

8 May 2023

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-2073

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information 2023-091

I refer to your request for information dated 19 April 2023, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (GW) on 19 April 2023 via Twitter. You have requested the following:

“Sewage... in our streams and beaches.

@WgtnCC can you advise of your plan to stop this happening?

@greaterwgtn Does this breach discharge consents?

Please consider these LGOIMA requests

(Retweeted Wellington Scoop Article <https://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=151803>)

(Then commented): “Due to heavy rainfall, the Moa Point Treatment Plant has had higher inflows than its designed for. As a result, at 8:24am screened sewage was discharged 1.8 km south off the coast of Lyall Bay

Additionally, How do you define “heavy Rainfall”, WCC and GWRC?”

On 1 May 2023 you agreed to clarify your request to:

1 *“A response from GW confirming if the following discharges referenced in the scoop article were authorised by a resource consent or were a breach of the Resource Management Act 1991:*

- The discharge “at 8:24am screened sewage was discharged 1.8 km south off the coast of Lyall Bay”*
- The discharge “At 9:29 am, there was also a discharge of untreated sewage from the Plant’s short outfall, located in Tarakena Bay”*
- the discharge “At 8:50am, fully treated sewage was discharged at the Waiwhetu Stream”*

- *The discharge “At 9:48am, screened sewage was discharged near the mouth of the Karori Stream”*
 - *The discharge “Porirua Wastewater Treatment Plant had a discharge of a mixture of fully treated wastewater and treated but undisinfectd wastewater today”.*
2. *Explanation of how ‘heavy rainfall’ is defined in relation to the sentence “Due to heavy rainfall, the Moa Point Treatment Plant has had higher inflows than it is design d for .”*

Greater Wellington’s response follows:

1. Of the five discharges listed above, one discharge was authorised by a resource consent and compliant, and four were either non-consented or non-compliant with the relevant consent and therefore in breach of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).
 - The discharge at 8:24 am off the coast of Lyall Bay was non-compliant with resource consent WGN080003 [35047] and therefore a breach of the RMA.
 - The discharge at 9:29 am located in Tararua Bay was a non-consented discharge and therefore, a breach of the RMA.
 - The discharge at 8:50 am to the Waiwhetu Stream, was consented under and compliant with resource consent WGN120142 [33406].
 - For the discharge at 9:48 am near the mouth of the Karori Stream, resource Consent WGN060283 [25227] allows the consent holder:

“to occasionally discharge milliscreened and settled wastewater from the Western (Karori) Wastewater Treatment Plant into the coastal marine area (the Cook Strait in the vicinity of Karori Stream mouth) via the existing outfall during events when the stormwater tank is full and the flow to the plant exceeds 190 L/s”.

However, due to a broken section of the Western Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Main Outfall Pipeline between the Treatment Plant and the coastal outfall point the discharge would have discharged directly to the Karori Stream rather than to the specified coastal outfall. Therefore, this discharge was non-consented and a breach of the RMA.
 - The discharge from Porirua Wastewater Treatment Plant including undisinfectd wastewater on 19 April 2023 was non-compliant with WGN980083 [33805] and therefore was a breach of the RMA.
2. Heavy Rainfall is not a term that is specifically defined in any of the relevant resource consents. Heavy rainfall affects wastewater treatment plants as network inflow and infiltration causes inflow volume to the plants to exceed maximum treatment capacity resulting in overflow/bypass discharges. The following bullet points explain the references to ‘heavy rainfall’ in the resource consents relevant to this information request.

- Discharge consent WGN080003 [35047] allows the consent holder:
“To occasionally discharge up to 4500 litres per second of mixed disinfected secondary treated and milli-screened wastewater to the coastal marine area via an existing submarine outfall during and/or immediately after heavy rainfall, when the quantity of wastewater arriving at the Moa Point Wastewater Treatment Plant exceeds 3000 litres per second”.
Therefore, in relation to the circumstances that allow for bypass discharges to occur at the Moa Point WWTP, heavy rainfall can be understood as “when the quantity of wastewater arriving at the Moa Point Wastewater Treatment Plant exceeds 3000 litres per second”.
- Discharge consent WGN120142 [33406] allows the consent holder:
“To temporarily discharge treated wastewater to the Waiwhetu Stream during and/or immediately after heavy rain events when flows exceed the capacity of the main outfall pipeline and the storm tank system is fully utilised”.
Therefore, in relation to the circumstances that allow for bypass discharges to occur at the Seaview WWTP, heavy rainfall can be understood as ‘when flows exceed the capacity of the main outfall pipeline and the storm tank system is fully utilised’
- Please note that the Porirua WWTP and Western WWTP consents do not refer to ‘heavy rainfall’.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington’s website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Al Ross
Kaiwhakahaere Matua mo te Taiao | General Manager Environment Management