



The Marlborough District Council has proposed changes to its existing plans to manage the impacts of new dairy farming on freshwater quality. Rules requiring new conversions to obtain resource consent from the Council will come into effect on 25 April 2013. The Council has been consulting with the farming community and key stakeholders such as tangata whenua, Federated Farmers, the dairy industry, Department of Conservation and Fish and Game New Zealand. Consultation on the final form of the policies and rules will continue through the public submission process.



HERE ARE ANSWERS TO SOME QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Q: What does the new rule mean for farmers?

A: Any person who wants to establish a new dairy farm requires a resource consent. Existing dairy farm operations will not require consent under the proposed rule.

Q: Why has the Marlborough District Council decided to do this?

A: The purpose of the plan change is to protect at-risk catchments, while allowing dairy farming to proceed in a sustainable way. Locally and nationally there is an increasing focus on water quality, in particular, the Government has introduced the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management (NPSFM), which requires Councils to set cumulative limits for water quality. The Council has a staged approach to implementing the NPSFM and these plan changes are part of that approach. Through these changes the Council aims to avoid degradation of waterways by focusing on dairy farming at the time of development rather than potentially having to remediate a water resource after the damage has occurred, which could potentially be at considerable cost to a dairy farmer if significant changes in practice are necessary.

Q: What do you mean by 'a new dairy farm'?

A: A new dairy farm means a land based activity, having as its primary purpose the farming of dairy cattle for milk production, and related activities on land converted for that purpose. It does not include any increase in the area or intensity of an existing dairy farming operation unless the increased activity requires any additional dairy shed. A replacement dairy shed that is unrelated to increased farming activity would not trigger the need for a consent.

Q: Can I reactivate an old farm that hasn't been in dairy for a while?

A: A consent is required under the new rules. The scale and intensity of dairy farming has changed over time. In addition, the potential degradation of water quality and the measures to be put in place to avoid this occurring are central considerations under the new provisions for the establishment of new dairy farms, these factors would not have been considered previously under any former rules.

Q: When will the new provisions come into effect?

A: The new policies and rules came in to effect on 25 April 2013.

Q: Is this an additional consent?

A: Yes. Although this is an additional consent, wherever possible farmers or land purchasers should lodge the application at the same time as their applications for consent to discharge farm dairy effluent (if applicable) and permit to take water, so that the applications can be processed at the same time.



Q: One of the proposed new policies refers to more than minor effects being avoided. How is ‘minor’ determined – what does it mean?

A: Whether an effect is minor or more than minor is an assessment that will be made when the resource consent application is being processed, based on the information that has been supplied with the application. If, for example, comprehensive Water Quality and Nutrient Management Plans have been provided, showing that surface water and groundwater quality will not decrease as a result of the conversion activities, then the effects would be considered to be minor. The policy lists five measures to be addressed in resource consent applications to guide applicants, which cover — stock in waterbodies, non-grazed buffers along waterbody margins, dairy effluent storage, separation distances between effluent ponds and waterbodies, and nutrient management plans.

Q: How much detail are you going to need in the Water Quality and Nutrient Management Plans? What sort of capability or skills do I need to have to complete one or will I need to employ a farm consultant?

A: A template of the plan will be available, to give you an idea of the amount of information that is needed. The template is being designed so that, as much as possible, you will be able to use the information that you will already have about your conversion, and so in general you should be able to provide the information yourself. It may be advisable to get the help of a farm consultant and/or resource management consultant to ensure all of the information is provided.

Q: Who will approve the management plans? Has the Council got the skills?

A: The Farm Management Plan will be assessed by Council staff as part of processing resource consent applications. Consents staff will consult experienced farm consultants when considering the Farm Management Plan. The overall decision about whether to grant a consent or not (and therefore whether to approve a Farm Management Plan) will rest with the Council.

Q: When I am replacing my consents (e.g. discharge and water permits) for my existing dairy farm, will I have to comply with the new rule?

A: No. The provisions only apply to new conversions, i.e. the initial conversion of the farm from its previous use to dairying.

Q: Where can I find the information I need on how to prepare a consent application?

A: Supporting information is currently being developed and will be available from the Council and online at www.marlborough.govt.nz shortly. The proposed provisions provide guidance about what is required to be included in an application but it is recommended that advice is sought from a farm consultant and/or a resource management consultant.

Q: How long will it take to process a consent?

A: The Resource Management Act specifies the maximum length of time that the Council can take to process consent applications, provided all the necessary information is provided by the applicant. Applications for consents for new dairy conversions are expected to take the same amount of time to process as the current consents that are required for farming activities.

Q: What will the costs of processing the resource consent be?

A: This is unknown at this stage as each new dairy farm will have its own unique set of circumstances. Ensuring you have a complete application and combining applications if multiple consents are required are ways in which you can lessen potential costs. It may be worth seeking a meeting with a Council planning officer prior to lodging your application to identify any potential issues and further information that may be required.

Q: Why do I have to get a consent when the existing dairy farm next to me, who is doing many of the same activities, doesn't?

A: Intensive land use is one of the significant causes of declining water quality. This is being addressed by several initiatives, one of which is to ensure that any new dairy conversions will be carried out in ways which minimise their impact on the environment. Other steps, including education and the promotion of sustainable farming practices, are being taken at the same time, and these will help your neighbours reduce their own environmental impacts.

Through its existing Dairy Farm Plan project and compliance programmes the Council is looking at the effects of various existing farming activities. The provisions applying to all intensive land uses will be considered as part of the current review of the Marlborough Resource Management Plans.



Q: How can I have my say?

A: While the proposed new policies and rules came into effect on 25 April 2013, the Marlborough District Council is consulting with the public on what the final policies and rule should be. You can make submissions until 24 May 2013 on any aspect of the plan changes, and then there will be an opportunity for submitters to make comment on other people's submissions. At the end of this process, the Council will consider all submissions and decide whether any changes should be made before the provisions become permanent amendments to the Wairau/Awatere Resource Management Plan and the Marlborough Sounds Resource Management Plan.

Q: How can I get more information?

A: The proposed plan changes may be inspected without fee at any of the following locations at any time that these places are open to the public:

- The Council's Office, Seymour Street, Blenheim
- The Marlborough Library, Arthur Street, Blenheim
- The Havelock, Seddon, Ward and Rai Valley Community Libraries
- The Council's Picton Office and the Picton Library, High Street, Picton
- Elma Turner Library, Halifax Street, Nelson

*The plan changes can be viewed on the
Marlborough District Council's website at
www.marlborough.govt.nz.*

CONTACT

If you have any questions please contact

Rachel Anderson - Policy Portfolio Manager, Environmental Policy

Phone: **03 520 7400** Fax: **03 520 7496**

Email: **rachel.anderson@marlborough.govt.nz**



MDC

15 Seymour Street
PO Box 443
Blenheim 7240
NEW ZEALAND

Ph: +64 3 520 7400
Fax: +64 3 520 7496
Email: mdc@marlborough.govt.nz
www.marlborough.govt.nz