



Council Policy

Protection of Watercourses and Drainage Channels

Version 8 - 27 November 2023

Policy - Protection of Watercourses and Drainage Channels

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to recognise the environmental, social, and utility values watercourses and drainage channels provide, particularly where natural characteristics have been maintained and/or reinstated. Further, to protect these values through implementation of best practice management and restoration measures.

Policy statement

Lake Macquarie City Council recognises the value of watercourses and drainage channels for the multiple environmental, social, utility and aesthetic values they provide, particularly where natural characteristics have been maintained and/or reinstated. These values include:

- Reduced risk of flood damage in developed areas
- Reduced stormwater runoff
- Prevention of excessive erosion of waterways, slopes and banks
- Enhanced in-stream water quality
- Improved water quality in downstream waters, including Lake Macquarie and the ocean
- Minimised water-borne sediment loadings
- Minimised contaminant transport from stormwater to surface or ground waters
- Protection of riparian ecosystems, including restoration of degraded ecosystems
- Provision of habitat for native fauna
- Reduced public and private costs of maintenance
- Linked open space for low-impact recreation
- Improved scenic, landscape, cultural and recreational values of stream corridors

Watercourses and their associated vegetation should, unless extraordinary circumstances apply, be left in as undisturbed a state as possible, without redirection, reshaping, or modification. This should include maintenance of a sufficient riparian corridor width to support naturally meandering streams. Where extraordinary circumstances exist, a comprehensive argument as to why special modification are necessary will be required.

Where watercourses and drainage channels have been modified in the past and are in a degraded condition, consideration should be given to returning these to their natural condition.

This policy applies to all management and restoration activities undertaken in both natural and modified watercourses within the Lake Macquarie local government area, either by Council or as part of private development. Procedures for applying this policy are outlined within the document titled 'Protection of Watercourses and Drainage Channels Procedure'.

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Controlled Document Information

Authorisation Details

Folder No:	F2005/02212	TRIM Record No:	D10849314
Audience:	External - all staff and external stakeholders		
Department:	Environmental Systems	Officer:	Senior Natural Landscapes Officer - Karen Mason
Key focus area(s):	Unique Landscape		
Review Timeframe: Max < 4 years	4 years	Next Scheduled Review Date:	27 November 2027
Authorisation:	Adopted by Council - 27 November 2023		
Authorisation - Council Adoption Date:	27 November 2023		

Related Document Information, Standards & References

Related Legislation:	(Legislation Name) <i>Water Management Act 2000</i> <i>Water Management (General) Regulation 2018</i> <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> <i>Coastal Management Act 2016</i> <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021</i>	(Relationship/Context) To provide for the sustainable and integrated management of the water sources of the State for the benefit of both present and future generations Implements the Water Management Act 2000 To conserve, develop and share the fishery resources of the State for the benefit of present and future generations Provides a strategic framework and objectives for managing coastal issues in NSW Contains planning provisions from the Coastal Management SEPP for land use planning within the coastal zone consistent with the Coastal Management Act 2016.
Related Policies:	(Policy Name) Lake Macquarie Catchment Management Committee Streambank and Riparian Planting Guide Improvements and Maintenance of Watercourses and Drainage Channels	(Relationship/Context) Provides a list of suitable native species to plant on creekbanks in Lake Macquarie. Defines Council's obligations and policy about maintenance, improvements and rehabilitation of watercourses including drainage reserves and channels
Related Procedures, Guidelines, Forms, WHS Modules/PCD's, Risk Assessments, Work Method Statements:	(Document Name) Protection of Watercourses and Drainage Channels Procedure	(Relationship/Context) Procedure to ensure consistent application of the policy for proposals involving management or restoration works on natural or modified watercourses

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	Lake Macquarie City Council Estuarine Creekbank Stabilisation and Rehabilitation Guidelines	Assists landholders and managers determine which bank stabilisation treatment and construction techniques suit their situation.
	Preparation of Rehabilitation Plans for Degraded Watercourses or Water Bodies	Helps landowners prepare rehabilitation plans for degraded watercourses or water bodies.
Standards, COP's & Other References	(Standard, COP or Other References)	(Relationship/Context)

Definitions

Term / Abbreviation	Definition
Watercourse or drainage channel	Streams, creeks, waterways or depressions (either natural or artificial) where water naturally flows.
Modification	Piping, concreting, capping, lining (rock or concrete), redirecting, removal of native vegetation, realignment or any activity that may result in environmental damage to the watercourse

Consultation (update for each version created)

Key Departments, Teams, Positions, Meetings:	Environmental Systems - Senior Natural Landscapes Officer, Karen Mason
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Version History

Version No	Date Changed	Modified By	Details and Comments
1	March 2003	Emma Graham	New Policy
2		E Graham	New Version New format Procedures removed to new controlled document TRIM D01823019
3	9 July 2012	E Graham	New Version – no changes required
4	24 June 2014	E Graham	New Version – no changes required.
5	18 May 2016	Karen Mason	New version Definitions from Procedure – Protection of Watercourses and Drainage Channels included in policy.
6	20 July 2018	Karen Mason	New Version – no changes required
7	July 2020	Karen Mason	New Version Catchment Management Authority Act has been changed to Local Land Services Act 2013 Minor inclusions – See Council report
8	Nov 2023	Karen Mason	New Version - minor changes made to related document information, standards and references