

South-West preferred wastewater servicing solution – FAQs



June 2025

1 What is the history of the project?

As the south-west of Auckland develops, we need to expand our wastewater treatment infrastructure to support population growth. The treatment plants currently serving these communities are coming to the end of their operational life and the area is growing. We are developing a long-term solution that will support growth through to 2050.

Our plan has previously been to replace these plants with one larger facility that can meet the needs of 30,000 people. In 2023, we purchased land in Glenbrook and lodged a Notice of Requirement with Auckland Council to designate it for wastewater treatment purposes. Council referred it to a panel of independent commissioners for assessment under the Resource Management Act 1991.

In late May 2024, the panel of independent commissioners recommended we withdraw our Notice of Requirement. After reviewing the commissioners' feedback, we decided not to pursue the designation of our land in Glenbrook for wastewater treatment purposes.

2 What have we been doing since then?

We have been reassessing options for wastewater servicing in the area, responding to community and commissioner feedback. The options assessed included using our existing wastewater treatment plant sites at Waiuku and Clarks Beach, a new treatment plant on one of two new sites on NZ Steel owned land at Waiuku, or a new plant at our previously preferred site at 372 Glenbrook Beach Road.

A longlist of eight options was developed, across five possible sites. In February 2025, Watercare held drop-in sessions in Waiuku, Clarks Beach and Glenbrook Beach to discuss this longlist with the community.

Options were then evaluated using multi-criteria analysis (MCA). This involved looking at the pros and cons of each option against a wide range of criteria, such as:

- Heritage
- Social and community
- Natural environment
- Landscape/ visual
- Highly productive land
- Constructability
- Operability
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Reuse of treated effluent

In March 2025, we held community drop-in session to talk about the short list of options before revisiting the MCA.



3 What is our preferred wastewater servicing solution?

The preferred solution is a decentralised scheme utilising our existing Clarks Beach and Waiuku sites that will service up to 30,000 people. This will include:

- New, upgraded wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) on our existing sites at Waiuku and Clarks Beach
- A new pipeline to carry treated wastewater from Waiuku to Clarks Beach
- An interim upgrade of our existing plant at Waiuku to meet existing consent conditions while we undertake the main upgrade
- Tidal storage on our Waiuku and Clarks Beach WWTP sites.

This option will provide capacity for up to 30,000 people, and based on Auckland Council's current population growth projections, will support growth to at least 2050.

Beyond this, Watercare has the option of transitioning to a centralised wastewater treatment plant at our Waiuku site. This would involve constructing a new pipeline to carry untreated wastewater from Clarks Beach to Waiuku, expand the Waiuku WWTP site and decommission most of the Clarks Beach WWTP site. This option was the best scoring long term option under the MCA.

We are unable to provide an exact date for transitioning to a centralised plant at Waiuku as it will be dependent on population growth.

4 Why was this option chosen?

It reflects the feedback we received from the community and the independent commissioners, about our previously preferred option and the matters we should be taking into account. This staged plan also uses the existing system better, gives us more flexibility and costs less upfront.

5 How long will the implementation of this option take?

The exact timing for the work depends on receiving landowner approvals and the relevant consents. Watercare will now look to close out the feasibility stage and undertake the design and consenting for the construction work. Once the design is complete, the main work will be tendered, and construction is expected to take approximately three years.

Discharge consents

6 Why the Waiuku Channel and not the Tasman Sea?

Watercare was granted resource consent by the Environment Court in 2018 to discharge treated wastewater into the Waiuku Channel on the outgoing tide, at a location adjacent to the Clarks Beach Golf Course, for a 35-year period.

In 2016, an Assessment of Alternatives Report for the discharge consent identified a long list of approximately 137 options with different discharge locations, treatment technology and treatment plant locations. Seven of the thirty four short listed options were taken to the detailed analysis stage. Two of these options involved a discharge to the Tasman Sea.

Neither of the Tasman Sea options was identified as our preferred option due to:

- The difficult and complex nature of constructing an outfall in a highly dynamic coastal environment.
- Discharging to the Tasman Sea would prevent beneficial reuse options of the treated effluent in the future.
- While the Tasman Sea options provided high dilution for the treated effluent, a majority of iwi opposed the Tasman Sea options.



The outfall for the discharge is currently under construction. The scope of this project has been to assessing alternative sites for a new wastewater treatment plant that will treat wastewater from the South-West, before it is discharged into the Waiuku Channel.

7 Do you need to extend the Waiuku WWTP discharge while construction is underway?

Yes, Watercare will apply for a short-term renewal for the discharge from the Waiuku WWTP. An interim upgrade will be undertaken at Waiuku WWTP to meet the existing consent conditions for this period while the permanent upgrades are undertaken.

8 Will Kingseat be able to connect in?

The estimated service population for the South-West wastewater scheme included an allowance for Kingseat and the scheme still has capacity to provide for Kingseat. However, due to a private wastewater consent being granted recently in Kingseat, we are undertaking a review to determine whether it will be feasible to connect Kingseat to the South-West wastewater scheme.

9 How much is this going to cost?

Watercare has undertaken high level costs for each of the different options.

The cost of the preferred solution to service a population of 20,000 is similar to the cost estimated in March 2024 for a plant at 372 Glenbrook Beach Road, which was also designed to serve 20,000 people.

Including both the capacity upgrades required to service 30,000 people and the interim upgrade of Waiuku WWTP, the total cost of our preferred option is \$578m. As the design and consenting work progresses, more detail will become available allowing more certainty around cost.

10 How will this impact our community?

Watercare is limiting wastewater treatment to our existing operational WWTP sites. In addition, the conveyance work to be undertaken in Glenbrook Beach Road has been minimised as far as possible.

Once the works are complete, better quality treated effluent will be dispersed more into the marine environment resulting in significantly less environmental effects.

11 How will you build new plants on existing sites and keep them operating?

Watercare will be installing temporary treatment facilities to ensure that we meet our existing consents conditions while the construction of the new WWTPs is undertaken.

12 What are we doing with the Glenbrook site?

We are currently restoring the natural flow path on this site by removing a dam (pond located adjacent to Glenbrook Beach Road). We may use the site as a temporary laydown area, continue using it for agricultural purposes, or potentially sell the land in the future.