

Watercourse crossings

IN THE NORTHERN AND YORKE REGION



Why control watercourse crossings and culverts?

Northern and Yorke region has a diverse landscape with many wetlands and mostly ephemeral watercourses used for purposes such as stock watering. These are also the habitats of many plants and animals including small fish. When access through a wetland or watercourse is required, a crossing may need to be constructed. It is important to plan and construct a crossing properly so that the structure is sound and operates correctly with minimal impact on the watercourse or wetland, and the surrounding land.

Watercourse crossings and culverts can impact on existing water users and the environment (water-dependent ecosystems).

Construction or modifications to these structures must be managed in a way that balances existing needs with those for new development.

If there were no controls for the construction or modification of water course crossings the following could result:

- Erosion and siltation issues both upstream and downstream;
- Interrupted flows to downstream users;
- Obstruction to fish passage and migration of other aquatic organisms.
- Water logging, salinity and acid sulphate soil issues, both in stream and to adjacent land.
- Flooding and habitat loss
- Poorly constructed crossing resulting in risk to safety.

Permit requirements

Before constructing a watercourse crossing, it is necessary to get approval under either the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 or the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016. WAA application forms are available from the Board's website:

<https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny/water/water-affecting-activities>

How long does it take?

Apply for your permit at least two months before you intend to undertake the activity. The exact time taken to process the application depends on the nature of the activity, the time of year and the information provided in the proposal. For this reason you are encouraged to seek your permit well in advance of the time planned for your watercourse crossing construction. Permits are usually valid for one year from the date of issue.

Definition of a watercourse or lake

Under the WAA Principles, a watercourse means a river, creek, or other natural watercourse in which water is contained or flows, whether permanently or from time to time. Examples include; a dam or reservoir that collects water flowing in a water course, or a lake, channel, part of a watercourse, or estuary, through which water flows. A watercourse must have a defined channel with both bed and banks (as distinguished from a mere fold or depression or contour in land along which surface water flows). A lake means a natural lake, pond, lagoon, wetland or spring (whether modified or not).



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Criteria for issuing permits

A watercourse crossing application will be assessed against the principles in the relevant plan depending on the property location in the Northern and Yorke region.

Policies and principles may vary between areas in the Northern and Yorke region. We recommend you download a copy of the relevant regulatory WAA Principles or Water Allocation Plan from the Board's website to be clear about the principles that apply at your location.

These principles cover criteria including (but not limited to):

- Appropriate positioning to ensure fish passage is possible.
- Scour pool protection and/ or headwall protection to prevent erosion.
- Adequate culvert or pipe size.
- Correct positioning of culverts or pipes to maintain flow and prevent erosion or flooding.
- Suitable site selection (e.g. straight stream section).
- Expert advice should be sought if there is any evidence of groundwater issues, (e.g. water logging, or acid sulphate soils) or in instances where significant erosion is an issue.
- Cut-off drains to trap silt and sediment from road run off.
- Appropriate causeway or crossing height.

Penalties may apply

Ensure you are not in breach of the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (the LSA Act). Undertaking a WAA without a permit or, in breach of the permit conditions is an offence under the LSA Act.

If you are unsure whether the works you are proposing to do will require a permit, call the Board for advice before undertaking any works.

The serving of protection orders or criminal/civil enforcement notices may be undertaken by the Board for breaches of the LSA Act.

Financial penalties or prosecution may also apply.

For more information

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Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

<https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny/home>



An example of a well-constructed crossing with adequate culvert sizing to allow fish passage and accommodate normal flows.



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