



September 2023 Newsletter | Freshwater farm plan certifier and auditor programme

Dear reader

Welcome to the second issue of our newsletter where we bring you the latest updates on the freshwater farm plan certifier and auditor programme. It was great to chat with some of you at the NZIPIM conference in Christchurch last week where our team was supporting the Ministry for the Environment staff in providing information to those interested in becoming certifiers or getting their farm certified.

In last month's newsletter, we provided some background on the appointment programme, an introduction to our team and some key dates and timelines. If you've only just joined our mailing list and haven't seen the previous newsletter, please take a look [here](#).

In this issue we cover:

- [What you need to know](#)
- [Making improvements to the application process](#)
- [Tips for completing your application](#)
- [Regional training and practical assessments](#)
- [Links to useful resources](#)

Freshwater farm plan certifier and auditor programme - key points

- Freshwater farm plans are a key part of the 2020 Essential Freshwater Package. A plan must identify risks of adverse effects from farming activities on freshwater ecosystems and actions that mitigate those risks.
- Under the Resource Management (Freshwater Farm Plan - FW FP) regulations, freshwater farm plans need to be certified after 18 months of the regulations applying in an area, and audited within 12 months of certification.
- Farm plan certifiers and auditors are appointed by regional councils.
- AsureQuality is responsible for running the appointment programme for farm plan certifiers and auditors.
- We are currently taking applications for certifiers in Waikato and Southland, which are the first regions where the freshwater farm plan regulations have come into effect.
- To become a certifier, you will first need to complete an online application, and if

successful, proceed on to National and Regional Training.

- Full information about the farm plan certifier and auditor programme, and how to apply, is available at www.farmplancertifiers.nz.
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Making improvements to the application process

We have been conducting interviews of early applicants through the application process, and making improvements to the process as we receive feedback. Check back often to www.farmplancertifiers.nz. If you have questions about the process or notice that something isn't clear, please feel free to email Trish at trish.rankin@asurequality.com.

Tips for completing your application

You can apply to become a farm plan certifier at www.farmplancertifiers.nz.

- Your answers should be unique to you. Please ensure you haven't workshopped a generic answer within your organisation.
- The regulations require applicants to demonstrate an understanding of competencies across three main categories:
 1. Farm systems
 2. Policy and regulation
 3. Cultural

As part of your application, you will self-assess your understanding in each of the competencies from Poor to Excellent. To be successful you need to average a score of 'great' in the farm systems category, and also in one of the other two categories.

Note that auditor applications will open soon. To register your interest, please email us farmplancertifiers@asurequality.com.

Regional Training and Practical Assessments

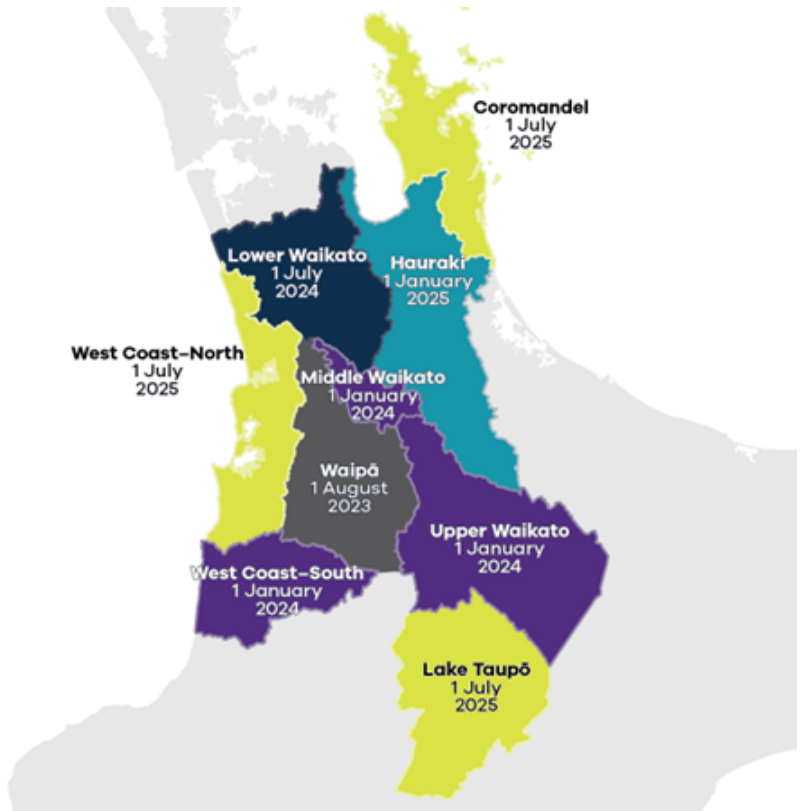
Waikato

Waikato Regional Council regional training consists of a series of online courses, which are due to be available from 1 September.

