Whangamatā Stormwater Master Plan

Consolidated Stakeholder-Led, Renewal-Ready Draft (v5.1 – Clean Reset)

Prepared by: Whangamatā Ratepayers Stormwater Action Group (WRSAG)
Purpose: Community consultation, governance assurance, property-owner clarity, and CSDC 105667 renewal readiness
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1. Executive Summary – What This Plan Does

This Master Plan provides a clear, integrated framework for managing stormwater, flooding, and flood risk in Whangamatā. Its purpose is to:

- reduce flood impacts to homes, infrastructure, and community assets;
- restore clarity and confidence for property owners;
- align stormwater decisions with statutory and consent obligations;
- support a defensible renewal of Comprehensive Stormwater Discharge Consent (CSDC) 105667 in 2031.

The Plan is deliberately **non-adversarial**. It does not re-litigate historic decisions or assign fault. Instead, it consolidates existing information, applies Council's own effects-based policy framework, and establishes a forward-looking pathway for improvement.

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2. How This Plan Should Be Read

This Master Plan sets **principles, outcomes, and governance guardrails**. It is supported by:

- **Appendices**, which provide operational and implementation detail; and
- a **WSAG Companion Document**, which contains technical context, local evidence, and example principles for review.

The Master Plan itself remains intentionally concise to ensure it is readable, adoptable, and durable over time.

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3. Governance, Monitoring, and Review

Effective stormwater outcomes require governance arrangements that endure beyond individual projects or personnel. This Plan establishes:

- clear separation between governance oversight and operational delivery;
- outcome-focused key performance indicators;
- annual public reporting;
- three-yearly reviews aligned with Long-Term Plan cycles;
- mandatory reassessment following major storm events or material network changes;
- explicit transition planning toward CSDC 105667 renewal.

Any departure from this Plan must be explicitly documented and justified.

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4. Role of Council, Community Board, and Stakeholders

Stormwater operations and statutory decisions remain the responsibility of Council. Stakeholders and the Community Board do not manage infrastructure or consents.

Their legitimate role is to ensure that:

- decisions are transparent and consultable;
- trade-offs are visible and recorded;
- outcomes align with flood-risk reduction;
- risk is not silently transferred to future ratepayers or property owners.

This Plan is designed to reduce the need for detailed stakeholder scrutiny over time by embedding durable systems of assurance.

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5. Whangamatā's Flooding Context – The System Story

Whangamatā comprises short, steep catchments draining into low-lying sand-dune, estuarine, and coastal environments. Historically, stormwater relied heavily on soakage and overland flow paths.

Over time, roading construction, land modification, vegetation loss, and cumulative development have altered natural flow paths and reduced system resilience. Flooding now

manifests across a spectrum, from infrequent nuisance ponding to habitable floor inundation.

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6. Statutory, Policy, and Consent Framework

Stormwater management operates within the Local Government Act 2002, Resource Management Act 1991, Waikato Regional Plan, and Thames-Coromandel District Council planning instruments.

Central to this Plan is **CSDC 105667**, which authorises stormwater discharges from Whangamatā's urban network within defined limits. Material changes to catchments, networks, or discharge effects create compliance and renewal risk if not transparently managed.

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7. Why a Master Plan Is Required Now

Council already holds much of the information required for effective stormwater management. What has been missing is a single, integrated framework that:

- distinguishes between different types of flood effects;
- prioritises investment transparently;
- aligns projects with consent and policy obligations; and
- provides certainty to property owners.

This Master Plan provides that integration layer.

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8. Objectives and Long-Term Outcomes

The objectives of this Master Plan are to:

- progressively reduce the number of properties experiencing habitable floor flooding;
- manage nuisance flooding proportionately;
- protect receiving environments and strategic community assets;
- preserve reasonable development opportunities where effects are minor and manageable;
- restore confidence through transparent, evidence-based decision-making.

9. Understanding Flood Effects and Development Implications

Flood modelling and mapping identify a range of flood behaviours across Whangamatā. These effects must be interpreted consistently with Council's adopted **adverse effects framework**, which recognises that not all adverse effects are equal.

Under this framework, flood effects may be broadly understood as:

- **Nil or less than minor adverse effects**, such as shallow or short-duration ponding during extreme storm events, unlikely to affect site development or enjoyment of land;
- **Minor adverse effects**, which may be noticeable but can often be addressed through site design or modest land uplift;
- **More than minor or significant adverse effects**, including habitable floor flooding, which require targeted mitigation and priority intervention;
- **Unacceptable adverse effects**, which cannot be avoided, remedied, or mitigated and require avoidance or land-use change.

Flood information provided to property owners is intended to inform risk awareness and design responses. It is not intended to sterilise land or remove reasonable development opportunity where effects are minor and manageable.

10. Evaluation and Prioritisation Framework

Stormwater options will be assessed using a transparent, multi-criteria framework considering:

- severity of adverse effects;
- number of properties affected;
- effectiveness of risk reduction;
- cost and constructability;
- environmental and community impacts;
- intergenerational equity.

