

# Wetland Programme



greater WELLINGTON  
REGIONAL COUNCIL  
Te Pane Matua Taiao

## Working to restore wetlands

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) is working with private landowners to protect and manage wetlands through the Wetland Programme.

The programme provides funding to help restore wetlands in some cases. Financial assistance may be available for management actions such as fencing, control of weeds and pest animals, and planting. To find out more, contact us using the details overleaf.

The programme also provides resources and information to anyone restoring wetlands. This includes:

- Advice on restoring wetlands and funding sources
- Information and publications such as *Beginners guide to wetlands* and *Understanding the 'wet' in wetlands* are available online at [www.gw.govt.nz/restoring-different-ecosystems](http://www.gw.govt.nz/restoring-different-ecosystems)



An example of a wetland overgrown with weeds

## Common methods to restore wetlands

Methods for restoring wetlands will depend on site conditions but may include:

**Fences** to protect wetlands from trampling or browsing by livestock, a priority for all sites.

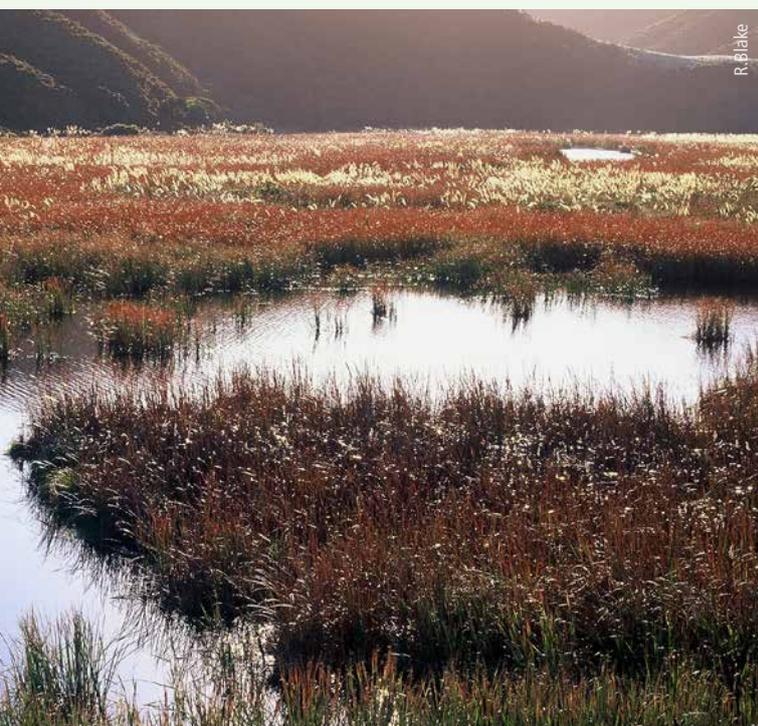
**Restoring water flows** to re-establish natural water levels and allow native fish passage between water bodies and wetlands.

**Controlling weeds** to protect native plants. If left unmanaged, weeds can out-compete native species, prevent regrowth and degrade the habitats of native plants and animals.

**Controlling pest animals** to protect native plants from browsing animals (such as possums), and native animals from predators, such as stoats, ferrets, weasels, rats, wild cats and hedgehogs.

**Planting native species** may be beneficial. However, when native plants are already present, weed control may be all that's needed to encourage natural regeneration.

**Encouraging legal protection** (such as covenanting) to protect the wetland from land use change.



Lake Kohangatera at Pencarrow

## Why wetlands are important

Wetlands are important for many reasons. They can:

- Play a vital role by supporting a variety of life, including birds, fish, insects, plants and lizards
- Reduce flooding by slowing water flows during high rainfall
- Lessen the effects of drought by slowly releasing water during dry periods
- Improve water quality by trapping sediment and absorbing nutrients
- Protect the coast from erosion where wetland vegetation grows on estuary edges
- Provide opportunities for hunting, fishing and recreation



Taupo Swamp near Porirua

Despite their importance, many wetlands are in a degraded state and are worsening over time. In the Wellington region only 2.3% of the original extent of wetlands remains. Wetlands continue to be threatened by a number of factors including:

- Changes to water levels and flow
- Conversion to farming or urban use such as subdivisions
- Damage caused by livestock
- Invasion by weeds and pest animals

## Recognising wetlands

Wetlands are defined in the Resource Management Act (1991) as *'permanently or intermittently wet areas, shallow water, and land water margins that support a natural ecosystem of plants and animals that are adapted to wet conditions.'*

Below are the five main types of wetlands in the Wellington region and how to recognise them:

**Swamps** have a wide range of vegetation, ranging from flaxlands to kahikatea forest. Many are infested with willow trees. Swamps are found in basins, valley floors and on plains. The water table is often above ground but can change seasonally.

**Fens** are dominated by rushes, sedges and broadleaved plants with some scrub. Found on slight slopes, they may merge with swamps at the bottom of hills. Fens have shallow peat soil and are fed by rainwater and ground water. The water table is usually just below the ground surface but can rise and fall.

**Marshes** are vegetated by rushes and sedges up to knee height. They occur on valley margins and valley floors alongside rivers and lakes. Marshes have large changes in their water levels as they are fed by surface water and can flood. If marshes dry out seasonally they become ephemeral wetlands.

**Shallow water** is open water less than a few metres deep. Open water bodies smaller than lakes are included as well as lake, river and estuary margins. Plants are submerged, float or emerge from the water.

**Seepages** are fed by groundwater springs and/or surface water. They are found on moderate to steep hill slopes or at the heads of water courses. The water table is slightly below the surface. Low rushes or broadleaved plants such as native buttercup may be present.



Swamp buttercup (*Ranunculus macropus*)

## Contact Us

If you would like further information about the Wetland Programme please contact the Biodiversity department: [biodiversity@gw.govt.nz](mailto:biodiversity@gw.govt.nz).

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