

# Proposal for a new consent for the Featherston wastewater treatment plant

## Overview

South Wairarapa District Council has commissioned Wellington Water to develop a proposal for a new consent for the Featherston wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). This proposal seeks to deliver on the outcomes we all want – protecting fresh waterways, improving environmental performance and catering for growth – while also being affordable for South Wairarapa’s ratepayers now and into the future. A consent application is to be lodged with consenting authority Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) in January 2023.

## The proposal

It is proposed that the application for a consent will incorporate upgrades to improve the performance of the FWTP.

It will also provide time to trial and implement innovative treatment systems including:

- A process to remove ammonia
- Land treatment trial
- Introducing a wetland to further enhance the quality of the treated wastewater before discharging to Donalds Creek.

The monitoring and testing of these new treatment systems will support the SWDC’s long-term investment in the FWTP over time to:

- Support the transition to land-based treatment over time
- Give effect to the principles of Te Mana o te Wai
- Improve environmental outcomes to meet new measures introduced under National Policy Statements and regulations
- Deliver value-for-money for ratepayers

A key value is **Te Mana o te Wai** – the vital importance of water, and the protection of the health and wellbeing of our freshwater



## How did we get here?

The FWTP has been operating under a historic resource consent since 2012, when the existing consent expired.

Subsequently SWDC lodged a new consent application to continue to discharge treated wastewater into Donalds Creek. GWRC had concerns about the discharge, and the application is currently on hold.

In 2017, SWDC lodged a new consent application to transition to a land-based discharge. This application was subsequently withdrawn in 2019 and SWDC moved to work with Wellington Water.

In 2020, SWDC commissioned Wellington Water to work towards achieving a new resource consent for the FWTP.

Since then, we have been working through a process with key stakeholders, mana whenua and the South Wairarapa community in 2020 to source ideas, define objectives and criteria and develop options.

In finding a fit-for-purpose proposal we have worked to incorporate and balance a range of factors.

## How much is it going to cost?

Part of the refinement and development of the proposal will involve a full costing. However, there is currently \$17 million allocated to upgrading the treatment plant in the 2021-31 SWDC Long Term Plan.

## What does land treatment mean?

This is a natural process using ground conditions to filter and manage nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous) found in the treated effluent. The process helps keep these nutrients out of freshwater, including Lake Wairarapa and Donalds Creek. A high concentration of nutrients can have a negative impact on the overall health and ecology of rivers and streams, adversely impacting fish species. This process involves dispersal of the treated effluent onto land in appropriate conditions. There is no odour as the effluent is fully treated.



### What you asked for

Improved water quality  
Better environmental performance  
Catering for growth  
Using natural processes  
Resilience | Affordability

### A balance between

Community aspirations

Mana whenua values

Council role as investor

Greater Wellington Regional Council  
requirements as consenting authority

## What next

During the coming weeks we will be talking to the community about the project through a range of channels.

**This will include a public drop-in session  
on Thursday 15 September 1pm to 8pm,  
at the Supper Room, ANZAC Hall, 62 Bell Street,  
Featherston**

Over the coming months Wellington Water will work with the SWDC and mana whenua to test and refine the proposal before lodging a consent application with GWRC in January 2023.

The proposal is also part of a wider programme of operational and project investments helping address a range of water network issues impacting the Featherston community.

Addressing the wastewater treatment plant issues will benefit the wider South Wairarapa community, with improved environmental outcomes, catering for growth in the region, and confirmation of technology and natural-based solutions that could be installed at other points in the network if proven to work.

While this is an important project, future investment decisions may be impacted by the current Government's Three Waters Reform.

Visit [wellingtonwater.co.nz/fwp](https://wellingtonwater.co.nz/fwp) for information