

Farm Water Access Plans – Fact Sheet

Farm WAPs – empowering farmers to manage their impact on the environment and ensure sustainable water use for future generations.

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What is a Farm WAP?

Farm Water Access Plans (Farm WAPs) ensure that the use of Tasmanian Irrigation scheme water is sustainable and meets environmental legislation. They play a key role in identifying and managing environmental risks related to irrigated properties and the surrounding environment, including:

- Soil health
- Streams, rivers and waterways
- Biodiversity and natural values

Why is a Farm WAP needed?

Farm WAPs are essential for:

- **Sustainable water use and land stewardship:** Farm WAPs are tools for managing water resources responsibly, ensuring the long-term viability of agricultural land for future generations.
- **Environmental due diligence:** Farm WAPs are a legal requirement to demonstrate compliance with environmental regulations and standards.
- **Environmental risk management:** Farm WAPs provide a structured framework to identify, assess and mitigate environmental risks from irrigation activities.
- **Funding requirement:** Farm WAPs help demonstrate to funding bodies that irrigators adhere to best environmental management practices.
- **Compliance with Irrigation District By-laws:** Irrigation District By-laws require landholders who use scheme water to manage their environmental impacts through a Farm WAP.
- **Connection Agreement Condition:** By signing a Connection Agreement, you agree to prepare and implement a Farm WAP.

How do I get one?

Approving a Tasmanian Irrigation Connection Agreement for your property will trigger the need for a Farm WAP.

Farm WAP Benefits

Farm WAPs can benefit farmers and their surrounding communities including:

Improved water use efficiency

Farm WAPs can help farmers optimise irrigation by aligning water use with crop needs, reducing water waste, cutting costs, and increasing yields.

Reduced environmental impact

Farm WAPs support sustainable farming by optimising water use to reduce environmental impacts. By minimising nutrient leaching/agricultural run-off, and reducing soil erosion, Farm WAPs help protect water quality and maintain aquatic ecosystem health.

Compliance with regulations

Farm WAPs help farmers comply with water use regulations and guidelines. By ensuring sustainable and efficient irrigation practices, Farm WAPs help reduce the risk of penalties for non-compliance.

Improved risk management

Farm WAPs help farmers manage risks to water availability and quality, ensuring greater resilience in their agricultural operations.

Improved farm productivity

Farm WAPs enhance productivity by offering a structured approach to water management. By tailoring irrigation practices to your property/soil type, farmers can optimise water use, increase crop yields, reduce production costs, and improve crop quality.

Increased market access

Farm WAPs enable farmers to access new markets by demonstrating their commitment to sustainable water management. This enhances marketability and appeals to customers seeking environmentally responsible farming practices.

Water conservation

An effective water management plan allows farmers to use water more efficiently, reducing overall consumption and conserving this vital resource for future use.

Improved soil health

Effective water management practices help maintain healthy soil conditions, fostering improved crop growth while minimising soil erosion.

Improved biodiversity management

Biodiversity is essential to the ecological systems that support all life and serve as a store of natural capital. Agriculture, more than most sectors, depends heavily on this natural capital. Effective biodiversity management helps safeguard these vital systems, ensuring the resilience and sustainability of agricultural practices.

Improved farm planning with soil and biodiversity maps

Farm WAPs include detailed soil and biodiversity maps to support on-farm planning and operation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Preparing your Farm WAP

Who needs a Farm WAP?

Every property receiving water from Tasmanian Irrigation is required to have a Farm WAP.

A Farm WAP does not have to cover an entire property but must include all dams and land where scheme water will be stored or applied now and in the future.

How many Farm WAPs do I need for multiple property titles operating under the same business enterprise?

All adjoining property titles should be covered under the one single Farm WAP. Where you have multiple titles geographically separated but managed under the same entity you can decide whether to keep them under a single Farm WAP or create separate Farm WAPs. The latter is usually recommended in case a title is leased or sold off in the future.

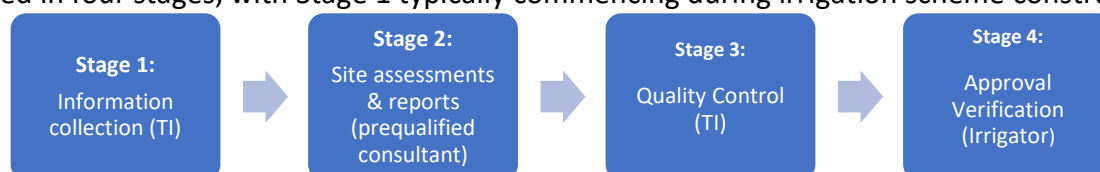
What is included in a Farm WAP?

