

Permitted activities for taking and using water

These notes from the Project Team are to assist the Ruamahanga Whaitua Committee (RWC) with their ongoing discussion on permitted activities.

Other legislation

Health and animal welfare are addressed under specific legislation. They are relevant matters to consider under the RMA in the wider context of adverse effects on the environment. RMA policies should not be contrary or inconsistent with health and animal welfare laws.

New condition for permitted activities

A new condition in permitted activity rules that water cannot be used for the same purpose as consented water on the same property would ensure that permitted water is not used to top up water use that should be governed by resource consent.

Comparing consented water use, stock water use and domestic water use

The one pager given to RWC at the last workshop compared consented, general permitted water use, farm dairy water use and domestic and stock drinking water use. The table below provides further breakdown of domestic water use and stock drinking water use in the Ruamahanga catchment and compares each with consented water use. In overall summary, rural domestic water use in the catchment is 0.07 percent of consented water use and stock drinking water use is 1.6 percent of consented water use.

Management unit (includes directly connected groundwater)	Management sub-unit (includes directly connected groundwater)	Core allocation (consented) (L/s)	Water for stock drinking water (L/s)	Water for rural domestic use (L/s)
Ruamāhanga River	Kopuaranga River	180	16.6	0.67
	Waipoua River	145	10	0.4
	Waingawa River	1,197	0.2	0.3
	Upper Ruamāhanga	1,200	12.6	0.6
	Parkvale Stream Creek	260	9.7	0.6
	Mangatarere	473	18.8	0.7
	Waiohine River	1,590	1	0.4
	Middle Ruamāhanga	1,240	48.5	1.3
	Huangarua River	110	15.1	0.53
	Lower Ruamāhanga	2,447	14.3	0.7
	Total	8842	146.8	6.2

Domestic and stock water use

The meanings of domestic and stock water use, in the context of taking and using water, are:

- Water for an **individual's reasonable domestic needs** is the amount sufficient to provide for hygiene, sanitary and domestic requirements.
- Water for the **reasonable needs of a person's animals for drinking water** is the amount sufficient to provide for the animals' health and welfare.

The quality of water for domestic and stock use is also important.

Water storage for domestic use

Jaques (2015) identifies that rainwater tanks are a reasonable proxy for well integrated water management in residential buildings. The construction and use of rain water tanks can be directly controlled by local authorities. A straight forward way of requiring rain water tanks for dwellings is when subdivision consents are considered. RWC is able to make recommendations that district councils require rain tanks to be installed on properties (eg. in relation to new subdivision). Education will also be an important method for promoting the use of rainwater tanks.

An approach that would give a clear steer on storing rain water would be to include a permitted activity in the regional plan for taking, using and diverting rainwater without any conditions around it. Rainwater is water collected before it reaches the ground or a water body.

Domestic water and minimum flows

The Horizons One Plan identifies 300L/person/day as an appropriate amount of water for people's reasonable domestic needs. Carterton District Council identifies average daily water use by individuals of 227 L/person/day from housekeeping bathroom, kitchen and laundry (CDC website). Such use is reasonably consistent with household water use identified by other local authorities (eg. Auckland Council identifies an average of 178 L/person/day in summer).

Other regional councils do not restrict household domestic use at minimum flow. When determining household water use at minimum flows, equity with Community Water Supply users will need to be considered. Community water suppliers generally use education rather than regulation. A permitted activity numeric would need to provide a maximum water use rather than average use.

An alternative to reducing water use by numerical amounts at minimum river flows is to limit types of use. For example, health and sanitary requirements are a necessity but water for other uses outside the home like washing the house or gardening could be limited. The promotion of efficient water use in rural households by using rain tanks and a variety of water conservation measures and appliances is frequently done using education methods.

Farm dairy and cooling water at minimum flows

There is an opportunity to reduce farm dairy water takes at minimum flow by recycling shed washdown water (green water) while it is recognised that water used in the dairy on cows during milking cannot be recycled because it has to be clean. Recycling green water is recognised in the

dairy industry as being more efficient but the amount will vary depending on circumstances and reliance is placed on good practice.

General permitted activity rule at minimum flows

A general permitted activity rule that allows 5m³ per day to be taken on a property can be subject to a condition requiring takes to cease at minimum flow.

Certainty around permitted activity water use.

Permitted activity water use will fall within limits that also apply to consented activities. The amount of water taken and used by individuals for stock and domestic water can continue to be estimated through modelling. The amount of water taken by existing farm dairies has already been estimated and will be fixed because the rule applies only to existing farm dairies (any increase will require resource consent).

Information is not available on how much water is taken and what it is used for under the current general permitted activity rule in the proposed Natural Resources Plan. To rectify this situation the following approaches can be considered:

- modelling properties in the Ruamahanga catchment
- surveying properties randomly at regular intervals
- metering permitted water takes.

Surveying properties at regular intervals will enable water use on these properties to be estimated. Using surveys and combining them with the results of modelling properties across the catchment would enable useful estimates of general activity permitted use.

Metering all permitted activity water takes will be costly to individuals and the benefits are small. GW would incur costs associated with compliance and is not able to pass these on as it can do for resource consents. Such costs will fall to the general ratepayer. At the present time permitted activity rules can require metering if GW considers it is warranted in individual circumstances.

References

Jaques, R. (2015). Measuring our sustainability progress: Benchmarking New Zealand's new detached residential housing stock. BRANZ Study Report 342. BRANZ. Wellington, New Zealand.