

Decision of the Southland Regional Council

Publicly notified resource consent application

Section 104B and section 113 of the Resource Management Act 1991

Applicant:	Blue Sky Meats Limited	
RM reference:	AUTH-20222295	
Location:	729 Woodlands Morton Mains Road, Edendale	
Legal description:	Lot 1 DP 14802, Part Lot 7 DP 159, Part Lot 8 DP 159, Lot 1 DP 595, Lot 1 DP 541980, Lot 2 DP 541980, Lot 9 DP 159, Lot 12 DP 159, Lot 13 DP 159, Lot 292 DP 155, Lot 293 DP 155, and Lot 1 DP 8287	
Decision date:	27 March 2026	
Expiry date:	27 March 2051	
Class of activity (ies)	Discretionary	
Activities authorised:	To abstract 1,500,000 litres per day and 7,000,000 litres per week of groundwater from three bores for a meat processing plant and a rendering and blood drying plant. (01)	pSWLP rule 54(e); RWP rule 23(d).
	To take groundwater for the purpose of dewatering the ground beneath the wastewater treatment plant (02)	pSWLP rule 54(d); RWP rule 23(d).
	To discharge treated wastewater, BNR solids, stockyard solids, grit, paunch, and covered anaerobic lagoon stormwater onto land (03)	pSWLP rule 34(a)
	To discharge contaminants to air from a meat processing plant, rendering and blood drying plant and associated boiler, wastewater collection and treatment systems	RAP rules 5.5.2(2), 5.5.2(4), & 5.5.2(16)

and associated land discharges, and a salting shed (04)	
To discharge land drainage water and stormwater to water (05)	pSWLP rule 5
To use land to maintain, and use three non-agricultural effluent storage ponds, for the treatment and storage of meat works effluent (06)	pSWLP rule 32C(a)

1. Decision

Resource consent is **granted** under delegated authority.

2. Reasons for the decision

In making this decision I have considered the application, further information responses, technical reports commissioned on behalf of Council, the submission and the relevant planning documents.

The proposal

Blue Sky Meats (NZ) Limited (BSM) operates an existing meat works processing plant located at 729 Woodlands Morton Mains Road, Edendale. The proposal seeks to replace consents associated with the ongoing operation of the existing meat works processing plant. Having conducted extensive upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and processing capacity during 2019-2021, the applicant seeks to extend the meat processing season from a 10-month season (prior to the upgrades), to eventually be able to process meat year-round.

The existing environment

A thorough description of the existing site is described in the consent officer's s42A report which I adopt. Below are the key highlights.

The existing site includes a lamb and sheep processing plant, ancillary meat rendering plant, and surrounding agricultural land (see figure 1 below). The Site is made up of land owned by BSM and land owned by various third-parties.

