

Information request

By Ian Holyoake

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Exceeded 1800 characters

To whom it may concern

I am seeking information relating to the Williamson Park Lake along Ocean Road in Whangamata.

I do not know if it has an official street address but the Lake is referred to by locals as the pond

Background: In its current form the area within Williamson Park contains an artificial Lake, two 700mm feeder storm water pipes that act as drains, boundaries to the Lake, sand filled exit with a stone basket weir that contains the sand and designed to prevent wave surge.

In flood, water discharges out the storm pipes, into the Lake, fills the Lake, then runs to the weir via the sand filled section, drops over the weir and onto the sand.

When flood waters retreat and the inflow of water drops to the natural water flow the lake drains and becomes stagnant water which soaks into the surrounding ground and sand dune until it presumably meets the ocean.

On investigation I can see evidence of a second weir constructed about 3m further out the Coastline now semi destroyed or has had the centre removed for the current weir. Debris were not removed. In can see recent Earthworks removing sludge and forming new or inclined batters to the Lake. There is currently diesel powered pumps discharging water over the new weir to reduce the level of the Lake to below the overflow level.

The Lake level is now below the storm water pipes that look like they come from under Ocean Road and likely the output of storm water drains up Williamson Road.

The Lake base is currently sludgy and full of silt/rubbish

The Lake water is currently polluted and in my opinion contains biota not suitable to pump or drain onto the Beach.

I understand plans are afoot to provide a side drain to empty the Lake so they (someone) can remove the pumping station. During February for a time there were two pump stations.

The storm water drainage system as I can read it shows Williamson Road, Archilles Road, Ocean Road, Lowe Street and The Esplanade are all piped as storm water and flow into the Lake

At the Lake end of Seaview Road a recent cut has been made to direct street surface water into the Lake.

There may be more storm water connections I am not aware of.

My assessment is the collection of all these pipes is an expansion from the original natural water shed before roading and infill now feeding the Williamson Park stream bed.

Much of this infrastructure could have been installed prior to RMA

Much has been altered since the RMA and other Acts

The Lake is situated in the old natural watercourse that locals remember as the old wet stream that excess surface water flowed out to the Ocean.

Once the storms abated the stream would dry up

Now in storms the water runoff from surface flooding on the roads runs to sumps where piping has been laid, or collects as inundation on properties then finds its way into sumps, into the storm drains and into the Lake collection area and exceeds the detention capacity and overflows into the Ocean.

As flood water retreats water tables drain into the storm water pipes as they do not have rubbers between the joints. A continual stream flows as the water table reduces below the level of the storm water pipes.

Eventually as the water tables reduce it would be expected the soil then transmits the water table out to the Ocean allowing residents soak pits to then begin discharging water detained in them. That is as long as the Lake is empty.

When the Lake is not empty and the feeder pipes remain submerged the storm water pipes stall and leak out the joints without rubbers and creates an artificial unnatural water table around its boundaries. This causes a back-load to the old natural water table.

The Lake when it is full will create an artificial water table that was not previously present around its boundaries. By not previously present I mean the original natural water table without the Lake present – just the original stream bed. The water table created by the full Lake has the greater boundary to Ocean Road, Lowe Street and through properties to the end of Seaview Road. It is my view this will over time restrict water table levels above Ocean Road, Lowe Street, and Seaview Road from draining as they naturally did. Many of these properties now have water trespass.

If the Lake is dry and silt removed to the original stream base the artificial water table within the Williamson Park area will drain away as it always did.

If the Lake was dry the storm water pipes would become exposed and allow the surface water the pipes were designed to collect to discharge and empty thus not being able to leak out the rubbers and increase the water table.

If the Storm water pipes were allowed to empty if the surrounding water table along the pipes and properties along its length could drain into the pipes via the missing rubbers.

If the water table did drain into the empty storm water pipes sand and contaminants would also drain with the water.

When the sand and contaminants drain into the empty storm water pipes the roads and footpaths above them create TOMO's. I understand there are a number of TOMO's already repaired and some yet to repair that would illustrate this point.

