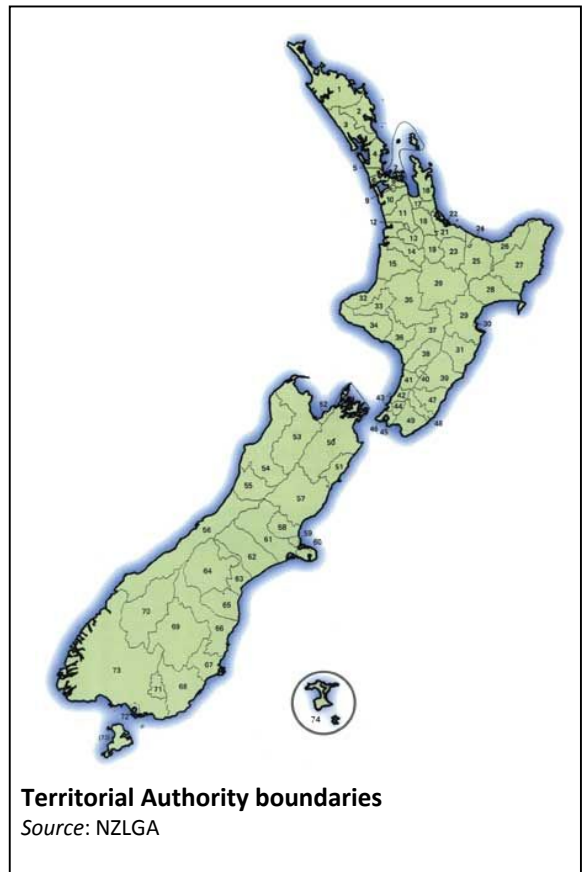


## FAQ Series 3: Stormwater quality

### FAQ3.7: What are others doing?

The membership of the RCA Forum comprises all 74 territorial authorities (TAs), the NZTA (Transit New Zealand and Land Transport New Zealand), and the Department of Conservation. In 2006, the RCAF Stormwater Group surveyed its members to assess the state of the industry (RCAF Stormwater Group, 2006). The survey elicited a response from 87% of all TAs and from all NZTA (then Transit) regions and sub offices. The key findings of the study were as follows:

- *“Forty six out of seventy eight responses, reported the use of devices or techniques to treat stormwater. Environmental reasons and consent compliance were the main reasons for treating stormwater. Eight territorial authorities reported that the issue had never been considered, but cost and lack of observed need were the main reasons for not treating.*
- *Sedimentation, bio-filtration, filtration and infiltration techniques are being used. ....*
- *Multiple, more intensive, stormwater and road run-off treatment techniques are being used by nineteen of eighty three road controlling authorities surveyed, and are in effect on no more than ten percent of the networks operated by those authorities.*
- *Six authorities had no maintenance regime in place. Twelve authorities had a maintenance regime in place for some devices, but not all. Twenty eight authorities had a maintenance regime in place for all treatment devices.*
- *Twenty one authorities reported that monitoring is being undertaken. ...*
- *...*
- *Two rural South Island authorities and one urban authority that are not now treating storm water reported an intention to begin treatment within five years. A further three rural South Island authorities plan to begin treating storm water in five to ten years. Three rural North Island authorities, one urban authority and one Transit New Zealand office also reported plans to treat storm water in five to ten years.*



- *Public awareness of storm water issues was reported to be low in fifty returns, or 64.1 percent of the total. Comparison of the reported intentions of authorities that are not treating stormwater with their reported perception of public awareness suggests a correlation between the two.*
- *Obtaining funding and political support for the investment required was identified as the most significant problem to be addressed in treating stormwater by many responses. Besides these, five problems of water quality that were likely to be most significant were: heavy metals, sediment, waterway contamination, chemical levels and disposal of treated residues.*
- *Only two respondents reported that they were unaware of the objective of ensuring environmental sustainability in the NZ Land Transport Strategy. Three returns from Transit New Zealand, three from rural North Island authorities and two from urban authorities indicated that the responding authority had objectives for managing road run-off within its asset management plan or business plan.*
- *Sixty three authorities reported that no training at all was available in their area for managing road run-off. Almost two thirds of the respondents' concerns related to treatment devices, and those concerns fell almost equally into three between the cost of the devices, the cost of maintaining them and understanding their effectiveness and capacity.*
- *..."*



