



WHAT IS A WATER AFFECTING ACTIVITY?

Water Affecting Activities (WAAs) are activities that have the potential to impact the health and condition of water resources, other water users, and the ecosystems that depend upon our water resources. Water resources may include rivers, creeks, waterholes, springs, lakes, wetlands, and rockholes.

Managing the impact of Water Affecting Activities is important in order to protect and maintain the health, quality and integrity of our water resources, particularly in our arid environment where the health of these resources is especially critical for the plants, animals and people that rely on them.

WHICH ACTIVITIES REQUIRE A PERMIT?

The *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* outlines certain WAAs that when undertaken within the SAAL NRM region may require a permit. These include, but are not limited to:

- » The erection, modification, removal, construction or enlargement of dams or structures to collect or divert water
- » Building of structures, obstructing or depositing solid materials in a floodplain (such as erosion control, planting vegetation, construction of water crossings, or dumping material)
- » Excavating material from a watercourse, lake or floodplain (such as excavating or cleaning soaks, rockholes, springs, waterholes, or on-stream dams)
- » Draining or discharging water or brine directly or indirectly into a watercourse or lake (such as maintenance of water delivery systems)

If you are unsure whether the works you propose to do will require a permit, contact the Natural Resources Centre 8648 5300 for advice before conducting any works.

PENALTIES MAY APPLY

Undertaking a Water Affecting Activity without a permit or a breach of the permit conditions is an offence under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*. If you are unsure whether the works you propose to do will require a permit, contact the Natural Resources Centre 8648 5300 for advice before conducting any works. The serving of Protection Orders or Criminal or Civil enforcement notices may be undertaken by the SAAL NRM Board or Department for Water for breaches of the Act. Financial penalties or prosecution may also apply.

Note: A permit may not be required if the activity has been authorised under other legislation, for example the Development Act 1993, Environment Protection Act 1993 or the Native Vegetation Act 1991. Additional permits may also be required for prescribed activities under other Acts. Please contact the Natural Resources Centre 8648 5300 or relevant authority to confirm.

WHAT IS THE SAAL NRM BOARD?

The South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board is one of eight regional NRM Boards in South Australia set up under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*. The Board works in partnership with community, industry groups, government agencies and others to ensure an integrated and sustainable approach to the management, protection and restoration of the region's natural resources (eg soil, water, native plants and animals).

Since 2010, staff of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have been delivering activities on behalf of the SAAL NRM Board.



CONTACT US

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Do you want to build a levee bank, enlarge a dam, excavate or modify a natural watercourse or construct a water crossing point? These are just a few examples of water affecting activities that require a permit.



WATER AFFECTING ACTIVITIES – the basics

Looking after arid South Australia's water resources and protecting dependent ecosystems and communities into the future is vital to preserve the natural beauty of Australia's outback and the unique lifestyle it offers.

We all have a responsibility to manage development in a sustainable way – future generations will depend on a sustainable water supply and habitat. The intent of this regulation is not to stop development within the region or to control landholders' management decisions – it simply ensures that those decisions don't adversely impact on the region's water resources or ecologically sensitive areas.



Within the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) region, there will be increased demand for water to support the mining and exploration industries, pastoral enterprises and anticipated population growth. Impacted by seasonal floods and prolonged droughts, this remote and rugged landscape relies on its water resources to sustain ecosystems and the cultural significance of the region.

For this reason, ensuring that development and infrastructure does not adversely impact on natural watercourses, floodplains and waterholes is crucial to preserve the region's integrity.

Water Affecting Activities permits were established by the SAAL NRM Board in 2010 when the 10-year *SAAL Regional NRM Plan* was adopted by the Minister for Environment and Conservation. This regulatory initiative ensures the Board's mandate to protect land and water resources in the region, as outlined in the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*, are responsibly managed.

If you plan to undertake any infrastructure activity that diverts water or alters flows from a natural water resource within the region or potentially impacts on the landscape in a way that threatens the health of existing ecosystems, you need to apply for a permit.

Janet Brook
Presiding Member, SAAL NRM Board

WHO SHOULD APPLY FOR A WATER AFFECTING ACTIVITY PERMIT?

Any individual or organisation proposing to undertake works that may impact on a water resource in a way that threatens the health of existing ecosystems and/or through activities that have been identified in the *SAAL Regional NRM Plan* must apply for a permit. This may include landholders, property managers, local government, industry and any other entities.

In most instances it is the landholder's responsibility to obtain a WAA permit. However, other parties, such as contractors, can apply on behalf of the landholder and/or with permission of the landholder to undertake the proposed activities.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A PERMIT?

Applications for a water affecting activities permit will be processed as quickly as possible with the time taken to assess an application varying depending on the complexity of the activity. Apply for your permit at least two months before you intend to undertake the activity. Once approved, permits are usually valid for one year from the date of issue.

Step 1 – Obtain a permit application form

Permit application forms for various activities can be downloaded from www.saalnm.sa.gov.au or contact the Arid Lands NRM water staff.

Step 2 – Complete the application form

Provide information on the proposed activity. Clear and detailed information assists in the assessment process and helps to have your application assessed as soon as possible. For further information on how to apply for a Water Affecting Activity, please refer to the information guide available for download from www.saalnm.sa.gov.au or contact the Arid Lands NRM water staff.

All applications should include:

- » Property identification details and copies of Certificate of Title
- » Any plans and photographs of the proposed activity and site location
- » Consultants or engineering reports (where applicable)
- » Any other supporting information as required under the *SAAL Regional NRM Plan* or relevant Water Allocation Plan (such as mitigation measures)

Step 3 – Lodge the application

Permit applications, accompanied by the prescribed fee, must be lodged with Arid Lands NRM water staff at the Natural Resources Centre and according to the instructions on the application form.

Step 4 – Provide additional information

When you apply for a permit you may be requested, in writing, to provide additional information. The timeframe to assess the application and make a decision may be extended to take account of any delays in obtaining additional information.

Step 5 – Site assessment

If the activity has the potential for a large impact or is unusual Arid Lands NRM water staff may visit your property to assess the application and identify any possible impacts of the proposed activity.

Step 6 – Permit notification and conditions

Arid Lands NRM water staff will notify you, in writing, of any decisions. You may be required to undertake additional actions in accordance with the conditions of an approved permit. If your permit application is not approved, or you disagree with any of the permit conditions, you may appeal to the Environment, Resources and Development Court within six weeks of the decision.

Step 7 – Notification of completion

Upon completion of works associated with an approved Water Affecting Activity, a Water Affecting Activity Completion Form must be returned to the Natural Resources Centre 8648 5300. Arid Lands NRM water staff may conduct a further site visit to ensure permit conditions have been met.

DUTY OF CARE

In South Australia everyone has a general statutory duty under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* to act reasonably and responsibly in relation to the management of natural resources. This includes an obligation to maintain and not damage a watercourse, floodplain or lake. For further information please refer to the *SAAL Regional NRM Plan*.