In any event considering all of the above Lake having the ability to discharge excess capacity means any stagnant water within it or on the roads, or within the water table, or becoming stagnant as surface water not draining (as trespass) means biota and contaminants cannot be managed before they enter the Ocean

The water table around the Lake has another unintended consequence that sand water tables are the description of liquefaction as sand has no bonding strength. The Lake is contributing to water migration through the sand and sand dunes which liquifies them at the water table level. Where the artificial water table is above the Coastline natural low level tide these Coastal areas are more suspect to erosion as the sand is already wet and liquified. This will be how the original shoreline had retreated out from the old stream bed. Now the Lake level is artificially high and the surrounding water table is also artificially high erosion has been greater.

While I concede this may be debateable, the obvious conclusion is the shape of retreat of the Coastline at the Lakes weir has by unfortunate design allowed wave surge beyond surge. This is now exacerbated by the artificial lake, the enlarged catchment area, and the manner of discharges.

If anything I have written is inaccurate can you please correct me.

What I am seeking is:

1. A copy of all WRC resource consents that cover the construction of the Lake and its discharge into the Ocean. These are to include who was approved, any conditions of use, any adverse effects and how these were to be mitigated, what maintenance requirements and performance standards were set into the resource consent for example cleaning the Lake and treating discharge other than the original natural watercourse. This would include how to mitigate Coastal erosion of the sand dunes and sand once liquified by the artificial water table around the Lake when it is not empty.
2. If no permits why not?

3. Was any discretionary powers included for example to meet Operational Plans of TCDC?
4. I understand the RMA and subsequent legislation provided for a sort of amnesty period to correct things like this. Has WRC made such application and when and provide a copy.
5. If not why not?
6. Any discharge permits issued in relation to volumes of water that can be discharged, or collected, quality of water that can be discharged, catchment areas that can be included in the redirection of land not included in the natural catchment areas and testing requirements. How was the impact of Coastal discharge satisfied?
7. If no conditions why not?
8. Any resource consents other than the TCDC Operational plan that TCDC have applied for to effect the function of detention ponds for example the Lake and discharge into the Ocean
9. A copy of the TCDC Operational Plan that WRC has approved. I have the TCDC Operational Plan but that does not reference WRC. Does TCDC need to seek WRC approval for any of the activities it requires to manage detention ponds, activities within natural stream beds and including artificial Lakes and Ocean discharges.
10. If WRC does not possess the TCDC Operational Plan can you please explain why TCDC is not required to seek such approval.
11. Would WRC agree to TCDC preparing and approving an Operational Plan (or in part) for the work I describe above to meet RMA requirements?
12. If TCDC were approved does WRC still manage the performance of that Operational Plan?
13. A copy of WRC policy, design, specification and management of detention ponds in general, like the artificial Lake at Williamson Park including changing, modifying or adapting natural water ways and in particular where they directly discharge to the Ocean or Estuary.
14. If the WRC detention pond specifications vary from the MBIE 2012 Guidelines for Artificial Lakes please provide an explanation of why they do.
15. Please provide any report available relating to Whangamata Coastline written by the WRC Coastal Engineer or manager of the Coastline (including that department). I understand WRC does not permit Coastal discharge.
16. Please provide a reference or copy of any external report covering in particular the Coastline along Whangamata Beach at the Williamson Park Lake discharge site.

In relation to timing of your response. TCDC are ready to release their Annual Plan and Long Term Plan 2023-2033 with a submission period closing 10th April 2023. They may be changing that to comply with s83(1)(b)(iii) of LGA but I must assume for now they will not change the closing date. I therefore need the information urgently.

I appreciate this request is a particularly extensive one. I would accept modification of this LGOIMA if WRC intends to submit to TCDC during the submission period, or by way of special request to TCDC, WRC position and objectives and requirements that TCDC must consider and abide by in relation to Williamson Park Lake, storm water collection, containment and treatment of contaminants and discharge to the sea at the Coastline. I would require an early copy of that to allow any modification of this request so I can then evaluate WRC position so I can modify my submission to TCDC.

Thanks for your consideration and much appreciated.