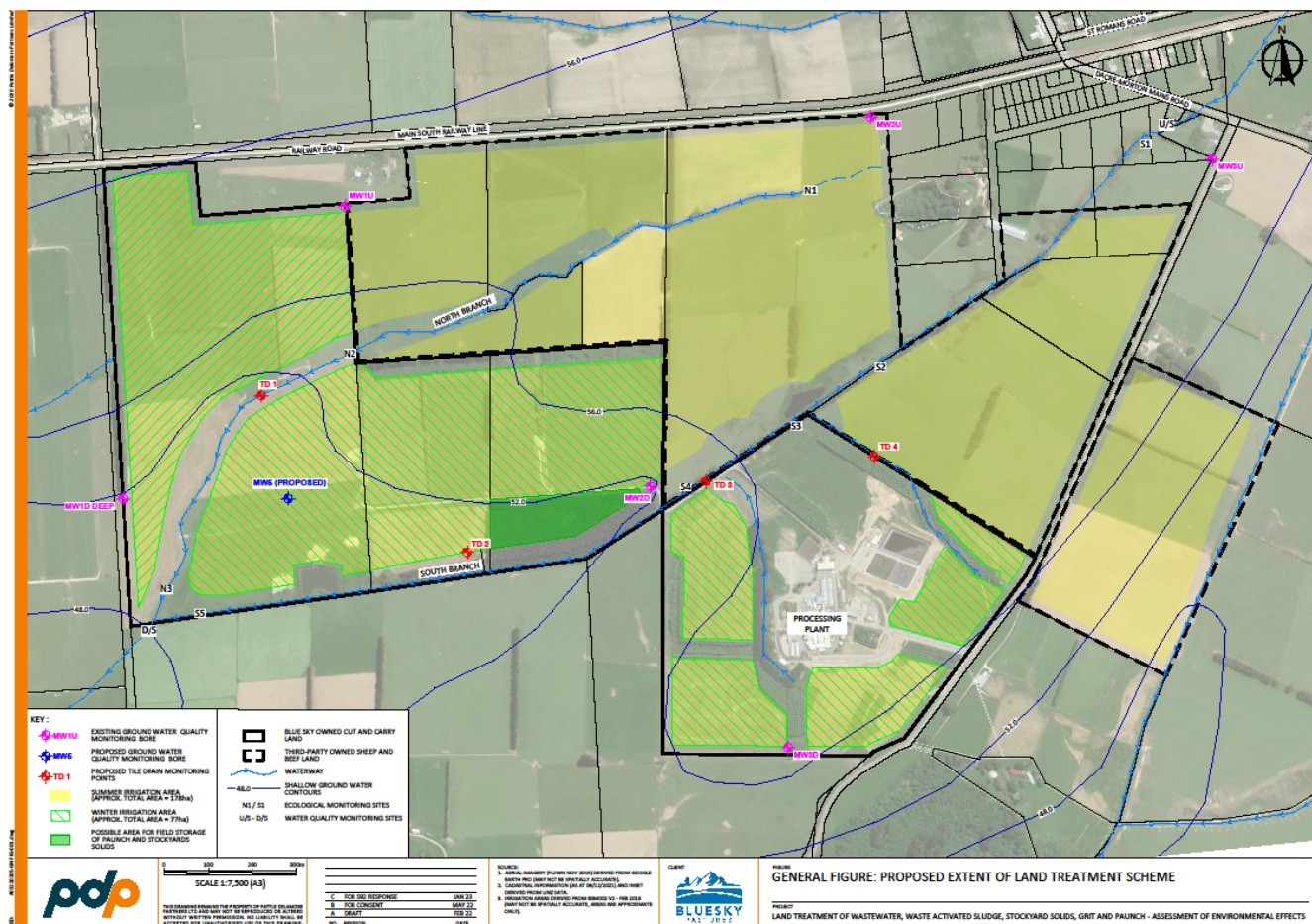


Figure 1: BSM Site Boundary and Wastewater Farm including setbacks and exclusion areas. The dashed outline is third party owned land with the thick outline BSM owned land.

BSM currently holds thirteen resource consents to operate the Plant on the Site (see table 1).

Table 1 Existing consents

AUTH-201191-V1	To discharge up to 1000 cubic metres per day of meat processing and rendering plant wastewater to land at Morton mains via a spray irrigator	Expires 31 December 2027* Applying for a new consent
AUTH-201190-V1	To take groundwater for a meat processing plant and rendering and blood drying plant	Expires 31 December 2027* Applying for a new consent
AUTH-201193-V5	To discharge contaminants to air from a meat processing plant, rendering and blood drying plant and associated boiler	Expires 31 December 2027* Applying for a new consent (combining air permits)
AUTH-20181937-01	To construct, maintain, and use two non-agricultural effluent storage ponds, and to reconstruct, maintain and use a non-agricultural effluent storage pond, for the treatment and storage of meat works effluent.	Expires 31 December 2027* Applying for a new consent
AUTH-20181937-02	To take and use groundwater for the purpose of dewatering a wastewater treatment and storage pond site	Expires 31 December 2027* Applying for a new consent
AUTH-20181937-03	To discharge land drainage water and stormwater to water	Expires 31 December 2027* Applying for a new consent
AUTH-20181937-04	To discharge contaminants to air from a wastewater treatment plant	Expires 31 December 2027* Applying for a new consent (combining air permits)
AUTH-20252062-01	To install a bore for industrial purposes	Expires 31 December 2027*
AUTH-20252062-02	To take groundwater for a one-off pump test	Expires 31 December 2027*
AUTH-20252689-01	To install a bore for groundwater abstraction	Expires 31 December 2027*
AUTH-20252689-02	To take groundwater for a one-off pump test	Expires 31 December 2027*
AUTH-20252689-01	To install a bore for industrial purposes	Expires 31 December 2027*
AUTH-20252689-02	To take groundwater for a one-off pump test	Expires 31 December 2027*

*From 17 December 2025, under the Resource Management (Duration of Consents) Amendment Act 2025 the expired permits currently operating under s124 continuation rights are deemed to be reinstated and extended to the close of 31 December 2027. The remaining consents that expire this year (bore installation and pump tests) will also have their expiry dates extended to the close of 31 December 2027.

