



tasman
district council

Te Kaunihera o
te tai o Aorere

Council Stopbanks – Responsibilities and Requirements



Do you have a stopbank on or near your property? If so, then please read on?

Tasman District Council manages various stopbanks along the Waimea, Lower Motueka and Riwaka Rivers for flood protection purposes. Maintenance of the Council owned banks is funded through collection of X river rates.

Under the 1941 Soil Conservation and River Control Act the Council is responsible for managing the stopbanks for the benefit of the whole community.

There are also stopbanks that are privately maintained.

Keeping our stopbanks in peak condition is vital – a stopbank is only as good as its weakest part. No one wants to be liable for a section of bank in poor condition that fails in a flood. While it has been some decades since the stopbanked areas have received a major flood, we must not be complacent.

The key issues that can affect stopbank condition include:

- access along and onto the banks
- use of the bank for grazing
- maintenance of the adjacent berm land (land on the inside of the bank)
- ensuring any disturbances to the bank are minimised and well constructed (i.e., pipes, fencing, tracks); and
- maintenance of a healthy grass sward to prevent erosion.



Access

We require good access to the banks so that we can undertake regular inspections and maintenance. There are places where fences inhibit activities like mowing and gates have been blocked off or the Council has been locked out. There are also lengths of bank that are too narrow for safe access.

Stock

We do not encourage stock on Council maintained banks. Unfortunately most of the Council's stopbanks have been constructed with steep side slopes and most types of grazing will compromise them. This is particularly so in wet conditions or with larger animals such as cattle and horses. Where we own the land we are progressively removing grazing rights to prevent further damage.

Tidy Maintenance

Large logs, debris or farm waste can direct flows into the stopbanks in flood conditions, they can mobilise and cause blockages, or cause damage directly to the stopbanks.

Track Crossings

Regular crossing by vehicles or animals wear the stopbank crest down, creating a low point and weakness where the bank can potentially breach or fail in flood conditions. Track locations should be rationalised and surfaced using gravel or similar material to guard against this.

Other Structures on the banks

We need to approve any new, or modification of existing structures on Council owned stopbanks. Irrigation pipes, tracks, fences etc that can weaken the bank or hinder access need to be discussed with us.

Shelter Belts

Trees and shrubs can shade out the grass growing on the banks, hinder access and reduce bank performance in flood conditions. If they are planted too close, tree roots create pathways for water to enter the stopbank. They can also blow over in a storm creating a breach as the root ball up-ends and tears a hole in the bank. Large trees should be planted a minimum of 15m from the base of any stopbank.

Vegetation Control

The Council's contractor needs to spray and control weeds on or adjacent to our stopbanks to ensure a healthy grass sward can be maintained. Grass is considered to be the best cover on stopbanks to resist scour in flood events.



What you can do:

- Don't put stock on stopbanks unless it is light sheep grazing outside of wet periods (or you are shifting them).
- Don't feed out on stopbanks.
- Ensure that you consult the Council before installing any new irrigation pipes, fencing, track crossings etc that may penetrate or lie on or over the bank.
- Notify the Council of any damage or obstructions you are aware of.
- Keep water troughs or feed dispensers etc that animals congregate around, well away from the bottom of the bank.
- Ensure any crossings have a minimum layer of 150mm of gravel or crushed stone to protect the bank from wear and have gentle approach and departure ramps.
- Ensure that materials or waste are not stored on or against the bank both for access and flood damage and so we can maintain a healthy grass sward.
- Ensure that access is not restricted along the crest or flanks and that all gates are in good working order.

What the Council will do:

- Talk to lessees/landowners about improving access and bank condition along their section of bank.
- Mow the banks at least once a year in spring. The purpose is to create a dense, healthy sward of grass with full coverage of the bank sides to protect the banks from scour and piping (water tracking though the bank and flowing out a weak point in the outer edge).
- Control weeds growing on or immediately adjacent to the banks.
- Check and maintain flapgates and culvert outlets associated with the banks.

For further information or to discuss your section of stopbank, please contact the Tasman District Council on Ph. 03 543 8400.



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