmes in the region.



What does the Draft Plan propose?

- Continuing to list the 76 wetlands already classed as Regionally Significant because of their size (bigger than 5ha) and/or their values – for example, they are the home of threatened, at-risk or regionally uncommon indigenous species.
- Protection of all other wetlands, regardless of size, on ring plain and coastal terrace properties with riparian plans; and protection of hillcountry wetlands of a certain type and more than 1ha, or containing threatened or regionally distinctive species.

Activity that damages these wetlands would be a non-complying activity and resource consents would be unlikely to be granted. However, grants can be provided to landowners and occupiers to help with the costs of enhancement and protection.

What is not captured?

- Damp gully heads or paddocks subject to regular ponding which are dominated by exotic pasture.
- Wetlands which have been created for recreational, amenity, public water supply, irrigation, water treatment ponds, and other uses.

Feedback and more information

Go to www.trc.govt.nz/draft-plan to find:

- The Draft Freshwater and Land Plan in full.
- A summary and background document.
- Info sheets and background papers.
- An online form for giving us feedback.

You can also send us your feedback by emailing info@trc.govt.nz or writing to the Council at Private Bag 713, Stratford 4352. Or contact the Council's freshwater planning team directly by calling 0800 736 222. We can give you more information, take your feedback or arrange a meeting.

Our deadline for feedback is Friday 26 June.

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