A range of processes are required to be undertaken by BSM on the Site to support the processing activities. These include meat processing plant, an animal by-product rendering plant and a blood drying plant. Furthermore, a wastewater treatment plant (**WWTP**) treats wastewater from the Site before irrigation to BSM and privately owned land around the Plant.

Operations on the site include:

- Edible product processing, stockyards/holding areas, slaughter and boning processes and chilled and frozen storage;
- On-site rendering, which can process up to 5,750kg of raw material per hour (the plant typically processes 4,500kg/hr); and
- A skin salting operation.

Production runs from the end of July to early June each year, with processing typically peaking from January through to May and dropping off in June. In the 2020/2021 season, the site moved from a 10-month to an 11-month processing season and is targeting 12-month processing to meet demand. The Plant closes for a brief period between Christmas and New Year.

Meat processing wastewater contains diluted blood, protein, and fats and solids which are high in organic material and nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus). A WWTP treats the meat processing and rendering wastewater prior to irrigation to land.

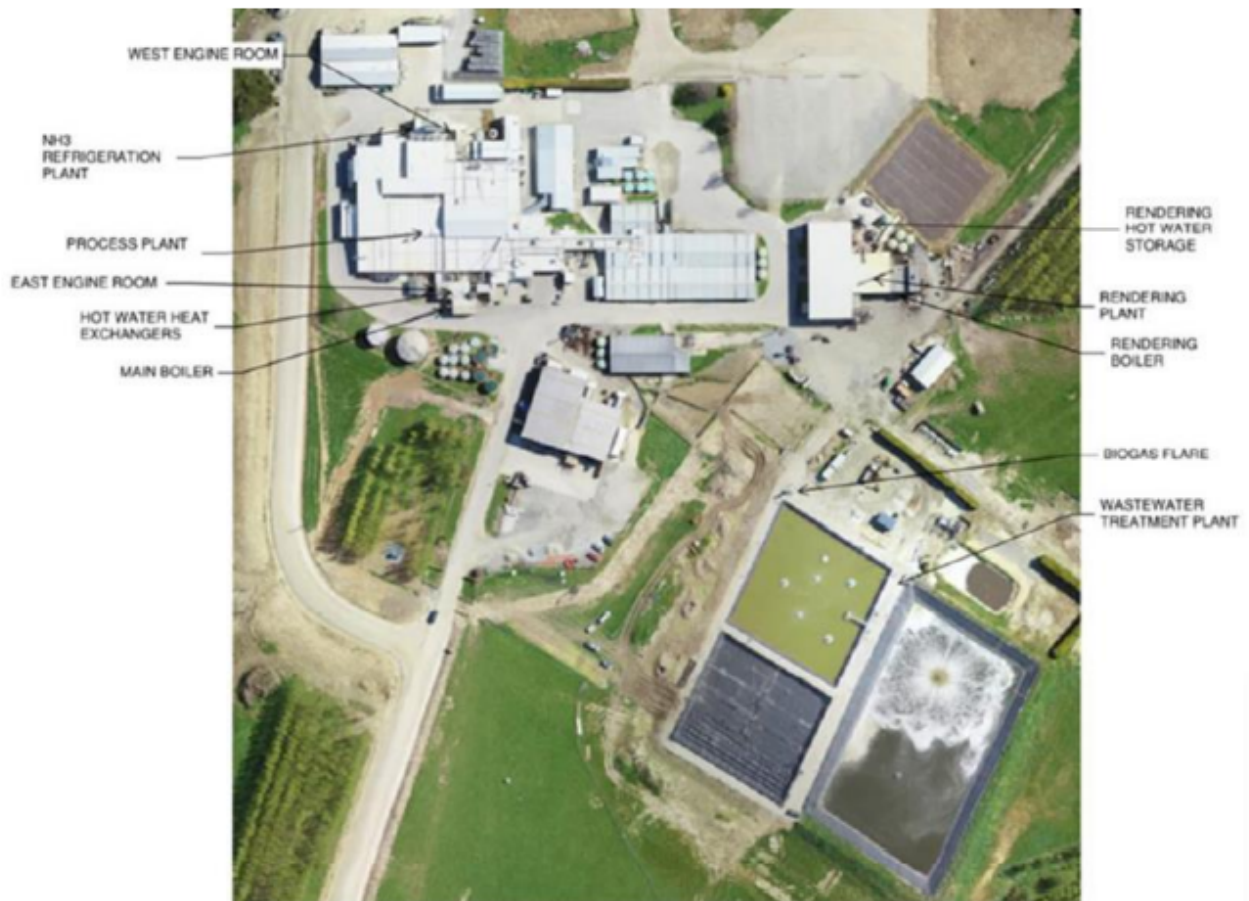


Figure 2: BSM Site Layout

During 2019 to 2021 BSM completed substantial upgrades to their WWTP. The upgrades enabled the plant to operate at full capacity, and to reduce nitrogen loading to the land treatment area. It also enabled greater removal of organic matter including fats, oils and greases.

