



# Managing wetlands on your property

*Wetlands form a natural boundary between land and water, absorbing excess water and protecting against flooding, while filtering out sediment and nutrients to improve water quality.*

*They support a greater concentration of wildlife than any other habitat in New Zealand, and can store large amounts of carbon, making them an important ecosystem for reducing the impacts of climate change.*

Canterbury has lost about 90 percent of its wetlands by area. Landowners with wetlands on their property have a responsibility to protect these remaining ecosystems. That's why activities that disturb wetlands, and the vegetation and water within them, are restricted.

## Do I have a wetland on my property?

Identifying what is a wetland can be difficult. A wet, soggy, or spongy patch on your land could be a wetland. It may be permanently wet, or only wet at certain times.

According to national rules, a natural inland wetland is:

- an area that is permanently or intermittently wet, or
- an area of shallow water, or
- a land-water margin that supports a natural ecosystem of plants and animals that are adapted to wet conditions.

## What is not a wetland according to national and regional rules?

Wet areas not considered wetlands, include:

- wet pasture or areas where water temporarily ponds after rainfall, which are not a habitat for threatened species
- artificial dams and drainage canals
- reservoirs used for domestic or community supply, or for firefighting
- constructed wetlands, unless constructed to restore what was once a natural inland wetland.

The best way to identify if your area is a wetland according to these rules is by having an ecologist examine the types of plants, wildlife, soil and hydrology that makes up the area. We have ecologists who can assess your waterbody, at no cost to you. If you think you may have a wetland or would like clarification around when these rules apply and if they apply to you, please get in touch on **0800 324 636** or [ecinfo@ecan.govt.nz](mailto:ecinfo@ecan.govt.nz).

**Many wetland features are hard to identify, and even well-meaning activities like weed control can negatively impact on wetlands and the species they support.**

## Rules for activity in and around wetlands

**You are required to contact Environment Canterbury at least 10 days ahead of conducting any permitted activity within, or up to 100m from a wetland.** We will offer you some strategies and practical ways you can help maintain wetland ecological values. You will also be able to discuss which rules apply to your wetland and the benefits of any activity you plan to take in or surrounding a wetland. These rules are designed to protect natural wetland ecosystems, the plants, and animals that rely on them.

- Rules and regulations **within** a wetland mean that you cannot reduce the size of a wetland or change the water in it, including via activities such as vegetation clearance or cultivation. There are a limited number of circumstances where consent may be granted for activity within a wetland. We recommended you check with us prior to any activity. For the purposes of enhancing, restoring, or creating a wetland, different considerations need to be had.
- When considering vegetation clearance **outside** of a wetland but **within 10m adjacent** to a wetland boundary (location, sediment and soil erosion-risk dependent), the following activities are permitted if several conditions can be met: restoration, wetland maintenance biosecurity, scientific research, maintaining a wetland utility structure, existing sphagnum moss harvests, arable or horticultural land use, or natural hazards works. The conditions include not exceeding 10% of the area within the relevant riparian margin at any time, as well as other conditions. A wetland restoration plan and a consent application may also be required.
- If taking, use, damming, diversion, or discharge of water is within **100m of a wetland**, resource consent is required and may be granted under limited conditions.
- Earthworks or land disturbance outside of a wetland but within a **100m setback**, that is likely to result in the complete or partial drainage of all or part of a natural inland wetland; are prohibited.

### Wetlands not covered by the above rules

If you have an artificial, constructed, or coastal wetland on your property, different conditions need to be considered. Any habitat with threatened species could change the rules applicable to the habitat. Contact your Land Management Advisor to check if this could apply to a wetland on your property. They may request an ecological assessment of the wetland.

**Grazing and stock exclusion:** No stock can be grazed within a wetland. There are limited situations where sheep are permitted to graze in a wetland and these require a resource consent unless the grazing can take place without a conspicuous change in colour or clarity of water, or pugging or de-vegetation that exposes bare earth. You may also need a discharge consent for sheep discharge.

\* This information is for guidance purposes only. The details included are a summary and further detailed regulations must be considered prior to any action in and surrounding wetlands.



### Where to get help

#### Check the website

For more information about wetlands, visit [ecan.govt.nz/wetland-management](https://ecan.govt.nz/wetland-management)

#### Industry support

Your farming industry partner should be able to help you meet wetland requirements. For more information, talk to your industry partners, or see the DairyNZ guidance on wetlands at [dairynz.co.nz](https://dairynz.co.nz)

#### Talk to your Zone team

Your local land management advisor can help you with advice on identifying, protecting, restoring and creating wetlands. For support in your local area, give us a call on 0800 324 636 or email [ecinfo@ecan.govt.nz](mailto:ecinfo@ecan.govt.nz). We can arrange for a land management advisor to contact you by email, phone, or face to face.