

Region-wide proposed new rules and regulations

Wastewater Management



Recent content updates:

26 September 2023:

- Added clarification of soil types and flooding zones for existing and new on-site wastewater disposal.

The Wastewater Management chapter manages discharges from the treatment of sewage, greywater, and industrial and trade waste. The discharges captured include those from:

- Reticulated wastewater systems (community and municipal systems)
- Biosolids
- Industrial and trade waste

Onsite systems including:

- Onsite wastewater treatment systems (septic tanks)
- Pit toilets (long drops)
- Composting toilets

These discharges have previously been managed by the Regional Plan: Water for Otago (Water Plan). Plan Change 8 (operative from 9 July 2022) improved the policy direction for reticulated wastewater to prefer discharges to land over discharges to water, and to reflect current best practice to contribute towards improving water quality in the Otago Region.

This chapter does not manage animal effluent, which is managed in the Primary Production chapters, or vegetative compos, which is managed in the Solid Waste Management chapter.

Overview of the chapter, and key changes

The table below provides a high-level comparison of the existing plan provisions and the draft Wastewater chapter and highlights the key changes from the Regional Plan: Water for Otago.

Wastewater chapter of draft LWRP	Existing plan
Reticulated wastewater (municipal and privately owned and operated networks)	
<p>Existing systems</p> <p>Key changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discretionary consent needed for existing discharges to water and land After 2045 is will be prohibited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discharge wastewater into water discharge untreated wastewater onto land where it may enter water (i.e., sewage overflows). 	<p>Existing systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A discretionary consent needed, with policy direction preferring discharges to land over discharges to water
<p>New systems</p> <p>Key changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discretionary consent needed to discharge treated wastewater to land Prohibited to discharge untreated wastewater to land where it may enter water (i.e., sewage overflows) Prohibited to discharge treated or untreated wastewater to water. 	<p>New systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A discretionary consent needed, with policy direction preferring discharges to land over discharges to water
<p>Biosolids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New rule framework Biosolids definition: “sludge derived from a wastewater treatment plant that has been treated and/or stabilised to the extent that it is able to be safely and beneficially applied to land.” No permitted activity rule <p>Restricted discretionary consent needed for discharge to land, and discretion is restricted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment and quality Land uses of site and adjacent sites Soil type and capacity Rate and management of application Storage and handling Setbacks from water, bores, boundaries Information requirements. 	<p>Biosolids</p> <p>Not managed in the Water Plan</p>

Industrial and trade waste	
<p>No consent needed to discharge to land, if the discharge meets all the following permitted activity conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less than 5 cubic metres per day (volume) • less than 5 millimetres per day (rate) • not hazardous • more than 50 metres from any water, bore or property boundary • not resulting in ponding, flooding or sedimentation within an industrial zone. <p>If the activity does not meet all the permitted activity conditions, a discretionary consent is required.</p>	<p>The discharge of industrial and trade waste to water or land requires discretionary consent.</p>
Onsite wastewater (septic tanks)	
<p>Key changes:</p> <p>If there is an available reticulated wastewater system available, discharges from any (existing or new) onsite system are not permitted.</p> <p>Existing systems</p> <p>Existing systems are permitted if the discharge is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 50 metres from the coast, surface water or drain • More than 100 metres from a bore • Not in a drinking water protection zone • Not within 0.6 metres of groundwater in most soils (soils classified as Category 2-6 in accordance with the New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1547:2012 – On-site Domestic Wastewater Management) • Not within 2 metres of groundwater in gravel soils (soils classified as Category 1 in accordance with the New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1547:2012 – On-site Domestic Wastewater Management) • Not on a slope greater than 30 percent grade for sub surface drip irrigation disposal systems 	<p>If the system was installed before 1998, no consent is needed if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge does not directly enter water • Discharge does not enter another property or cause flooding of another person’s property, erosion, land instability, sedimentation or property damage. • If the above conditions are not met, the system requires a discretionary consent. <p>If the system was installed after 1998, consent is required if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The discharge exceeds 2000 litres per day • The discharge occurs in a groundwater protection zone • The discharge occurs within 50 metres of a surface water body or bore • There is a direct discharge to groundwater, drain or water race • The discharge enters another property or causes flooding of another person’s property, erosion, land instability, sedimentation or property damage. <p>If the above conditions are not met, the discharge requires a discretionary consent.</p>

Onsite wastewater (septic tanks)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not on a slope greater than 10 percent grade for all other systems • Not in a zone subject to flooding (subject to flooding at a frequency of: greater than 1 in 100 years for any primary treatment system; or greater than 1 in 20 years for all other treatment systems.) • Not containing chemical toilet waste or hazardous substances. <p>If the above conditions are not met, the discharge requires a discretionary consent.</p>	
<p>Pit toilets (long drops)</p> <p>No consent needed for existing pit toilet if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setback 50 metres from coast, surface water, bores • outside a drinking water protection zone • at least 1 metre above groundwater • operated and maintained to avoid the leakage of sewage above ground. <p>If the above conditions are not met, the discharge requires a discretionary consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No consent needed for new pit toilet if: • located on a section over 20 hectares • setback 50 metres from coast, surface water, bores • outside a drinking water protection zone • at least 2 metres above groundwater • operated and maintained to avoid the leakage of sewage above ground. <p>If the above conditions are not met, the discharge requires a discretionary consent.</p>	<p>Pit toilets (long drops)</p> <p>Discharges from pit toilets constructed before 1998 are permitted.</p> <p>Discharges from pit toilets constructed after 1998 are permitted if the discharge is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further than 50 metres from surface water or a bore. • Outside a groundwater protection zone • Not directly entering groundwater. <p>If the above conditions are not met, the discharge requires a discretionary consent.</p>

Onsite wastewater (septic tanks)	
<p>Composting toilets</p> <p>No consent needed to discharge to land if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> material is composted for 12 months prior to discharge the land is not used for food crops setback 50 metres from surface water, coast, bores material is discharged outside a drinking water protection zone. <p>If the above conditions are not met, the discharge requires a discretionary consent.</p>	<p>Not managed in Water Plan.</p>
<p>Onsite greywater</p> <p>No consent required to discharge to land if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the greywater system complies with the Building Act the discharge is via a sub-surface land application system and does not exceed 15 millimetres per day the greywater system filters the discharge and does not allow it to store for more than 12 hours the discharge does not contain sewage or a hazardous waste the discharge does not result in ponding or flooding the discharge is not within 50 metres of surface water or coast the discharge is not within a drinking water protection zone. <p>If the activity does not meet the permitted activity conditions, a discretionary consent is required.</p>	<p>Onsite greywater</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed as “sullage” under the Water Plan Permitted to discharge to water as long as quality and temperature are not affected If the activity does not meet the permitted activity conditions, a discretionary consent is required.