



On-site Wastewater Treatment

Proper management of on-site wastewater treatment systems, such as septic tanks, is essential for both the environment and human health.

What are the issues facing our Region?

Subdivision of rural land is leading to more wastewater systems on smaller sections. They are too close together and the combined effects could contaminate groundwater. Some existing systems are not working efficiently because they haven't been maintained regularly or weren't designed to cope with the amount of wastewater produced in a modern home.

How does the One Plan address these issues?

It has rules that require much better systems for new sites and when old systems are upgraded. It also sets minimum standards for the performance of existing systems. If a system doesn't meet these standards, it will need to be improved.

There are three rules regulating existing, new and upgraded discharges ([RP-LF-LW-R21](#), [RP-LF-LW-R22](#), and [RP-LF-LW-R24](#)).

What has changed since the Proposed One Plan was released?

Under the old plans there was no restriction on property size when installing a new system. This changed when the One Plan rule became operative. Sections created before 31 August 2012 that are smaller than 2,500m² will need a resource consent for wastewater disposal. This area increased to 5,000m² after that date.

What do the One Plan rules mean for landowners and others?

If you already have an on-site wastewater treatment system, the new rules came into effect on 1 July 2011. Your system will need to comply with the conditions of [RP-LF-LW-R21](#). The discharge must be from a system lawfully in existence at 1 July 2011. A soak hole is very unlikely to meet these conditions.

If you're installing or upgrading a system, the rules came into effect from 31 August 2012.

To comply, you must have regular inspections and maintenance by an approved contractor, keep records and make them available to Horizons on request. You will be responsible for paying for this. Other conditions include not discharging wastewater to groundwater or within 20m of a bore for drinking water or a waterway.



Provided your existing system meets the criteria of [RP-LF-LW-R21](#), and your new or upgraded system can meet the criteria of [RP-LF-LW-R22](#), you may not need resource consent. Discharges from systems that do not meet these standards will require resource consent.

How can Horizons help?

[Horizons' staff](#) can give you advice on meeting the criteria set out by the rules. They can also advise you about applying for a resource consent if this is necessary.

If you are installing or upgrading a system or considering purchasing, building or developing a rural property, some questions to ask yourself are:

- Does my existing system meet the conditions of [RP-LF-LW-R21](#)?
- How much will it cost for inspections, maintenance and repairs?
- What will happen if I extend my home and need to upgrade the system?
- Will my section be big enough to cope with the discharge?
- Will it be big enough if I subdivide?

Additional Information

The One Plan is available on Horizons' website www.horizons.govt.nz.

To request a copy of the One Plan or to speak with someone about how the changes may affect you, freephone 0508 800 800.