

# Farm Water Access Plans – Fact Sheet

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

9 May 2023

## What is a Farm WAP?

Farm Water Access Plans or Farm WAPs help identify and manage environmental risks on irrigated properties and the surrounding environment including:

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

## Why is a Farm WAP needed?

- Sustainable water use and land stewardship
  - Environmental due diligence
  - An environmental risk management planning tool.
- Funding requirement
  - Farm WAPs demonstrate good environmental practice to the state and federal governments who fund our irrigation schemes.
  - Required to comply with Irrigation District By-laws.
- Condition of signing up to a water entitlement – all land and dams receiving TI water in designated irrigation districts require a Farm WAP.

## How do I get one?

- When your irrigation scheme is ready just apply for a water entitlement to get started
- Irrigators purchasing new entitlements are already in the process of developing Farm WAPs.
- Tasmanian Irrigation will help you by coordinating a prequalified consultant to prepare your Farm WAP.
- A prequalified consultant (approved by the Minister) has expertise in water, soil and biodiversity.

## Farm WAP Benefits

Farm WAPs can benefit farmers and their surrounding communities including:

### Improved water use efficiency

Farm WAPs can help farmers use water more efficiently by providing a clear understanding of water requirements for different crops, the timing and amount of water required, and the best irrigation techniques to use. This can help to reduce water waste, lower water use costs, and increase yields.

### Reduced environmental impact

Farm WAPs can help to reduce the environmental impact of farming activities by reducing water use, minimising nutrient leaching, and reducing soil erosion. This can help to protect water quality and maintain ecosystem health.

### Compliance with regulations

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

### Improved risk management

Farm WAPs can help farmers to manage risk associated with water availability and quality.

### Improved farm productivity

Farm WAPs can help to improve farm productivity by providing a systematic approach to water management. By optimising irrigation practices for each soil type, farmers can increase crop yields, reduce production costs, and improve the quality of their crops.

### Increased market access

Farm WAPs can help farmers to access new markets by demonstrating their commitment to sustainable water management practices. This can help to improve their marketability and attract customers who are interested in environmentally-friendly farming practices.

### Water conservation

With an effective water management plan, farmers can use water more efficiently, reducing their water usage and conserving this valuable resource.

### Reduced water pollution

Correct water management practices can reduce the risk of agricultural runoff, which can cause water pollution and harm aquatic ecosystems.

### Improved soil health

Effective water management practices can also help maintain healthy soil conditions, which can promote better crop growth and reduce erosion.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Preparing your Farm WAP

### Who needs a Farm WAP?

Properties receiving water from Tasmanian Irrigation (TI water) schemes are required under by-laws to have a Farm WAP.

### What is included in a Farm WAP?

Farm WAPs are required for each individual property. A Farm WAP does not have to cover an entire property but must include all on-farm dams and land where TI water will be stored or applied both now and in the future.

Farm WAPs include information on:

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

### What is involved in preparing a Farm WAP?

Tasmanian Irrigation facilitates the preparation of Farm WAPs to help reduce the cost to irrigators. There are four stages in preparing your Farm WAP. Tasmanian Irrigation will approach you when Stage 1 commences.



Farm WAPs can only be completed by a prequalified consultant who has been approved by the Minister for Water and are prepared in accordance with the soil, water and biodiversity modules approved by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Tasmania).

Irrigators taking or planning to take water from a scheme will be contacted by Tasmanian Irrigation directly to arrange for a Farm WAP to be developed. Farm WAPs are usually prepared in batches which provide cost efficiencies for each irrigator.

### How is the process started?

When your scheme or zone is ready to commence Stage 1, Tasmanian Irrigation will send you draft property maps and a farm checklist questionnaire. seeking to identify where you currently or propose to apply and store TI water. Multiple properties that will be operated as separate entities, require a separate farm checklist for each property.

### What are the likely costs to prepare a Farm WAP?

Tasmanian Irrigation engages a prequalified consultant to undertake this work. The consultant's field assessments and reports vary in complexity depending on the size, soil and biodiversity characteristics of your property.

Factors affecting the price of a Farm WAP include:

- the size of the area to be assessed,
- existing land capability data for the area to be assessed, and
- the likelihood of threatened species, ecological communities or other matters of national environmental significance (MNES) occurring in or near the area to be assessed.

The cost of Farm WAPs for most schemes can often be subsidised.

### What if I don't know exactly how or where I'll use TI water yet?

Farm WAPs consider a wide range of suitable long-term future options, so your property will not be restricted to growing the particular crop or pasture you indicate now. The significant decisions involve selecting the area that may be irrigated in the future and the dams in which you propose to store TI water (you may wish to select all your dams). Choosing a larger area or incorporating properties that you have long term leases on **may save paying for extensions to your Farm WAP in the future.**

### What if I want to engage my own consultant (for Stage 2)?

If you do not choose to take advantage of the TI facilitated process, you may engage your own consultant to prepare your Farm WAP. A list of prequalified consultants who can perform the work can be obtained from Tasmanian Irrigation upon request.

## Ongoing Management of your Farm WAP

### Who is responsible for and complying with a Farm WAP?

Usually the landowner is the irrigator and therefore the person responsible for obtaining a Farm WAP and complying with management and reporting requirements. In situations where water is transferred or land is leased, a business arrangement between the irrigator and the landowner and/or lessee may be required to facilitate obtaining the Farm WAP.

Farm WAPs should be reviewed and checked upon transfer, and prior to each irrigation season, to ensure the Farm WAP area covers the proposed irrigation area and that the land capability is appropriate.

### What is a Farm WAP linked to?

A Farm WAP is developed for each specific property. They are attached to land and not individual property owners or irrigators. If land is sold or leased, the Farm WAP can be transferred to another property owner or irrigator at no cost.

### What compliance monitoring related to Farm WAPs?

In accordance with condition of approval of the irrigation schemes under the Tasmanian *Water Management Act 1999*, Tasmanian Irrigation has implemented a Farm WAP auditing program. The program includes annual audits of randomly selected Farm WAPs, and triggered audits where non-compliance is identified or monitoring results indicating a decline in scheme water quality.

### What is a Farm WAP audit?

Farm WAP audits are simply a quality assurance check to ensure that the irrigator is (still) managing and can achieve the environmental management actions in their Farm WAP, review and changed farm operations that pose potential risks to the environment and review any changed environmental aspects that may be affected and may be at risk from irrigation activities.

Audits focus on compliance with the management prescriptions set out in each Farm WAP. Criteria to be addressed include whether water has been applied in accordance with the Farm WAP, and whether land capability limitations and biodiversity have been managed, monitoring has been undertaken and required records are being kept in accordance with the Farm WAP.

### Can a Farm WAP be amended to include an additional area?

Yes. A Farm WAP is a 'live' document that can be amended. Contact Tasmanian Irrigation's Farm WAP Team to request an additional area or other change to your existing Farm WAP. Some changes may need a prequalified consultant to complete, which may incur a cost.

### Farm WAP Team Contact Details

The Farm WAP Team is happy to answer your questions.

**Farm WAP Officer**

[FarmWAP@tasirrigation.com.au](mailto:FarmWAP@tasirrigation.com.au)

Ph: (03) 6398-8433