

Central Hawke's Bay council charged over wastewater treatment plants

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A court date for Hawke's Bay Regional Council's prosecution of Central Hawke's Bay District Council has yet to be set.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council has laid charges against the Central Hawke's Bay District Council over alleged breaches of consent conditions for its wastewater treatment plants in Waipukurau and Waipawa.

The CHB council faces three charges of breaching its consent conditions in relation to discharges of contaminants from its wastewater treatment plants in the two towns.

The district council's resource consents allow for a certain number of exceedances of discharge limits during a 12-month period.

HBRC claims the district council has passed that limit at both plants. One charge relates to the discharge of E.coli at Waipawa in excess of the five allowed exceedances. The other two charges relate to discharge of E. coli and dissolved reactive phosphorus (DRP) at Waipukurau, again in excess of the five allowed exceedances.

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Central Hawke's Bay Mayor Alex Walker said she is disappointed her council had been charged over "minor exceedances" of consent limits at the plants but said she was pleased the charges related to infrastructure for which the council already had work underway to address.

"Any failure to comply with consent conditions is obviously a concern to us as a council, and to our community. It is disappointing that it has got to this point but we are continuing to work closely with the regional council over these issues."

CHB council chief executive John Freeman said it was believed a heavy rain event in September caused both plants to exceed their consent limits.

He said in Waipawa, changes to alum dosing at the plant had already been in place since September and compliance with resource consent limits have been achieved since then.

The Waipukurau plant is affected by stormwater inundation from an ageing piping network, he said.

The council was in the process of spending \$1.5 million to add two new ponds in Waipukurau to mitigate the impact of stormwater entering the system. The ponds were currently under construction in Waipukurau and were expected to have a large impact on the performance of the whole system, Freeman said. They are due to be operational by late March next year.

Walker said the exceedances did not represent a health risk for the community or the Tukituki River where the discharges from the plants flows into.

CHB District Council upgraded its Waipawa and Waipukurau wastewater plants two years ago to meet new standards required under new resource consents, which came into effect in October 2014.

However, it has been warned since then that it was exceeding discharge limits

A court date for the regional council's prosecution is yet to be set.

Earlier this month the regional council began prosecution against another council –

Hastings District – following August's gastro outbreak related to Havelock North's drinking water supply.

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