

# TAPPED IN

Bringing you news, updates and information from Watercare

Spring 2024



Upper Nihotupu Dam

## Spring into summer with confidence

**As we transition from spring into summer, when water usage goes up in line with the temperature, we keep an eye on several factors to ensure our water supply remains stable. This includes current dam storage, river levels, expected water demand and the weather outlook.**

In winter, we received lower-than-normal rainfall which meant our total dam storage level was sitting around 79 per cent at the start of spring. While recent rainfall has pushed storage levels up since then, it is still lower than the historical average for this time of year.

We're actively managing our water resources to preserve the water in our biggest water supply dams in the Hūnua Ranges. This means increasing production at our other water treatment plants

to allow our Hūnua dams to replenish as much as possible. We're also optimising our water network performance and carrying out proactive leak detection to prevent water loss around Auckland.

While long-range weather forecasts indicate near normal rainfall throughout spring, Auckland's water demand typically increases during the warmer months. Peak consumption can increase by up to 100 million litres a day in the warmer months, largely due to outdoor water use. This serves as a good reminder to be mindful of your water use.

**In this edition of *Tapped In*, find out how Auckland's water demand is tracking and what you can do to reduce water use at home. You can also learn more about what we're doing to manage our water supply ahead of summer.**

# Managing our water supply

## Boosting production at our Waikato treatment plants

**Most of Auckland's drinking water comes from 10 water supply dams in the Hūnua and Waitākere ranges. The Hūnua dams are by far our biggest – the water from all five Waitākere dams would only half fill our Mangatangi Dam!**

Given the importance of our Hūnua water sources, we are managing our water supply to allow these dams to replenish as much as possible.

We have increased production at our Waikato water treatment facility. The Waikato River plays a crucial role in meeting Auckland's water supply needs, supplying on average about 20 per cent of Auckland's drinking water each year.

We are also maximising production at our Huia Water Treatment Plant, which treats water from four of our western dams. As the western dams are much smaller than their Hūnua counterparts, their levels fluctuate much more often. We are aiming to prevent water from spilling from them when they reach capacity (as much as possible).



Watercare graduate engineer Tina McIntosh, Watercare smart network engineer Finau Pole and CityCare planned team leader Young Prole install a pressure controller in a pressure-reducing valve chamber in Cockle Bay.

## Improving our water networks

**Our programme to improve our water networks – which focuses on leaks and water pressure at a neighbourhood level – has prevented an estimated seven million litres a day of water loss in the past year.**

While there will always be leaks in any water network, this programme focuses on suburbs with higher numbers of reported leaks – targeting our resources to prevent as much water loss as possible.

We're systematically splitting large water supply zones into smaller 'district metered areas' with their own flow meters. This data is continuously monitored, and if there are unusual spikes for the time of day – for example during the night when water use is at its lowest – that's a good indicator of a leak.

The data guides us on where we need to search for leaks, so our maintenance crews can carry out repairs. This is important, because not all leaks are visible on the surface.

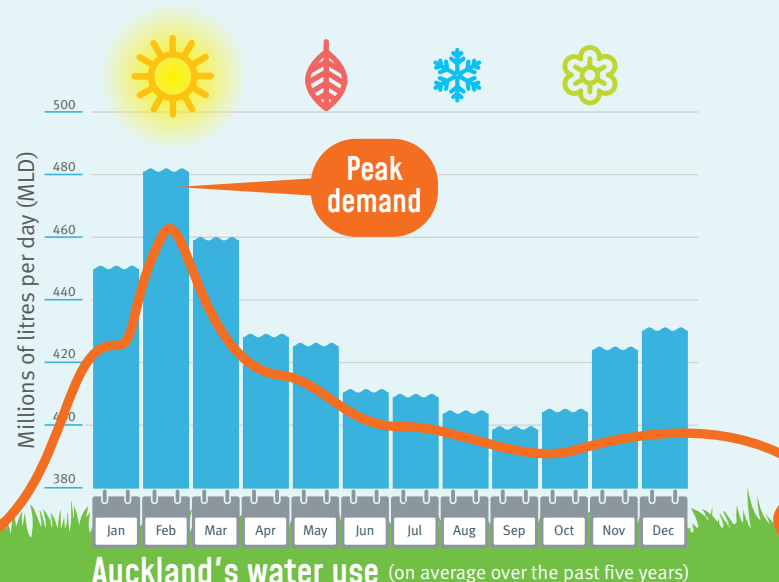
On top of the proactive leak detection and repairs, the water pressure in the network is optimised to ensure it's sufficient for customer use, without being too high and raising the risk of pipe bursts. Optimising the pressure can reduce both the number of leaks, and the volume of leaks.

## Beat the peak

**Across the year, homes and businesses in Auckland use an average of 440 million litres of water a day. But on a hot day in summer, the combined use can peak as high as 560 million litres! That suggests a huge volume of water is being used outdoors.**

This coming summer, we will be encouraging Aucklanders to help us beat the peak by being mindful of their water use and not letting their hoses run wild. It's not about saving water or going without; it's about using water wisely so we make the most of our existing infrastructure and treat our most precious resource well.

We have to deliver infrastructure that enables us to meet our growing population's peak demand on hot days. New infrastructure costs money and its construction has an impact on community wellbeing as well as the environment. We want to ensure our existing assets are being well used before we build new infrastructure.