Following treatment of the wastewater, BNR solids, stockyard solids, grit, paunch, and covered anaerobic lagoon stormwater to surrounding pastoral land comprised of 77ha of BSM land and 101ha of third party owned land. Irrigation to BSM owned land occurs year-round with the area predominantly operated as a pastoral cut and carry system. The third party owned land is predominantly for sheep and beef grazing and irrigation occurs from October to March (inclusive) when it is beneficial for grass growth.

Air discharges at the site occurs from one coal-fired boiler, a salting shed, a rendering plant, a blood drier, a biofilter, and the stockyards. Coal is used to fire the boiler which generates steam for the rendering plant. The steam boiler is 20m high with a diameter of 750mm and has an output of 4.3 MW (although designed for 6 MW). Coal quality currently complies with the existing consent limits. It should be noted that BSM also had a boiler which generated hot water for cleansing and sterilising purposes however this was decommissioned in 2024 and no longer forms part of the application.

Stock are transported to the plant in trucks and held in stockyards, then washed prior to slaughter. The stockyards are covered but have open sides to allow natural light and ventilation. The stockyards are elevated approximately 1m above ground level and the stock are held in mesh floor pens which allow effluent to drop through onto a concrete slab that gravity feeds to a drain. The effluent and washdown water drains to a screen before being pumped to the WWTP for treatment.

The site is predominantly in a rural area surrounded by dairy farming activities and stock finishing. Twelve rural properties are clustered together approximately 300m northeast of the proposed discharge area and 1.2km from the plant itself. Rural dwellings also exist relatively close to the plant with the nearest dwelling being approximately 460m south-east of the plant. The processing plant and upgraded WWTP are generally hidden from view by existing trees.

The BSM-owned land is predominantly operated as a cut and carry operation, while sheep are grazed to clean up buffer areas. The cut and carry operations typically occur from October to April with three grass cuts completed each season.

The third party owned land is a sheep and beef operation with silage making. In 2020-2021, 800 ewes and lambs were run and up to 30 head of cattle in November to January.

The topography of the site is flat to gently undulating and gently graded towards the tributaries which pass through the site.

The property is located within the Waihōpai River catchment which is part of the Oreti Freshwater Management Unit. Three small tributaries of the Waihōpai River traverse through, or adjacent to, the proposed discharge area (including third party owned land). They flow in a South-West direction eventually join the Waihōpai River approximately 14km downstream. These streams are fed by surface water runoff and shallow groundwater and subsurface drains. These tributaries are characterised by low flows and dry or stagnant conditions can occur.

Surface water quality at the site is heavily impacted by local land-use influences which comprise of intensive agricultural practice. Two watercourses are monitored on site and these show elevated concentrations of plant available nutrients as well as elevated E-coli concentrations, with historic activities undertaken by BSM on the site contributing to these elevated levels. Degraded shallow groundwater also feeds the two streams and will also contribute to degraded water quality.

Ecological surveys indicated the presence of native aquatic species in the faster flowing water including freshwater Kōura, inanga and galaxiids. Benthic ecological assessments range from fair to poor, periphyton cover is low, and macrophyte growth is particularly high.

The riparian margin habitat is considered to be typical of that passing through pastoral land. There is strong channelization, limited shading, deep sediment accumulations, instream vegetation obstructing flows, and riparian margins characterised by stream-bank erosion and homogenous vegetation offering limited shading.

The site overlays gleyed and oxidising physiographic zones. Soil infiltration rates have shown large degrees of variation across the site where poor infiltration rates have sometimes been an issue. The upgraded treatment plant and corrective actions undertaken by BSM have helped improve the situation in recent years.

The site is underlain by a shallow unconfined aquifer classified as the Waihōpai groundwater management zone, along with a deeper confined aquifer (which is interbedded with the Gore Lignite Measures) where the abstraction bores take water from, for the site.

Effects on the environment

I have had regard to the actual and potential effects on the environment of allowing the activity. The application is for multiple meat works processing activities. Associated with these activities there are a number of environmental effects. These include:

- water quantity effects
- water quality effects
- soil health effects
- public health effects
- air quality effects

I agree with and adopt the assessment provided in the consent officer's s42A report. I am satisfied that the effects of the proposed activities on the receiving environment will be no more than minor provided the proposed practices and mitigations are implemented.

