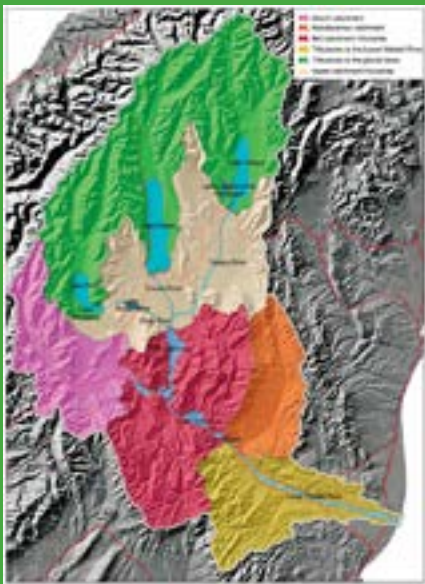


Waitaki Catchment Water Allocation Regional Plan

The Waitaki Catchment Water Allocation Regional Plan manages water allocation in the Waitaki River catchment. It came into full effect in 2006, and it has been updated three times since then. Environment Canterbury oversees the implementation of this plan.

Disclaimer: This factsheet summarises provisions from the WCWARP that are common activities within the Mackenzie Basin. For a full list of provisions refer to the operative WCWARP.



Background

The Waitaki Catchment Water Allocation Regional Plan (WCWARP) provides for the allocation of water in the Waitaki catchment.

Water allocation covers taking, using, damming, and diverting of water. The Waitaki Catchment encompasses the Waitaki River, its tributaries, lakes, wetlands and aquifers. It straddles the boundary between the Otago and Canterbury Regions, and runs through areas covered by the Waitaki, Waimate and Mackenzie District Councils.

This fact sheet only discusses the WCWARP as far down the catchment as the Waitaki Dam. The WCWARP was initially developed under a special piece of legislation introduced to apply a whole-catchment approach to addressing water allocation in the Waitaki Catchment. This included setting environmental and flow regimes to manage low flows, balancing demand for water across various uses (including hydro-electricity generation and irrigation) and to allow for reasonable domestic use of water. Establishing a consistent approach

to the allocation of water through resource consents and addressing the influx of consent applications at the beginning of the plan development process were also key objectives of the plan.

The WCWARP is likely to be reviewed in 2020-2022.

Because the WCWARP only deals with water allocation, the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan (LWRP) also applies to manage issues like nutrient loss, other discharges, and works in the beds of lakes and rivers.

Based on a High Court decision in 2005 (Aoraki vs Meridian), almost all water in the catchment is effectively allocated to Genesis and Meridian for electricity generation. Any new water takes for other uses need approval from the relevant electricity generator for consents to be granted. This is called a derogation approval.

WHAT VALUES ARE IDENTIFIED FOR PROTECTION?

The WCWARP aims to sustain the qualities of the environment of the Waitaki River and associated beds, banks, margins, tributaries, islands, lakes, wetlands and aquifers, while enabling people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing and their health and safety.

It recognises the importance of maintaining the mauri of the catchment, by meeting the specific spiritual and cultural needs of the tāngata whenua and recognising the interconnected nature of the river. It does this by setting a framework which aims to safeguard the life-supporting capacity of the river and its ecosystems, maintain natural landscape and amenity characteristics and safeguard the integrity, form, functioning and resilience of the braided river system.

The WCWARP identifies waterbodies considered to have high natural character, because they are either in largely unmodified parts of the catchment or home to important species and habitats. The plan provides these waterbodies with a higher level of protection.

WHAT VALUES DOES THE PLAN PROVIDE FOR?

There are 5 objectives in the WCWARP:

- > *Qualities of the environment of the Waitaki River*
- > *Providing water allocation for different activities and uses*
- > *Recognising beneficial and adverse effects as well as local and national costs and benefits*
- > *Efficiency in the use of water*
- > *Fair sharing of water during times of low water availability.*

The policies cover the following topics:

- > *Low flows*
- > *Catchment specific outcomes*
- > *Efficiency*
- > *Replacement consents*

WHAT ARE THE KEY PROVISIONS OF THE PLAN?

The WCWARP is impacted by section 14(3) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), which means water may be taken as a right for an individual's reasonable domestic needs; or the reasonable needs of a person's animals for drinking water, provided the taking or use does not, or is not likely to, have an adverse effect on the environment.

Activity	Key Conditions and Considerations	Status
Taking, using or diverting water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take, use or diversion at a rate less than 5 L/s and a volume less than 10 m³/day • The take, use or diversion must not occur in a waterbody that has high natural character, or from a waterbody covered by the Ahuriri Water Conservation Order. 	<p>Permitted</p> <p>Consent required if conditions not met</p>
Damming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered by Environment Canterbury on a case-by-case basis, includes assessment of whether a building consent is required from the relevant District Council. 	Consent required
Taking water from specific lakes and wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lakes Tekapo, Pukaki and Ohau below certain levels (except for essential uses) • Certain wetlands • Lakes Alexandrina, McGregor, Middleton (and their tributaries); and other lakes upstream of Tekapo, Pukaki and Ohau 	Prohibited

WHAT TO DO IF RESOURCE CONSENT IS REQUIRED?

If consent is required, then the following are considered:

1

Environmental flow and level regimes

Tables 3B and 4 WCWARP set these for specific water bodies and provide a method for calculating them where the waterbody is not specified.

These detail the restrictions on taking water (ie minimum flows), how much water may be taken from a waterbody, and how flow-sharing should operate.

2

Annual allocation to activities

Table 5 sets the volume of water that may be allocated annually, from different parts of the catchment, for different uses.

To ensure these volumes are complied with, all consents have an annual volume restricting how much may be taken in a year.

3

Efficiency

Consent conditions (along with national regulations) require water meters to be installed and maintained. The data from the water meters must be provided to Environment Canterbury. This, combined with the rate and volume restrictions placed on consents, helps ensure water is used efficiently for the activity it is required for.

Minimum flow restrictions and flow sharing requirements encourage efficiency in water use; and Water User Groups enable water to be shared and the waterbodies full allocation to be accessed as necessary across a catchment.

4

Instream values

Consent conditions require intakes to be screened to avoid fish becoming trapped in water distribution systems.

The environmental flow and allocation regimes were set, in part, to protect instream values.

5

Effects of water use

Water quality: In the past this has been managed by conditions on water consents requiring the property to comply with a nutrient discharge allowance; and by water quality monitoring both for localised and cumulative effects. The introduction of Plan Change 5, Part B to the LWRP has changed the process, future water permits granted under the WCWARP will have less focus on water quality outcomes.

Landscape: In the past, landscape assessments and mitigation of adverse effects on landscapes were required as part of the water permits. As the District Council plans evolve, these effects may effectively be managed through other processes.

Terrestrial Biodiversity: The effect on terrestrial biodiversity was also managed through water permits. With both the evolution of District Plans and the development of the LWRP Plan Change 5, Part B, these effects may effectively be managed through other processes.

6

Duration

Consents which require derogation approval are generally granted with an expiry date of 30 April 2025, in line with the duration of the key consents Meridian and Genesis hold. This is to enable a full assessment of the cumulative effects of the water abstraction on the catchment at the time all the consents expire.