

Waikato Regional Council contacts

Call 0800 800 401 to be put through to the member of staff for your area. Scheme unit lead is the new title for the role previously known as works supervisor.

Waikato Regional Council drainage areas

Drainage Manager – Waikato and Thames Valley

Thames Valley drainage areas

Scheme unit lead – Thames Valley (based at Te Aroha depot)

Franklin-Waikato drainage areas

Scheme unit lead – Tuakau (based at Pōkeno depot)

Scheme unit lead – Waikato (based at Horotiu depot)

Aka Aka-Otaua drainage area

Scheme unit lead – Tuakau (based at Pōkeno depot)

Waikato Central drainage areas

Scheme unit lead – Central (based at Horotiu depot)

Scheme unit lead – Rotomanuka and Ōhaupō/Ngāroto (based at Hamilton)

Find out more

The following publications have been written to help you.

- Best Practice Environmental Guidelines – Land Drainage
- Land Drainage Management Plan – August 2019

Find them online at waikatoregion.govt.nz/publications or request a copy by calling 0800 800 401.

For more information on Waikato Regional Council’s drainage areas or council and landowner roles and responsibilities, call 0800 800 401 or complete the form at: waikatoregion.govt.nz/request.

Land drainage information

What you need to know

7585

Waikato Regional Council
Private Bag 3038
Waikato Mail Centre
Hamilton 3240



ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEES

There are two flood protection and land drainage advisory subcommittees for the Waikato region: the Waikato Scheme Subcommittee and the Hauraki Scheme Subcommittee. They are responsible for providing local community advice to the Integrated Catchment Management Committee for the Waihou Valley Scheme, Piako River Scheme, Thames Valley Drainage Scheme and lower Waikato catchment (includes Aka Aka-Otaua, Franklin-Waikato and Waikato-Central land drainage areas), including:

- proposed annual flood protection and river management activities
- proposed annual land drainage activities
- scheme and level of service reviews
- other matters impacting the operation, maintenance and renewal of the flood protection and land drainage
- infrastructure within the above schemes
- priority areas for investment.

If you’re concerned about drainage issues in your area, please talk to your local regional council scheme unit lead or your local representative on the relevant subcommittee.



Introduction

This brochure is sent to all landowners who pay land drainage rates to Waikato Regional Council and are in the drainage areas shown on the map below. It provides key information about:

- land drainage works carried out by the regional council
- land drainage subcommittees
- landowner responsibilities
- health and safety.

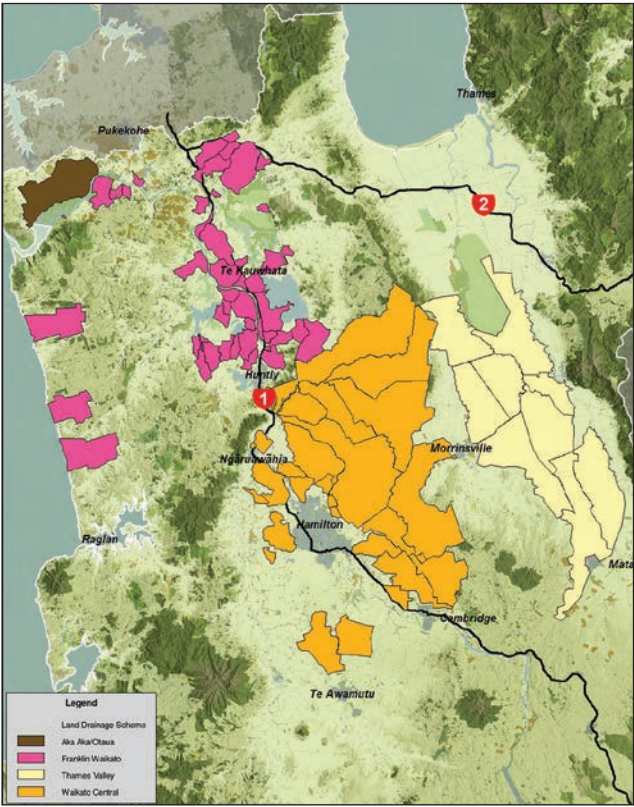
It also notifies landowners about the routine maintenance spray programmes Waikato Regional Council carries out from October to April each year.

The purpose of land drainage

The primary purpose of land drainage is to allow landowners to manage groundwater levels to support pastoral farming. It clears ponded water from a 10-year rainfall event within three days to minimise pasture damage. Within these parameters, it is intended that a balanced level of drainage is delivered, while trying to ensure “over drainage” doesn’t become a major issue. However, it’s important to note that crops generally require a lower water table than pasture and generally do not tolerate being underwater for as long.

Land drainage areas

Waikato Regional Council manages and maintains drain networks within 84 areas in the Waikato region.



What is and isn’t included in our drainage network

Not all drains are managed by our council, but we do maintain the main established network to provide a drainage outlet to each property. We also regularly review the effectiveness of the drainage networks and, as a result of this process, existing private drains or new drains may be added to the council maintained network.