Positive effects

I agree with and adopt the assessment provided in the consent officer's s42A report (section 2.2) and do not repeat here for efficiency.

Assessment under relevant plans

I agree with and adopt the assessment provided in the consent officer's s42A report (sections 2.3 to 2.8) and do not repeat here for efficiency. I consider that granting consent will assist and not detract from achieving the objectives of the relevant plan provisions. The conditions of consent ensure that the proposal is consistent with the relevant plans and policy statements.

The Southland Regional Policy Statement 2017 became operative on 9 October 2017. It pre-dates the NPS-FM 2020, so may not fully give effect to it and therefore regard should be given to the higher order document.

I have had regard to the value of the investment the applicant has made exercising their current resource consent. The value is significant given the meat works operation relies on resource consents to continue to operate.

In terms of s105, the nature of the discharge and the sensitivity of the receiving environment, alternative methods and/or locations of discharge have been discussed in the application. I note that the applicant has selected the proposed discharges because they consider that the alternative methods would result in greater adverse effects than the proposed new discharge systems. The sensitivity of the receiving environment has been taken into account for all discharges, and mitigations are proposed to address the risks to water quality and air quality for the operation.

Granting this resource consent is not contrary to section 107 or section 217 of the Resource Management Act 1991. I agree with and adopt the detailed section 107 assessment provided in section 2.12 within the Consent Officers s42A report.

All considerations are subject to Part 2 of the RMA, which sets out the purpose and principles that guide this legislation. Section 5 states the purpose of the RMA and sections 6, 7 and 8 are principles intended to provide additional guidance as to the way in which the purpose is to be achieved. In my view granting this resource consent achieves the purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991 as set out in Part 2 of the Act. I consider that the adverse effects have been addressed by some of the mitigations proffered and agreed to as conditions of consent.

3. Conditions

As the applications are bundled, the overall activity status is a **discretionary activity**. Under Section 104B the Council may grant or refuse consent for a **discretionary activity**, and if it grants the application, may impose conditions under Section 108 of the RMA.

The consents are granted subject to conditions. These conditions are consistent with sections 108 and 108AA of the Resource Management Act 1991.

The applicant has requested a 25-year consent term to reflect the Applicant's significant existing investment in the plant including recent upgrades and to provide economic certainty. Having had regard to policy 40 of the proposed Southland Water and Land plan and the statutory purpose of the Act, I am satisfied that there is reasonable certainty about the effects of the activity and I do not consider that there are factors that would warrant a significantly shorter duration. Consequently, I consider it appropriate to grant the application with an expiry date of 27 March 2051 for all permits.

Please read and ensure you understand and implement these conditions. By law you are required to comply with them for the duration of the consent. Failure to show compliance with conditions of a consent on inspection may result in enforcement action.

For the **Southland Regional Council**



Lacey Bragg
Consents Manager

Notes

1. Right to object: Applicants and consent holders have the right to object to any part of this decision to Environment Southland. Objections must be in writing and received by Environment Southland within 15 working days of the decision being notified. Objectors can request the objection be heard by an independent commissioner. The procedure for making and hearing objections is set out in sections 357A to 357D of the Resource Management Act 1991.
2. Right to appeal: The applicant, the consent holder (if different), and any person who made a submission on the application may appeal against any part of this decision (including the consent conditions) to the Environment Court. A submitter's appeal is limited in scope by the matters raised in their submission. Appellants have 15 working days to lodge an appeal, from the date they received notice of this decision. The right to appeal and procedure for lodging appeals is outlined in sections 120 and 121 of the Resource Management Act 1991.
3. Our costs: An invoice for our costs of working on your application will be forwarded to you shortly.

4. Expiry of consent: Please note the expiry date of your resource consent(s). The expiry date will be printed in on the first page of the consent. You can only undertake the activity legally between now and the expiry date. If you wish to continue with the activity after the consent expires, you will need to apply for and obtain a new resource consent in advance. We recommend you re-apply at least six months before any current consent will expire.
5. Lapse of consent: Please note that the resource consent(s) will lapse if you do not 'given effect' to it within five years of it being granted (or otherwise within a different period specified on the particular consent). Lapse of a consent has the same effect as an expiry. The consent will not lapse if you commence the activity within five years. A longer lapse period can be applied for. Please contact us in advance if you think you are not likely to give effect to the consent before it lapses.
6. Cancellation of consent: Resource consents can be cancelled if they are unexercised for a period of five years. Cancellation of a consent has the same effect as an expiry.