

“HOW TO” KEEP YOUR WETLAND WET



Keeping Your Wetland Wet is essential.

Wetlands are covered or soaked for at least part and often all of the year. They depend on a natural supply of water – from tidal flows, streams, flooding rivers, connections with groundwater, rainfall or a combination of these. The water level in your wetland and how much it fluctuates will determine the plants and animals it can support. Maintaining water levels is one of the most important tasks in managing your wetland – water is what makes it a wetland!

WHAT TO DO - STEPS:

- 1** Check out your wetland’s water supply – Different types of wetlands will have different water supplies. If you are creating a wetland, first investigate and monitor the source and amount of water, especially over the seasons.
- 2** Consider what the natural water levels of your wetland would be.
- 3** Set a goal for how you want your wetland to be. Do you want to reduce flooding, improve water quality, increase the wildlife or fisheries resource or re-establish a natural wetland system to enhance native biodiversity?

4 Restore your wetland’s water supply.

5 Monitor your wetland’s water levels – by photographs, or by measuring and recording the presence of surface water, how far the water spreads, the length of wet and dry periods, and depth of surface water. You may have to adapt your restoration to get the best results.

Restoring water levels

If your wetland has been partially drained, you’ll probably need to increase its water levels by filling in or blocking drains and ditches. By retaining such wetland areas you will protect their biodiversity and maintain the benefits that wetlands provide (for example, flood management and improving water quality).

It is not only drainage of wetlands or near wetlands that can affect their water levels. Changes further upstream, such as damming or channelling waterways and groundwater abstraction, can change how much and when water reaches a wetland. If there have been changes in the surrounding catchment you may need to increase your wetland’s water levels by building a low stopbank around a water body or installing a partially submerged weir, or building a low dam across a stream or river (make sure fish can still get through - this will also require a consent) or digging out an area to create a depression. To make sure that water levels don’t rise unnaturally high, these structures must allow for generous overflows.

See “How To” Know When I Need Consent, or contact us to find out more about when a resource consent is required for activities such as diverting and damming water, abstraction of surface and ground water, earthworks or vegetation clearance.

It all depends on your wetland type!

A wetland with a high water table or steady water supply will stay damp throughout most of the year. Be aware

that it is natural for some wetlands to dry out during the summer and that some species prefer it this way. Members of the Southland Wetlands Working Party can help you with advice on restoring water levels, and can even provide free laser-level surveying.



The historic Big Lagoon has had its water levels restored, through the construction of embankments, once again making this area a wetland habitat in Southland.

