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Media Release

Timeline is now critical in Government move to address quarry concerns

Cabinet's agreement to provide quarries and other affected sectors with a consenting pathway through obstacles created by new wetland regulations promulgated last September has been welcomed by Aggregate & Quarry Association CEO, Wayne Scott.

He says the critical issue now is whether officials can meet the indicated timeline to have amended regulations in place by the end of the year, along with early, clear guidance to councils on what constitutes a wetland.

Otherwise, he says some early effects already evident in the supply of quarry materials will become critical and profoundly impact infrastructure and housing projects.

"We have been working closely with Ministry for the Environment (MfE) officials over recent months to address the unintended consequences of the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020."

"From September 2020, these new regulations prohibited 'mineral and aggregate' extraction activity and earthworks generally on land deemed to be natural wetlands, and as such represent the biggest challenge currently being faced by our sector."

Wayne Scott says this is already seeing quarries put a halt to expansion plans and some councils have been interpreting the new regulations to mean they must reject any resource consents for development on land broadly defined as wetlands.

"Today we have received confirmation from MfE that Cabinet has considered our concerns and noted that there is a clear case for providing a consenting pathway for affected sectors including quarries."

MfE officials say by mid-year Cabinet will be provided with a detailed proposal. Six to eight weeks of public consultation would follow, feeding into an Exposure Draft of amended regulations, to be circulated prior to final Cabinet decisions. The amended regulations would be expected by the end of 2021.

"It is important that sufficient time be taken to ensure we get these regulations right, as the haste with which the original regulations were enacted is the major reason for the problems we currently face," says Wayne Scott.

"That said, quarries are already having to shelve expansions. If this drags into next year, we will see shortages of supply. This will impact on infrastructure projects as much as housing, as well as the price of aggregate. We know from our engagement with him that this is the last thing Minister for the Environment David Parker and the Government want."



Wayne Scott says MfE is separately aware that the definition of what constitutes a wetland is already being applied broadly by regional councils, impacting on quarries and other sectors.

“Draft guidance on this is being consulted on and should be finalised next month. MfE anticipate this will reduce uncertainty by providing clearer direction of what constitutes a wetland and therefore when a wetland should not be captured by the wetland regulations.”

Wayne Scott has thanked members of the quarry sector who’ve helped raise concerns about the new wetland regulations and also acknowledged assistance from the Infrastructure Commission, MBIE Resource Markets Policy officials and Auckland’s Mayor Phil Goff and Deputy Bill Cashmore.

“Auckland will be the principal market impacted if these indicated changes are not brought through in a very timely and comprehensive fashion, although other regions will also feel the crunch if timelines start to stretch and aggregate supply dries up.”

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