Farm WAPs include information on:

- soil, biodiversity and water resources,
- current and proposed future water use,
- potential irrigable land (based on land capability and land use categories such as root cropping, surface cropping, irrigated pasture, dryland pasture, horticulture and forestry),
- actions to manage environmental risks including monitoring, and
- best management practices and other relevant guidelines.

What is involved in preparing a Farm WAP?

Tasmanian Irrigation helps prepare Farm WAPs to reduce the cost to irrigators. Farm WAPs are prepared in four stages, with Stage 1 typically commencing during irrigation scheme construction.



Farm WAPs must be prepared by a prequalified consultant approved by the Minister for Water and follow the Farm Water Access Planning Framework approved by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Tasmania) including water, soil and biodiversity components.

How is the process started?

After signing a Tasmanian Irrigation Connection Agreement, you will be invited to complete a Farm WAP Application Form, available on our website www.tasirrigation.com.au.

If you manage multiple properties as separate entities, a separate application is required for each property.

What information do I include when applying for a Farm WAP?

The Application Form collects the following information:

- **Section A:** Your contact details.
- **Section B:** Your property details, such as the property name, address, and Property Identification Number (PID).
- **Section C:** Water volume and storage, including other (non-TI) water sources and dam capacities.
- **Section D:** Land use, covering current and planned irrigation areas, crop types, and livestock numbers.
- **Section E:** Biodiversity, detailing protected waterways, threatened vegetation or species.

You must also attach a property map of where you intend to use scheme water. Tasmanian Irrigation can create a map for you if you do not have one.

What are the likely costs to prepare a Farm WAP?

Preparing a Farm WAP typically costs landholders \$1,250 to \$3,000+ (ex GST). The cost will be confirmed upon engaging a prequalified consultant to undertake the site assessment. A government subsidy is often available when connecting to a new or augmented irrigation scheme.

Factors affecting the price of a Farm WAP include:

- the size of the area to be assessed: larger properties incur higher costs due to the increased scope of work,
- the availability of existing land capability data: access to relevant data can reduce assessment complexity and costs, and
- the likelihood of threatened species, ecological communities or Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) occurring in or near the area to be assessed: this is determined through a desktop assessment.

Farm WAPs for new schemes are usually produced in batches providing further cost savings for each irrigator.

What if I don't know exactly how or where I'll use Tasmanian Irrigation scheme water yet?

Farm WAPs consider a wide range of suitable long-term production options, so your property won't be restricted to growing the crops or pasture you indicate now. It is important to include all areas that may be irrigated in the future and the dams in which you propose to store Tasmanian Irrigation water (you may wish to select all your dams). Including a larger area or properties you have long-term leases on when first preparing your Farm WAP may save paying for changes in the future.

What is involved in the Stage 1 desktop assessment?

During Stage 1, Tasmanian Irrigation creates a preliminary map of property boundaries, irrigation areas (Farm WAP area), contour lines, threatened species (Natural Values Atlas), TASVEG data, and waterbody information (dams, rivers, watercourses). This is provided to a prequalified consultant ready for Stage 2.

What is involved in the Stage 2 site assessment?

The prequalified consultant's fieldwork focuses on the Farm WAP/irrigation area but may extend beyond this, especially downslope or critical MNES areas.

Field assessments involve inspecting dams and waterholes designated for Tasmanian Irrigation scheme water storage. Biodiversity assessments are conducted to evaluate habitats for signs of threatened species and their overall condition. Vegetation is assessed according to TASVEG codes. Trees are surveyed to identify the species and their potential to provide habitat, focussing on evidence of nests or dens. Soil assessments are also undertaken to determine land capability. State vegetation and natural values databases are updated if found to be incorrect.

What is a Land Capability Assessment?

During the site visit, the Land Capability Assessment (LCA) evaluates the suitability of your land for agricultural uses that don't harm the environment. Land is classified using seven capability classes (Class 1 being the best, Class 7 the poorest). The classification considers erosion, wetness, flooding, drainage, soil quality, rockiness, salinity, and topography limitations. It identifies suitable land uses, including irrigated/dryland pastures, cropping, horticulture, and forestry, and determines a sustainable cropping frequency based on site limitations.

Do I have to be present during the Stage 2 site assessment?

Landholder/irrigator presence is not required during the field assessment. Prequalified consultants are trained to independently conduct these water resource, soil, and biodiversity assessments and will follow all necessary guidelines.

Can I engage my own consultant for Stage 2?

If you choose not to take advantage of our facilitated process, a list of prequalified consultants who can perform the work can be provided upon request. To prequalify, consultants must demonstrate competency in water management, soil science and ecology.

Will obtaining a Farm WAP constrain my farm's operation?

