

What do I do about a storm water run-off from my neighbour's property flooding mine?

Not every storm water problem is a council issue and may be something landowners need to resolve. Points for landowners to note:

- It is a fact that storm water flows from other properties naturally either via an overland flow path or via a stream.
- If you do something that increases the amount of storm water flowing onto a neighbour's site, such as raising the ground level, increasing the impermeable area or blocking a flow path, either stop that activity or cause, or prevent the extra storm water flowing across the boundary.
- It is your responsibility to manage storm water falling naturally onto your site.
- The best solutions to storm water problems manage the problem as close to the source as possible by reducing run off and decreasing impermeable surface area - see our ideas below.

You may need to consult a lawyer so that any agreement you made with your neighbour is legally enforceable and appropriate for future owners of the land should it be sold.

Storm water and your home

If you are a landowner, it is your responsibility to manage the storm water on your property. As well as managing the problem of flooding, there is also the need to protect the environment from the impact of storm water run-off and the pollution and sediment that the storm water picks up as it flows over hard surfaces.

Fortunately, the measures that will reduce your flood risk often help the environment too:

Be flood wise – build with nature not against it.

- When constructing new buildings like homes, garages or sheds think about how the storm water will flow over the ground, remember it will naturally and inevitably collect in dips and channels.
- Reduce the amount of ground covered with impermeable surfaces such as concrete or asphalt. Permeable surfaces absorb the water reducing the risk of flood and pollution.
- Never obstruct an overland flow path – this will cause flooding.
- Ensure that habitable floors (those areas of the house such as kitchens, bedrooms and living rooms) are always the correct height above ground level to ensure that storm water is not able to encroach into the living areas of your property. This height can be found in the district plan.

Protecting the environment

Preventing pollutants from reaching our vulnerable stream and coastal environments

Property owners can help protect the environment by using Low Impact Design (LID) features such as rain gardens or permeable paving, or by planting native bush around streams. By managing storm water close to the source they reduce the scale of the problem, reducing flood risks, erosion and protecting the environment.

LID features work by slowing down the flow of storm water, allowing it to cool down (rainwater is warmer than stream or seawater) before entering the natural ecosystem which can be harmed by sudden increases in temperature. The soil and the plant roots help by trapping many of the pollutants and returning the water to the atmosphere through the plants leaves – up to 75 per cent in some instances.

Some of these features will need a building consent.

Examples of Low Impact Design

Retention tanks

they collect runoff from impermeable areas and hold it during the storm, releasing it back into the storm water