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**WAT-G-002**

**EASR Guidance: Registration Activity: Impoundments for peatland restoration or wetland creation**

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# Purpose

This document provides information and guidance for anyone undertaking the use of impoundments for peatland restoration or wetland creation which requires an authorisation under The Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations.

This guidance does not cover any other permissions that may be required.

# What activity does this guidance apply to?

This guidance applies to impoundment activities granted as a registration under the Environmental Authorisation (Scotland) Regulation 2018 for:

* The construction, modification, removal and/or operation of any impoundment in inland surface waters, or wetlands, for peatland restoration or wetland creation.

# Understanding the activity

This activity covers impoundments for [peatland](#_Definitions) restoration or [wetland](#_Definitions) creation and any associated construction works.

This activity only applies to blocking of ditches shown on the 1:50,000 scale Ordnance Survey maps (Landranger series).

Restoration of degraded peatland is essential to ensure it stores and sequesters large amounts of carbon. Most peatland action projects will include measures to raise the water table in the peat as this will drive the recovery of the peatland vegetation and thus ensure that the peatland returns to an actively carbon accumulating state.

Wetlands are a diverse and unique set of habitats with wet soils and plants that favour those conditions. They include marsh, swamp and fen, peatland, wet woodlands and marshy grasslands, as well as lochs, ponds and rivers which support wetland habitats. Wetlands also deliver benefits for climate change and people. They are also one of the most effective carbon sinks on the planet and help improve water quality.

Both peatland restoration and wetland creation require raising the water table which means in most cases impounding water.

# Understanding and minimising risks to the water environment

## Risks to the water environment

You should contact NatureScot where your proposed activity is within a [protected area](#_Definitions).

Some Peatland Action projects include active management of the surface, especially where the area has supported recent commercial conifer plantations or where there are big dry edges (peat hags or edges of eroding gullies). Optimal surface management techniques will create large bare peat areas before the target peat vegetation recolonises and recovers and this might take 2 to 3 years.

This results in a risk of run-off of eroding peat material during the un-vegetated time resulting in diffuse pollution. To minimise this risk a minimum of 5m buffer between should be used between bare peat surface and watercourses. A wider buffer might be needed in specific instances and NatureScot will advise you on this.

If you want to use forest material as part of the project you should discuss and agree these uses with NatureScot Peatland action officers prior to any action being taken on the ground. Further information on peatland Action can be found in the [Peatland Restoration and Management Guidance](https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions/peatland-action/peatland-action-how-do-i-restore-and-manage-my-peatland/peatland-action-peatland-restoration-0).

To minimise risks to the water environment and to help you comply with the standard conditions for this activity, you should follow the Dos and Don’ts below.

## Dos and don’ts

* Don’t work if fish are likely to be spawning or young fish are still to emerge. In general, avoid the period between 1 October and 31 May. You should check the exact times with your local fishery board. Details are available from [Fisheries Management Scotland](https://fms.scot/#:~:text=Fisheries%20Management%20Scotland%20is%20the%20representative%20body%20for%20Scotland's%20District).
* Don’t spread invasive non-native species**:**
  + Check the banks and in water for invasive species.
  + Use biosecurity measures.
* Do minimise the extent, location and duration of works in the wetted part of the channel.
* Do, where required, create and maintain a robust and secure dry working area of minimum size.
* Do install and maintain suitable mitigation before, after and during the works.
* Do store all fuel, machinery and vehicles at least 10m from any watercourse, loch or permeable drain.
* Do have oil spill kits, drip trays and bunds on site and available to operators.
* Do prevent any pollutants entering the water environment.

# Glossary

A full list of terms is available in the main Glossary.

**Impoundment** means any dam, weir or other structure that can raise the water level of a water body above its natural level.

**Peatland** means an area of land containing peat which support a variety of habitats. They are the largest natural store of carbon on land.

**Protected area** means areas designated under International (Ramsar sites), European (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) or National (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) legislation, to provide protection of their notable natural features or biodiversity. This legislation places duties on bodies such as SEPA to assess whether activities we regulate would harm these sites.

**Wetland** means an area of ground the ecological, chemical and hydrological characteristics of which are attributable to frequent inundation or saturation by water, and which is directly dependent, with regard to its water needs, on a body of groundwater or a body of surface water.

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