Priority will be given to addressing higher-order adverse effects while managing lower-order effects proportionately.

11. Stormwater Toolbox – Integrated Solutions

Stormwater responses will be drawn from a defined Stormwater Toolbox, including pipes, overland flow paths, swales, soakage and infiltration, detention and storage, land adaptation, and operational measures.

Tools are applied in combination, recognising that pipes, overland flow paths, and infiltration systems are complementary components of a single system.

12. Catchment-by-Catchment Planning

Each of Whangamatā's catchments will be addressed using a consistent structure documented through the appendices, enabling staged delivery and transparent prioritisation.

13. Protection of System Hydrology

All stormwater solutions in Whangamatā operate within and depend upon the integrity of the local hydrological system, particularly the shallow aquifer.

A core principle of this Plan is that stormwater interventions must not diminish the functional hydrology of the catchment. Solutions that compromise system hydrology risk transferring flood impacts, undermining infrastructure performance, and creating cumulative effects not apparent at the site scale.

Indicative technical context is provided in Appendix H and the WSAG Companion Document.

14. Strategic Assets and Receiving Environments

Whangamatā's beach, coastal discharge points, rivers, wetlands, and key reserves are critical community assets. Stormwater management must protect these assets and avoid using them as default infrastructure solutions solely for convenience or cost.

15. Receiving Environments: Moana Anu Anu, the Upper Harbour Reaches and Otahu River

Stormwater systems do not end at pipe outlets. Where discharges enter **low-energy receiving environments**, system performance must be assessed across the **entire pathway**, including downstream accumulation, retention, and recovery processes.

Moana Anu Anu, the Upper Harbour reaches and Otahu River function as receiving environments for multiple stormwater inputs. These areas are characterised by:

- low gradients and limited flushing,
- episodic tidal exchange,
- and long residence times for fine sediment and organic material.

In such environments, even modest but continuous inputs of **fine sediment, organic carbon, and nutrients** can accumulate over time. Where water movement is insufficient to re-suspend or export this material, a layered bed structure can develop:

- a **soft, mobile surface layer** of fine material, and
- an underlying **anoxic (oxygen-depleted) layer** where organic matter decomposes slowly.

These conditions are consistent with observed outcomes in Moana Anu Anu, the Upper Harbour reaches, and Otahu River including:

- persistent surface softness,
- dark, odorous subsurface material when disturbed,
- reduced drainage following rainfall,
- and seasonal stagnation during warm, low-wind periods.

Accordingly, **Moana Anu Anu and the Upper Harbour reaches and Otahu River must be considered integral components of the Whangamatā stormwater system**, not separate or downstream issues. Stormwater planning that focuses solely on conveyance or outlet capacity, without regard to receiving-environment response, risks shifting impacts rather than resolving them.

Effective long-term stormwater management therefore requires:

- recognition of receiving environments within system boundaries,

- alignment between conveyance, treatment, and maintenance practices, and
- monitoring and management approaches that account for cumulative effects over time.

This Master Plan treats Moana Anu Anu, the Upper Harbour reaches and Otahu River as part of the stormwater system to ensure that proposed interventions are **physically coherent, durable, and environmentally effective**.

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16. Inter-Agency Management and Resolution

Effective stormwater outcomes require coordination between TCDC, Waikato Regional Council, Waka Kotahi NZTA, Department of Conservation, and other relevant agencies, particularly in relation to river channels, outlets, sedimentation, and blockage management.

Formal inter-agency agreements are required to define responsibilities, response timeframes, escalation pathways, and cost-sharing mechanisms. Monitoring alone is insufficient where flood risk or system performance is compromised.

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17. Requests for Service, Complaints, and Escalation

Requests for Service and complaints are indicators of system performance. This Plan establishes clear escalation pathways, Community Board visibility, and resolution tracking to prevent unresolved or recurring issues.

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18. Preparing for CSDC 105667 Renewal

This Plan adopts a forward-looking approach to consent alignment, focusing on preparedness, transparency, and regularisation ahead of the 2031 renewal of CSDC 105667.

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19. Levels of Service and Continuous Improvement

The long-term objective of stormwater management in Whangamatā is to eliminate habitable floor flooding while managing minor and nuisance flooding proportionately.

Recognising legacy development patterns and existing constraints, this Plan adopts a **progressive improvement approach**, whereby:

- higher-risk properties are prioritised;
- interim performance is transparently reported;
- Levels of Service are reviewed regularly and adjusted as mitigation measures are implemented.

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20. Appendices – Operational Enablers

The appendices provide the operational detail required to give effect to this Plan while preserving its governance framework.

Companion

Appendix A: Catchment Project Register
Appendix B: Prioritisation and Options Assessment
Appendix C: Implementation and Delivery Programme
Appendix D: Funding Pathways and Cost Allocation
Appendix E: Consent and Regulatory Alignment Schedule
Appendix F: Inter-Agency Agreements Register
Appendix G: Community Engagement Programme
Appendix H: System Hydrology – Technical Context (theory only)

End of Master Plan v5.1 Clean Reset