

Summary of Information - Greater Wellington Regional Council's Proposed Dangerous Dam Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose is to inform the public of the proposed Dangerous Dam policy required to be adopted by Greater Wellington under the provisions of the Building Act 2004.

2. Summary of the Proposed Dangerous Dam Policy

2.1 Background

The provisions of the Building Act 2004 (the Act) came in to effect on 30 November 2004 and 31 March 2005. Contained within the Act is a specific section dealing with Dam Safety which applies to existing dams and new dams, once constructed. One of the provisions of the Dam Safety section is that Greater Wellington must adopt a policy on Dangerous Dams.

(Note, for the dam safety section of the Act, a dam is defined as a structure that retains 3 or more metres depth and holds more than 20,000 or more cubic metres of water or other fluid.)

The Dangerous Dam policy must state:

- the approach the regional authority will take in performing its functions;
- the regional authority's priorities in performing those functions; and
- how the policy will apply to heritage dams.

A dam is considered to be dangerous if it is a high or medium potential impact dam (as defined by regulations); and

a) is likely to collapse –

- i) in the ordinary course of events; or
- ii) in a moderate earthquake (as defined by regulations); or
- iii) in a moderate flood (as defined by regulations); or

(b) is a leaky dam.

2.2 Summary of Policy

Identification

Greater Wellington will compile a list of potentially dangerous dams over time in response to owners providing information / dam classifications and complying with the dam safety assurance process, and in response to complaints or relevant information.

Assessment

Once regulations that prescribe the standards and criteria for medium and high potential impact, moderate earthquake and moderated flood are Gazetted, Greater Wellington will use those definitions in their assessment of dams. Greater Wellington officers and technical specialists will use “The New Zealand Dam Safety Guidelines (2000)”, or any subsequent update or recognised replacement for that guideline, for guidance in determining if a dam is dangerous.

Taking Action on Dangerous Dams

On being satisfied that a dam is dangerous, Greater Wellington will:

- Provide the owner with all information and reports obtained as a result of inspections and investigations
- Advise and liaise with the owner of a dam identified as dangerous and other agencies to discuss action to be taken.
- If necessary, Greater Wellington will give Notice to those likely to be immediately affected in the event of a dam failure.
- If the owner has not taken steps to reduce or remove the danger then a Notice may be issued pursuant to Section 155 of the Act.
- Greater Wellington will carry out the work required in a Notice itself or via contractors if any work required under the Notice is not completed within the time frame given in the Notice.
- Where it is considered measures are necessary to avoid immediate danger, Greater Wellington may take swift action to remove the immediate danger without first serving Notice on owners.
- A dam owner may dispute a dangerous dam classification by providing their own assessment and information to Greater Wellington.

Dealing with a Dam Owner

Before exercising its statutory powers, Greater Wellington will seek to discuss options with a dam owner, with a view to obtaining, from the owner, a mutually acceptable proposal for removing or reducing the danger.

Heritage Dams

When dealing with dangerous heritage dams, Greater Wellington will seek advice from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and the relevant territorial authority (if appropriate) before any actions are undertaken.

Priorities

Greater Wellington will prioritise the requirement to reduce or remove dangerous dams as follows:

First priority: to ensure public safety at all times

Second priority: economic welfare

Third priority: heritage values

3. Availability of proposed policy

This Summary of Information contains the major matters in the Proposed Dangerous Dam Policy. A full copy of the proposed policy is available from Greater Wellington Regional Council Offices in Wellington and Masterton or from our website www.gw.govt.nz.

4. Submission process

Comments and submissions on the proposed policy are invited to be received by the Greater Wellington Regional Council by 5pm, 22 August 2006. If required, a hearing will be held in September 2006. Submitters should indicate in their submission if they wish to be heard in person to support their submission.