For example, there may be a subdivision where newly created lots require drainage and the council drainage network needs extending to provide that service. Alternatively, the council-maintained network may be reduced by the removal of drains or portions of drains. Such instances could include the amalgamation of properties where a current council-maintained drain would end within a property and it would be appropriate to shorten the drain to the new property boundary.

Health and safety

Waikato Regional Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for its employees, contractors and any others affected by the activities we carry out.

We’re aware that some landowners have their own health and safety systems. However, given that there are some 8000 property owners across our drainage network, we do not notify individual landowners before carrying out inspections or drain spraying activities. If you have a specific requirement to be notified, please contact your local scheme unit lead (see the back page for contact details).

You should also contact your local scheme unit lead if you have specific hazards on your property that are not generic, for example, an unsafe bridge or culvert, unguarded power cables or tomos, or aggressive animals. This information will be passed onto our contractors, so they are aware of all potential dangers.

Access to council-maintained network

Access to council drains is becoming an increasing issue. Cropping, planting and the placement of structures in very close vicinity to the drainage network restricts access for maintenance activities. Access restrictions increase costs. Please ensure you adhere to the requirements for setbacks outlined in the *Waikato Regional Plan*, Permitted Activity Rule 4.2.18.1. Hauraki and Aka Aka drainage areas have a 15-metre setback requirement and all other areas in the region have a 10-metre setback.

Drain maintenance

Drain maintenance activities, like inspections, emergency response, spraying and machine cleaning, are carried out by Waikato Regional Council in most of the region’s land drainage areas.

Removing vegetation growing in drains so it doesn’t block channels is an ongoing maintenance challenge. Spraying of drains is our preferred way of doing this because it:

- is cost effective (up to 10 times cheaper than mechanical clearing)
- can be carried out quickly by a small team of people, meaning we can service a bigger area
- leaves less mess on the landowner’s property
- minimises the need for mechanical cleaning which can often enlarge or deepen drains, making them too big
- has an environmental advantage as it doesn’t disturb the area.

Spray programmes are generally undertaken from October to April each year.

Please note that culverts within the land drainage network are not managed or owned by the Waikato Regional Council. These are the responsibility of the private landowner or the territorial authority.

Best practice for spraying drains

As a general rule, only the bottom of the drain should be sprayed. This is so the vegetation on the edges of the drain remains undisturbed to keep the drain banks stable and filter nutrients and sediment from water entering the drain. We will only target spray the sides of a drain if there is a particular need to do so.

If you are considering spraying drains on your property, perhaps before cropping, please be aware of the consequences of over spraying. We often see sites where significant slumping has resulted from excessive spraying.

Cropping

Cropping too close to drains (see below) increases the amount of silt and nutrients entering waterways, thereby increasing the need for maintenance spraying or channel cleaning. It also limits access to do maintenance work. We need a clear space between drains and crops so we can use our machinery without crushing your crops or causing drain bank collapse.



Peat drainage

As peat land is farmed it tends to shrink. Deep drains and cropping can accelerate the rate of shrinkage, making these areas more expensive to maintain and reducing the effectiveness of the system.

If you have peat soils on your farm, check out the publication *For Peat’s Sake: Good Management Practices for Waikato Peat Farmers*. It’s available online at: waikatoregion.govt.nz/peat/#findoutmore.

Fencing

Fencing drains to exclude stock continues to be encouraged. As well as land productivity gains and environmental benefits, the cost of maintaining a fenced drain is significantly less.

Subsidence and slumping of drain banks due to stock pressure often means channels have to be regularly machine cleaned – a method that is expensive, creates more disturbance and leaves more mess on the landowner’s paddock. By fencing and then spraying weeds, drains should only need to be cleaned every five to 10 years instead of every year or two.

Establishing trees and structures beside drains

Under the *Waikato Regional Plan*, landowners with drains on their property that are managed by Waikato Regional Council must ensure there is suitable access for maintenance machinery by:

- installing a connecting culvert when constructing a new side drain
- keeping plants or structures more than 10 metres away from the drain or more than 15 metres away if the area is in the Hauraki District Council and Aka Aka-Otaua drainage areas.

Before you plant trees or shrubs, put up a fence or construct any structure near a drain, please call your local regional council scheme unit lead for information on the location and boundaries of our drainage schemes. More information is also available in the *Waikato Regional Plan* – see rule 4.2.18.1. You can view the *Waikato Regional Plan* on our website: waikatoregion.govt.nz/regionalplan.



Culverts in council drains

The maintenance and replacement of private culverts and bridges is the responsibility of landowners.

If we are upgrading a drainage system and a culvert needs to be lowered or enlarged as part of the upgrade, we will fund the required works. In these cases, existing culverts will be reused where possible, but if that isn’t a reasonable option, new culverts or structures will be provided.

Upon satisfactory completion of any repair, installation or modification of a private culvert or bridge, the landowner will assume ongoing responsibility for future maintenance.

If you’re planning to put in a crossing, please ask your local scheme unit lead to confirm the correct culvert size. If the wrong sized culvert is installed, it can become an obstruction and cause flooding upstream. The regional council’s regulatory team can provide advice regarding any resource consents required.