



Beach erosion update

12 July 2024

In early July 2024, a king tide hitting Sunset Beach resulted in significant erosion, causing damage to property and raising concern in the community.

The strong tide resulted in soil supporting the foundations of a home on Ocean View Road being eroded away. This put it at risk of falling onto the beach below and it had to be removed. Severe erosion also occurred in front of neighbouring properties.

Part of the Sunset Beach Surf Club car park also eroded, with the space cordoned off and being monitored for the risk.

Immediate priorities

- Our priority is the safety of the Port Waikato community, as well as staff and contractors on site.
- While the risk of potential debris remains, people are advised to avoid the beach in that area.
- Properties on the beachfront are being regularly checked to make sure they are not at risk of instability.
- Continuing assessment of the surf club car park to ensure visitor safety.

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Erosion at Port Waikato

Coastal erosion is a process that is part of natural beach behaviour which occurs on most beaches. Short-term erosion can be caused by storm activity and strong tidal actions consistently hitting the same area. Long-term sea level changes also increasingly have an impact. At Port Waikato, sand is regularly deposited from the south and then eroded, meaning that the beach is constantly changing.

Preventative measures

Over many years, there have been calls for a sea wall to act as a barrier to protect Sunset Beach. We received guidance in 2019 that the likely cost for this was minimum \$50m, which puts it financially out of reach for our ratepayers.

A resource consent has been issued to the Surf Lifesaving Club that allows residents to push sand from the beach up to the edge of their properties. This is, of course, a short-term measure but one that can be effective during one-off events or to repair damage. Frequency and volume limits are in place, with details available from the Surf Club.

Current support

- Sunset Beach sand push ups consent, to act as short-term erosion protection
- Finalising designs for stormwater development to improve key infrastructure in the town and reduce flood risks
- Continuing with the recovery efforts after Cyclone Gabrielle
- Working with a dedicated group and with local marae to support them with emergency response training and management for Port Waikato

Looking ahead

We want to ensure there can still be a viable community at Port Waikato and are focusing on activities that can maintain the township for as long as is feasible in the face of increasing environmental risks.

A local resilience group was established in 2020 to look at all natural hazards, to develop options to make sure Port Waikato continued to be a viable community.

This is now being updated with a District Wide Resilience Project where Port Waikato and Raglan will be the initial focus areas. It will build on the previous Port Waikato Resilience Project work. A governance group consisting of district, regional and iwi members has just been appointed, and we will be seeking input from residents.

