



Paradise, Queenstown.

## Let's catch up on water

ORC is responsible for creating and upholding regional plans that set out how natural and physical resources should be managed in Otago. Our [Water Plan](#) promotes the sustainable management of water in the region, using policies and methods (including rules) to address freshwater use, development and protection.

This year is a really busy one for our Policy and Planning team, with quick fix plan changes needed to comply with direction from the government, on top of our long-term work to write a new Land and Water Regional Plan by 2023.

These changes are essential for us to deliver a planning framework that is fair, fit for purpose and delivers the best environmental outcomes for Otago.

Here's a quick breakdown of the changes in the pipeline:

### **Water Permits Plan Change (WPPC, or Plan Change 7)**

Plan Change 7 (WPPC) creates a simplified resource consent process to manage water permits and deemed permits (historic water permits), while a new planning framework is developed for how freshwater is taken and used. This simplified process will allow for short-term water permits to be granted until the Land and Water Regional Plan is operative.

ORC notified the Water Permits Plan Change in March. Because Minister Parker "called in" this plan change (along with the Water Quality Plan Changes) at ORC's request, it will be re-notified by the Environmental Protection Authority. All submissions will then be considered together.

Anyone who submitted to ORC on WPPC does not need to resubmit to the Environmental Protection Authority, but they can choose to do so if there are additional considerations.

### **Water Quality Plan Changes (WQPC, or "Omnibus")**

Our regional plans managing water and waste need to be strengthened to protect our environment. We're proposing several changes to these plans to provide clear environmental management requirements until the new Land and Water Regional Plan is in place.

The proposed changes to the water and waste plans will strengthen and align water quality management to meet central government expectations and policy, and to safeguard our waterways. Like the Water Permits Plan Change, these plan changes have been called in and will be notified by the Environmental Protection Authority. Anyone can submit to the Environmental Protection Authority on the Omnibus Plan Change.

### **Regional Policy Statement (RPS)**

All regional councils are required to have a Regional Policy Statement, which sets the direction for the future management of natural and physical resources such as



Reservoir in Alexandra.



## Stay informed!

Visit our dedicated water website.

We know that you want to find information about water quickly and easily, so we've created a water-specific site to help you find what you need to know faster. Check it out at [www.goodwaterinotago.nz](http://www.goodwaterinotago.nz).

The website is mobile-friendly, so you can access water info on the run. The website showcases 'Everyday Water Heroes', so if you know of someone in Otago who is doing great things to protect and enhance our waterways, please let us know by emailing [water@orc.govt.nz](mailto:water@orc.govt.nz).

freshwater, land, air and our coastline. Our RPS provides the foundation for the development of all regional plans (which ORC develops) and district and city plans (which district and city councils develop). A new RPS is required to meet National Planning Standards and to support our plan development.

We ran a questionnaire to collect input on the Regional Policy Statement in February, and staff and planned to travel around the region in March. Due to the disruption of Covid-19, we have instead formed reference groups of community experts to give input to staff on all topics that will be covered in the new RPS.

The new Regional Policy Statement will be notified and open for submissions in November this year, with the aim to be operative by April 2022.

### Land and Water Regional Plan (LWRP)

The Land and Water Regional Plan will promote the sustainable management of Otago's water and land resources. It will

include objectives, policies and methods (including rules) to address issues of use, development and protection of freshwater and land resources, including the beds and margins of water bodies.

The new Land and Water Regional Plan will be the result of the current review of the Regional Plan: Water, the Regional Plan: Waste and ORC's work with communities in each Freshwater Management Unit (FMU) area. You can find out more about FMUs at:

[www.orc.govt.nz/FMUs](http://www.orc.govt.nz/FMUs)

### Ministerial call-in

ORC councillors voted in February to ask the Minister for the Environment to consider a ministerial "call-in" of the Water Permits and Water Quality/Omnibus plan changes. The Minister has since agreed to refer the proposed plan changes directly to the Environment Court, which will shorten the lengthy process of finalising plan changes, and deliver certainty for Otago communities much sooner.

Minister Parker considered the plan changes to be of national significance with regard to a range of factors. His decision assists ORC by allowing staff to focus on the bigger picture of long-term freshwater planning in Otago, through the new Land and Water Regional Plan.

The EPA will now take over notification of these plan changes for submissions ahead of hearings in the Environment Court. The EPA may have notified the Water Permits Plan Change and the Water Quality Plan Changes by the time you're reading this. Check online at: [www.epa.govt.nz](http://www.epa.govt.nz)

### Friend of the submitter

ORC has engaged a "Friend of the Submitter" to help the community with the process of lodging submissions to the EPA. Emma Spalding can be contacted, free of charge, at [friend@orc.govt.nz](mailto:friend@orc.govt.nz) to help guide you through the process, give advice on how to capture your views and explain what happens after your submission is lodged.