

# Mataura flood protection

December 2022

## Dear householder

Environment Southland has received the latest geophysical report and specialist observations on the Mataura stop banks, and they confirm there is no obvious structural damage to the Mataura township stop banks.

However, our specialist river engineers have raised concerns with a 600m section of riverbank that is at risk of erosion and could undermine the stop bank. In a flood, this stop bank could fail, leading to flooding of the township on the true left bank.

We are prioritising works for this stop bank upstream of the old Mataura paper mill, however the true right riverbank will also need monitoring and protection works in future.



The section of Mataura stop bank (shown in red) could be at risk in the event of a flood.

## What is Environment Southland doing?

Your safety is our number one priority. Environment Southland is working with Emergency Management Southland (EMS) on the possibility of evacuations for Maitua residents at lower levels than have been used in the past.

River levels are monitored 24/7 by the Environment Southland hydrology team who notifies EMS of rising river levels. Catchment operations staff are monitoring the riverbanks weekly, and will move to daily monitoring as river levels and weather forecasts change.

We are working on contingencies in the event of high river levels in the short-term, and we are preparing a permanent solution, with plans to begin this work in January.

## What does that mean for you?

Because the frequency of flooding events is likely to increase due to climate change, we are working closely with EMS to take a precautionary approach to keeping the communities of Gore, Maitua and Wyndham safe.

This means that you may need to be evacuated sooner and at a lower river level/flow than you have previously.

We encourage you, as part of being prepared for emergencies, to prepare for evacuation. Have a plan, gather supplies and get connected with information and with your neighbours. Being prepared will help to make any evacuation easier and less stressful.

In the event of a flood, EMS will make the decisions about if and when to evacuate and will lead any evacuation. EMS can provide advice to people to evacuate and once a state of emergency is declared by the mayor, EMS can make evacuation mandatory. Each event will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, as it is not possible to predict conditions for every situation.

We do have some factors working in our favour, including being able to predict how quickly flood waters travel. We also know from experience during the 2020 floods that we can quickly and effectively evacuate these communities.

## How can you get prepared?

Some items you should ensure you have ready to go include

- clean drinking water
- blankets or sleeping bags
- first aid kit

- non-perishable (canned or dried) food
- torch and radio
- medications
- pet supplies
- food
- formula and drinks for babies and small children

Go to [www.cdsouthland.nz/get-home-ready](http://www.cdsouthland.nz/get-home-ready) for more information on being prepared.

## How will you know when to evacuate?

In the event of high river flows you and your neighbours may be advised that you can self-evacuate if you wish. However, if the risk becomes significant, a state of emergency may be declared and evacuations could become mandatory.

There are a number of ways you can be made aware of evacuation advice and mandatory evacuation. This includes:

- receiving a civil defence emergency mobile alert on your phone
- receiving an Antenna app alert on your phone
- hearing a radio broadcast
- checking media outlets and the Emergency Management Southland website and Facebook pages

As is usual, people will be asked to share the information with neighbours, family and friends so that people without access to these channels are informed.

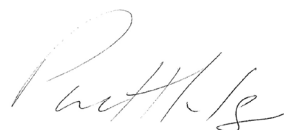
In the event of an evacuation, community leaders and emergency services will be on hand to support you.

## Further information

If you have more questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch on 0800 76 88 45 or email [service@es.govt.nz](mailto:service@es.govt.nz).

You can also sign up to our flood protection and climate change newsletter at [www.es.govt.nz/subscribe](http://www.es.govt.nz/subscribe). Download Antenna from your app store to receive alerts.

Ngā mihi



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