**Stormwater treatment device construction, Auckland**

Source: NZTA

As part of the preparation of these **FAQs**, a brief overview of member organisation web sites was undertaken to quickly assess the level of publically available information, and also the level of importance RCA Forum members give to this matter. The overview found that stormwater quality was rarely identified as an issue<sup>1</sup>, and that the quality of information produced in response to this search from each of the web sites varied greatly. Whilst the NZTA<sup>2</sup> and the Department of Conservation all have specific reference material relating to stormwater quality, only a third of all TAs publically identify stormwater quality as a distinct issue requiring management. Of the TAs that identified with stormwater quality, most (but not all) were associated with heavily urbanised areas, however interestingly, not all of the major New Zealand population centres were 'covered'. Not surprisingly this correlates well with the more detailed 2006 survey which held that public awareness of the issue was generally low, and that information was not readily available to the public.

<sup>1</sup> This considers whether a search for "stormwater quality" produced a response. The search did not consider the content or status of any district planning documentation, policies, or rules, which would be expected to address stormwater quality in response to the requirements of the RMA.

<sup>2</sup> Both the Transit New Zealand and Land Transport New Zealand sites held information.

The 2006 survey highlighted a general confusion and / or apathy towards the need to provide stormwater quality improvement into the future. Should the survey be repeated (eg to assess changing attitudes and trends), then it would be useful to also understand the perceived or actual drivers for each of the RCAs that might underpin or determine a need to provide stormwater treatment. In some parts of the country, there are very clear statutory drivers, as well as the understanding of the effect upon the receiving environment of stormwater, or at least urbanisation more generally. Whilst this may not necessary correspond with action, increasingly the provision of stormwater treatment is being adopted as 'business as usual' or industry best practice irrespective of specific drivers or statutory imperatives. Furthermore, as regional plans are revised and updated, the need or requirement for stormwater treatment may be clarified and help to alleviate 'confusion' regarding requirements (refer also to **FAQ 1.3: What does this mean for an RCA?**).

It has also become apparent through the preparation of these FAQs, that some of the environmental 'proof' sought by roading, asset, and stormwater managers, may be available but not accessible due to organisational silos, or the general availability of state of the environment information or stormwater related research<sup>3</sup>. A wide but still fairly limited range of technical reports and environmental monitoring results are available via the web, and are therefore generally accessible to RCA Forum members. However, as outlined earlier in **FAQ3: Stormwater Quality**, because of the difficulty in definitively linking environmental effects to urbanisation, and more specifically to stormwater quality or for that matter roads, there may be a reluctance to use the data, let alone accept 'ownership' of any issues that may have been highlighted. The 2006 survey suggests that this reluctance may be largely associated with the cost of both providing and maintaining stormwater quality improvement devices (**SQIDs**).

The brief overview of RCA websites did highlight that some TAs have pollution prevention guidance available to download, however this mostly related to source control and specific activities (eg the washing of cars). Whilst it is understood that some RCAs do have technical guidance available, not all of these were easily or readily accessible. This general inaccessibility of material is perhaps why several 'similar' industry guidance documents have been produced in recent times (eg NZWERF / NZWWA, Transfund, and others produced on an RCA by RCA basis). Where practicable and accessible, this guidance material has been referenced within **FAQ6: Additional Information**. The RCA Forum is proposing to develop a virtual reference library which should help to reduce the duplication of effort in this regard. RCA Forum members are therefore encouraged to add to this library<sup>4</sup> to improve the accessibility and sharing of information across members.



**Fish kill, China**  
Source: AsiaChat.blogspot

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<sup>3</sup> A point that was one of the key findings of the 2006 survey.

<sup>4</sup> In the interim, please provide updated links or material to the RCA Forum Stormwater Group directly by clicking on one of the links provided elsewhere within this web site.