# Be summer-ready

Daylight Saving often brings a surge in water demand as people spend more time outdoors and tend to their gardens. While we'll be monitoring Auckland's total demand closely, now is a great time to be mindful of your water use at home. So, before you head out to the garden, here are some water-saving tips to keep in mind:

## ① Make the most of mulch

Apply a layer of mulch around your plants to retain moisture, suppress weeds, and reduce the need for frequent watering.

## ② Group plants by water needs

Plant species with similar water requirements together to optimise watering and avoid over- or under-watering.

## ③ Beat the heat

Water your plants early in the morning or late in the evening to reduce evaporation and ensure more water reaches the roots.

## ④ Right plant, right time

Choosing the right plants for your garden and planting them at the right time is essential for successful growing and saving water. Visit the Auckland Botanic Gardens website to view their database of plants that are suited to the region's conditions.



Even if you don't have a garden, there are still plenty of ways to use water wisely outdoors. Here are some top tips:

## ① Wash cars wisely

Use a bucket and sponge to wash your car instead of a running hose. If you use a hose, attach a trigger nozzle.

## ② Check for leaks

Regularly inspect outdoor taps, hoses, and irrigation systems for leaks and repair them immediately.

## ③ Install a rain tank

Capture rainwater for use outdoors, such as washing windows.

## ④ Use a broom, not a hose

Sweep driveways instead of hosing them down.



Visit [watercare.co.nz](https://watercare.co.nz) or scan the QR code for more water-saving tips.

# Day in the life of Chris Oord

**Chris's role as a dam technician means he spends most of his working week at the five Waitākere Ranges dams that supply about 20 per cent of Auckland's drinking water.**

He and his colleagues on the headworks team are responsible for the routine inspection of these dams as well as three water supply dams in Helensville, and wastewater retention dams all the way up to Wellsford.

One of the highlights of his role is the eel trap and haul season. The headworks team is responsible for providing transport assistance to both juvenile eels looking to get into our dams and continue upstream, and mature eels in the water supply lakes who are ready to head back to the ocean to breed.

Chris says that since working with eels, he's gained so much respect for them and enjoys being part of helping their life cycle. Having lots of eels means healthy water.

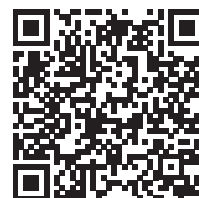
The pristine native bush and photogenic water supply lakes make the perfect office for Chris. It also means he



can indulge his passions for botany, wildlife, history and amateur photography.

Chris loves his job so much, he hopes to still be doing it 20 years from now.

To learn more about his journey, visit [watercare.co.nz/careers](https://watercare.co.nz/careers) or scan the QR code to read the full article.

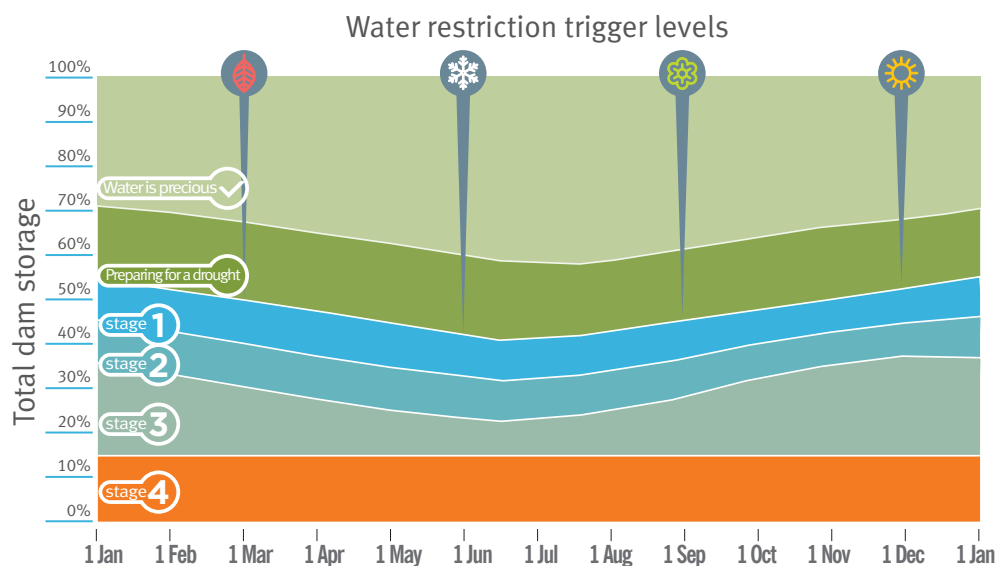


## What happens if we head into a drought?

**We've recently reviewed the trigger levels in our Drought Management Plan to ensure we're prepared for extended dry spells.**

The graphic alongside illustrates the trigger levels for metropolitan Auckland. Currently, we are in the 'water is precious' stage. This stage applies whenever we are not in a drought and highlights the importance of being mindful of our most precious resource.

To stay informed, you can track dam levels on our website throughout summer. Search 'dam levels' on our website for more information and updates.



### Current Stage 1 water restriction trigger levels by season



50%

Start of Autumn,  
1 March



41%

Start of Winter,  
1 June



47%

Start of Spring,  
1 September



55%

Start of Summer,  
1 December

## KEEP IN TOUCH

To get in touch, please email our communications team at [communications@water.co.nz](mailto:communications@water.co.nz).

You can learn more about what we do at [watercare.co.nz](https://watercare.co.nz)