

Water Affecting Activities: FAQs

There is a lot to know when considering when a permit is needed for a Water Affecting Activity. The following frequently asked questions might help you navigate the path.



What are water affecting activities?

Water affecting activities (WAA) are activities that have the potential to adversely affect the health and condition of water resources, water dependent ecosystems, and other water users.

Water resources include, but are not limited to: rivers, creeks, waterholes, floodplains, dams, wetlands and lakes (springs, salt lakes, claypans or temporary waterholes).

When do I need to apply for a permit?

When any activity or proposed work is going to interact with a water resource (watercourses, lakes, floodplains, surface water) has the potential to

affect the health of the water resource, or other users, then a permit may be needed.

Who needs to apply?

Any landholder, business, organisation or government body or agency planning to undertake works on a watercourse, floodplain or surface water body may require a permit.

What is the purpose of a permit?

A permit aims to reduce the risks of an activity on the environment and to people and ensures that relevant checks against the activity have been made. The permit will include conditions that must be followed, addressing concerns such as erosion

control, protecting vegetation, habitat and fauna, and preventing contamination of the site.

How do I check if a permit is required?

The board's [Water Affecting Activity Control Policy](#) and [Factsheet](#) can help guide you to which activities may require a permit. When in doubt, always contact the board for advice.

Are any works exempt from a WAA permit?

Not many activities are exempt from a permit, unless a Best Practice Operating Procedure has been agreed to by the Board, with relevant organisation, businesses or state body. Some emergency works are also exempt (such as urgent repairs to a crossing) as are contour banks for erosion control. It is best to assume a permit is required and to contact the board before starting any work.

If I am a contractor, do I need a permit?

If you are undertaking work in, or close to a watercourse, floodplain or surface water body, including dams, you should check with your client has the appropriate approvals. Contractors can also submit permit applications on behalf of a client.

How much does a permit cost?

In 2026/27, a permit costs \$71.50. The cost may increase at the start of a new financial year.

How long will it take to assess my permit application?

A simple permit application will take two months to assess, while a more complicated application that requires additional assessment or Native Title notification can take more than three months.

Can I start work without a permit?

No. If you have done so, please contact the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board for advice.

I have approval to clear Native Vegetation, do I still need a WAA permit?

Depending on the planned activity, a permit may still be required. Approval to clear Native Vegetation does not cover the requirements of the board's Water Affecting Activity Control Policy.

I want to undertake repairs and maintenance to existing infrastructure, so do I need a WAA permit?

This depends on the extent of the works and whether maintenance is like for like. It includes work on dams.

Usually, permit requirements are determined on a case by case basis, and therefore it is best to contact SAAL Landscape Board before starting any work.

How long is my permit valid for?

A permit is usually valid for 12 months. If you need longer, this can be requested during the application process.

Where do I apply for a permit?

Head to the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board website for the latest information about how to apply and guides to help determine what is needed to complete your application.

I still have some questions...

Contact us

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