

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

These have emerged from the Council's advice that the allocation of groundwater from the Heretaunga Plains is at its limit. Refer the [Aquifer at its Limit](#) media release (18/8/17).

While more water is allocated than used, current peak usage is as much as the Council would wish to see used. The aim is to limit further use of water.

CONSENTS

- Q.** What happens to existing resource consents?
A. Nothing now. These can continue to be exercised to meet the set conditions.
- Q.** What if I use more water than before?
A. This is not prevented. A consent holder can take up to the maximum rates and volume set out on their consent document, if used for the purpose set out, and in the case of irrigation if it does not exceed the soil moisture deficit. Water use is monitored. The use pattern up to the 2016/2017 water year may be considered later to determine the need for any reductions in allocation.
- Q.** What happens to consents that expire?
A. Resource consents up to the same amounts can be replaced. Closer attention may be made to the need for this amount. A review condition is normally included to line up conditions with any changes included in a Plan Change.
- Q.** Can consents be transferred?
A. YES, where a property is sold and the transfer is to the new owner to carry on as before. NO, if the transfer is to another property in its entirety or if this is to divide a consent and transfer unused water to another property or use.

SHARING

- Q.** Can water be shared?
A. Water may be used in land boundaries identified on the current resource consent. In the case of the Twyford Global Consent water may be shared between members across land covered by the consent. Water may still be transferred into this resource consent by existing resource consent holders.
This is different to earlier advice re transfers – the reason being that the Twyford global approach includes a strategy for rationing at times of low flow and to augment the Raupare Stream flow.

ALREADY IN PROCESS

- Q.** What happens to applications in process or lodged close to the time of this initial advice?
A. Applications in process will be processed as before, as will new applications subject to discussion prior to 18 August 2017 and which the applicant can demonstrate has involved a reasonable investment of time and money. If consent is granted, conditions will identify that the consent is subject to review when the TANK Plan Change becomes operative, if the TANK Plan Change sets limits that are exceeded.
It may be that later resource consents will be subject to a lower priority when the Plan Change takes effect. The consent duration may be for a shorter period to reflect the uncertainty of this water being taken longer term.

STOCK or DOMESTIC WATER

- Q.** What happens to stock or domestic water takes?

- A. There are no changes for existing takes or new takes of water for stockwater or domestic uses on the property. These may occur without needing a resource consent.

PERMITTED ACTIVITY TAKES

- Q. What happens to permitted activity takes?
A. The Permitted Activity rule allows takes of up to 20m³/day for use on the property. There is no change at this stage. The Plan Change could adjust this if considered appropriate.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR WATER?

- Q. Can anyone still apply to take water?
A. Yes. Nothing prevents anyone from lodging a resource consent.
With the exception of applications lodged before 18 August 2017 or well advanced, any new applications will have to provide scientific evidence that the allocation of this water can be made without adding to the current cumulative effect of takes on Heretaunga Plains groundwater and on the surface flows that are connected.

ALLOCATION

- Q. What if it is found that more water can be allocated later and people miss out now? Can people form a queue?
A. Not easily. There is a 'first-in first-served' approach under the RMA but to get into this queue an application has to be complete and accepted by the Council. Once accepted the application has to be processed inside certain time limits.
Since a 2015 RMA change, applications cannot sit for very long without being advanced to a decision to grant or decline. It will be difficult to grant a consent if the scientific evidence demonstrates unacceptable adverse effects if the limit is exceeded.
If an application is declined it would fall out of any queue.
- Q. Are there ways to offset the effect of takes that applicants could commit to, to take water over and above what is allocated?
A. This is being investigated as part of the TANK project. One aspect being looked at is whether consent holders with existing takes can contribute to strategies to supplement or sustain spring and river flows through critical periods. If found to be practical, this may also allow additional water to be allocated.
- Q. Can water still be allocated from surface water bodies? e.g. Ngaruroro River at higher flows.
A. Most surface water bodies are already considered to be fully allocated. HBRC do currently take an approach that water can be taken in high flows and put into storage for use at later lower flow times. This remains an option at this time.
The Ngaruroro has a block of 2m³ that HBRC will allow to be taken above the median flow (22m³/s flow at Fern Hill). Some of this remains available.

FROST PROTECTION

- Q. What about takes for frost protection from groundwater?
A. The current practice has been to grant frost protection takes without reference to an annual volume allocation limit. A consent may be issued for combined irrigation and frost purposes in which case the annual allocation limit would have been determined for and applied to the irrigation use. Alternately a consent may be issued solely for frost protection purposes in which case no allocation limit will be assigned. The reasoning has been that this occurs for a short period, it is highly variable from one year to the next, it occurs when river flows and water tables are typically high. If water isn't available there is a risk that the crop will be damaged and lost to the extent there will then be no need for irrigation that season. If an existing irrigator applies for water for frost protection HBRC will grant this to allow frost protection for the same area and purpose supported by the existing irrigation. This would only apply to protection of blossom at the start of the season and not to frost protection that may prolong the yield of crops, e.g. squash / zucchini, late in the season.

Q. What about frost protection takes from rivers, particularly the Ngaruroro?

A. Currently there are a number of frost protection takes occurring from the Ngaruroro river. Depending on when they were granted they have different minimum flow conditions. The most recent have been granted with a minimum flow condition of 12,222 L/s at Whanawhana. We would continue in this manner to allocate water for frost protection purposes.

[The TANK Plan needs to review whether this current approach is appropriate or necessary. It doesn't seem to be an impediment to consent holders. The river is usually flowing above this rate at this time of year. There is no record that water is not able to be taken for frost protection because of the flow state of the river. The Tukituki Plan Change allows for frost protection "to continue to be allowed without further restriction".]