The customised management actions for your property complement farming activities and focus on sustainable practices you may already implement. Most farmers find these practices align well with their operations, making compliance straightforward and beneficial. Management actions depend on the biodiversity and soil condition on your property and may include:

- retaining and enhancing native vegetation,
- managing livestock to prevent overgrazing, trampling, or soil compaction,
- implementing erosion and sediment controls,
- monitoring and controlling invasive species,
- fencing and providing alternative stock watering sources,
- maintaining organic matter and ground cover,
- adopting stubble retention, minimal tillage, and cover cropping,
- using controlled traffic techniques and perennial pastures,
- maintaining buffer zones between sensitive areas and irrigation activities, and
- avoid clearing or modifying protected areas.

Ongoing management of your Farm WAP

Who is responsible for and complying with a Farm WAP?

The landholder is typically the irrigator and therefore responsible for obtaining a Farm WAP and adhering to all management, monitoring and reporting requirements. Where water is transferred or land is leased, a business arrangement between the irrigator and that landowner and/or the lessee may be needed to obtain a copy of the Farm WAP.

Farm WAPs should be reviewed and updated upon transfer of ownership or lease and before each irrigation season. This ensures that the Farm WAP area aligns with the intended irrigation and that the land capability remains appropriate.

Who owns the Farm WAP?

A Farm WAP is prepared for each property and is tied to the land, not the landholder or irrigator. When land is sold or leased, the Farm WAP can be transferred to the new landholder or irrigator at no cost.

Tasmanian Irrigation retains a copy of each Farm WAP. Landholders can request a copy of their Farm WAP at any time.

Who pays for the Farm WAP?

The landholder/irrigator who signs the Farm WAP Engagement Agreement (approving the prequalified consultant to undertake Stage 2) is responsible for paying the Farm WAP invoice.

How is ongoing Farm WAP compliance ensured?

Tasmanian Irrigation schemes are referred to under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Approval conditions under the EPBC Act require Tasmanian Irrigation to implement a Farm WAP Audit Program. The Audit Program involves annual audits of a sample of Farm WAPs to ensure conformance with management actions and demonstrate compliance with EPBC approval decisions. Audits may also be triggered in response to environmental monitoring indicating potential impacts, any Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) present in irrigated areas, reported environmental incidents, repeat non-compliance, and other factors such as missed or follow-up audits and suspected irrigation with scheme water outside approved areas.

What is a Farm WAP audit?

Farm WAP audits are simple quality assurance checks to ensure irrigators carry out the environmental management actions in their Farm WAP. Audits also assess changes in farm operations or environmental conditions that may pose risks. Key criteria include whether water has been applied appropriately, whether land capability limitations and biodiversity have been managed appropriately, whether monitoring has been undertaken, and whether the required records are being kept.

What does a Farm WAP audit involve?

A Farm WAP audit involves interviewing the auditee/irrigator, reviewing relevant documents, and conducting a site inspection. An audit typically takes two hours. During that time the auditor will record evidence, including interview notes, copies of documents, and site photographs. If non-conformances are identified, corrective actions and timeframes are discussed with the auditee/irrigator before finalising the audit report.

Changing a Farm WAP

Can a Farm WAP be amended, e.g. to include an additional area or remove a sold title?

Yes. A Farm WAP can be easily amended. To request changes, contact our Farm WAP Team or complete a Farm WAP Application Form available on our website www.tasirrigation.com.au.

Amendments requiring a site assessment may need to be completed by a prequalified consultant. This will incur a cost to the landholder.

Why would I need to amend my Farm WAP?

While details like property overview, water use figures, or water entitlement information may become outdated, the key is ensuring that Tasmanian Irrigation water is applied only within the approved Farm WAP area, stored in approved dams and that land capability requirements, such as resting phases and land use, are followed. Monitoring and management obligations must also be met. Minor inaccuracies can be addressed during an audit and updated as needed. For changes at any other time, complete a Farm WAP Application Form (available from our website).

My land capability summary supports only irrigated or dryland pasture, horticulture, and forestry, but I want to start growing potatoes. What do I need to do?

Your Farm WAP will need to be amended. The soils in the area you plan to use must be reassessed by a prequalified consultant to determine if this land use is suitable. Contact our Farm WAP Team to get the ball rolling.

Farmers often address limitations to improve land capability. If significant improvements have been made since the original assessment, the land may meet the requirements for growing potatoes. Please note that this reassessment will incur a cost, so it's important to carefully consider all potential land uses when initially preparing your Farm WAP.

Farm WAP Team Contact Details

The Farm WAP Team is available to answer your questions. Contacted us at:

- FarmWAP@tasirrigation.com.au
- Ph: (03) 6398-8433