- [Introduction](#)
- [Mana Whenua](#)
- [Land and Soils](#)
- [Waterbodies](#)
- [Effluent](#)

For more information about becoming a certifier in Waikato or for any Waikato specific questions, please visit [Freshwater Farm Plans | Waikato Regional Council](#) or get in touch with WRC: pie@waikatoregion.govt.nz.

Practical assessments can only be done in areas where the freshwater farm plans regulations have come into force. Refer to the map for dates that the regulations apply to the specific catchment areas in Waikato.



Southland

Southland regional training is available from September. Practical assessments will be available in the areas where the freshwater farm plan regulations have come into force. To date these are Aparima, Fiordland and Islands freshwater catchments. Aparima encompasses the Pourakino, Aparima, Waimatuku, Taunamau and Orepuki areas. Outside of these areas, the freshwater catchment rollout will be as follows:

- 1 February, 2024 - Oreti and Waiau
- 1 July, 2024 - Mataura and Waituna

The dates that the regulations take effect in other regions and catchment areas across the country are available here: [Resource Management \(Application of Part 9A—Freshwater Farm Plans\) Amendment Order 2023 \(SL 2023/203\) – New Zealand Legislation](#)

Each Council is responsible for providing catchment context, challenges and values (CCCV) information to help the development of freshwater farm plans. It is intended that CCCV information will be made available in each area as the regulations come into effect for that catchment / region. CCCV information includes the unique environmental features, current environmental health status, cultural values and priorities in relation to freshwater, and recreational sites in their catchment/ freshwater management unit.

Freshwater farm plans – all you need to know about certification | Stuff

An article about freshwater farm plan certification, just published on stuff.co.nz, sets out everything you need to know about the opportunity to become a certifier, such as the minimum requirements, how certifiers will be trained and supported, how long the process will take and what sort of work certifiers will undertake.

Environmental Assurance Lead at AsureQuality, Simon Love explains that the ideal certifier will have a good level of experience working with farms, particularly farm planning and environmental elements.

“While most certifiers will likely have a rural professional background, there will be other qualification pathways. People who have the right qualifications in farm systems or natural resource management can come into the programme. People with strong cultural knowledge related to freshwater, and those that have worked with Māori landowners, will also be well-suited to certification roles.”

Read the full article here: [Freshwater farm plans: All you need to know about certification | Stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz/news/2018/07/12/freshwater-farm-plans-all-you-need-to-know-about-certification)

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Freshwater farm plans: all you need to know about certification

Here's what you need to know about freshwater farm plan certification and the opportunity to become a certifier.

This year, the Ministry for the Environment has introduced new freshwater regulations for the agricultural sector to protect our waterways now and for the future. The freshwater farm plan system will empower farmers and growers to create individual plans to safeguard freshwater, with accredited certifiers and auditors a key part.

Freshwater farm plans are already being introduced in parts of Waikato and Southland, and will start to come into effect in Otago, the West Coast and Manawatu from early next year. The new regulations are designed to protect and restore the health of freshwater and lower the environmental impact of farming.

For farmers and growers, the first steps are to check if they need a freshwater farm plan and whether to prepare the plan themselves or enlist a farm advisor. Farmers and growers will need a freshwater farm plan if they have 20 hectares or more in arable, pastoral or mixed use, or five hectares or more in horticultural use.



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councils to prepare certifiers to be accredited in their regions

on potential contaminants and the freshwater environment, and as

requirements. If the farmer is happy with the process and certification

New Zealand Association of Resource Management - Webinar

The AsureQuality team recently presented a webinar at the New Zealand Association of Resource Management on the appointment process for farm plan certifiers and auditors. The webinar answers the following questions:

- What is the programme to become a certifier or auditor?
- What is AQ's role?
- What you need to know and
- How to apply

You can watch the webinar here: [Webinars | New Zealand Association Of Resource Management \(nzarm.org.nz\)](#)

Useful Links - The Ministry for the Environment

- [Developing a freshwater farm plan | Ministry for the Environment](#)
- [Freshwater farm plan certification guidance | Ministry for the Environment](#)

How to contact us

New Zealand has highly competent and passionate rural professionals working with our farm operators, and we look forward to supporting as many people as we can to become appointed as freshwater farm plan certifiers and auditors.

Let's get behind the programme and help our farm operators keep up the great mahi underway on their farms for the care and protection of our environment.

Ngā mihi

AsureQuality APM team

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- Waikato Regional Council – pie@waikatoregion.govt.nz
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