

On-site Wastewater Management Training Course

Site Assessment: Desktop Study

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Land Capability Assessment Site and Soil Evaluation (SSE)


Aim:

- Identify and consider site-specific attributes significant in the selection, design, location and sizing of an on-site sewage management system
- Assess the capacity of the land to sustainably manage sewage within lot boundaries
- Identify public and environmental health risks of on-site sewage management, especially the effect on groundwater and surface water receptors

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Objectives

- To demonstrate the site has sufficient space for:
 - The treatment system
 - The land application system, and
 - Appropriate buffers
- To demonstrate the soil is appropriate and of sufficient depth to:
 - Install the preferred land application system, and
 - Treat the quantity and quality of effluent to be dispersed

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Land Capability Classification

- Defines biogeophysical capacity of land to support a given land use
- Groups landform and soils into units according to their suitability
- Often developed by State agencies for agriculture and development, but less-commonly for on-site wastewater management suitability
- Can be developed for individual regions, catchments etc. using GIS

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Land Capability Classification

- Land suitability also introduces engineering, social and economic considerations
- Designs should aim to be:
 - Sustainable (long-term benefit)
 - Achievable (practically constructible)
 - Acceptable (minimal impact)
 - Affordable (value for money)

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Stages of Data Collection

- Desktop study
- Site and soil check
- Soil description and profile assessment
- Calculations
- Collection of additional data
- Identify site and soil opportunities and constraints
- Selection of appropriate system/s

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Desktop Study

- Collects preliminary data from readily available sources
- Provides an overview of opportunities and constraints
- Determines what information is relevant
- Identifies information gaps exist and what additional information is required

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Site and Soil Assessment

- Site and Soil Assessment** (DLG, 1998) or **Site and Soil Evaluation** (AS/NZS 1547) refers to the procedural investigation of land for the purposes of evaluating its potential for onsite sewage management, including land application of effluent
- Should be undertaken by an appropriately qualified person with specific experience in wastewater applications
 - Specific advice regarding field investigation procedures in DLG, 1998 and AS/NZS 1547:2012

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Site and Soil Assessment

The **WaterNSW Current Recommended Practice guideline** (2023) also includes information on Site Assessment procedures, with specific focus on requirements within the catchment area. SCA specific matters include:


- Appropriate soil information and investigation rigour (depth, description and site coverage)
- Selection of appropriate climate information
- System suitability (dwelling usage, power etc.)
- Sensitive environmental features
- Setback (buffer) distances

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Level of Investigation

Guidance documents (DLG 1998, AS/NZS 1547 and WaterNSW 2023) recommend different 'levels of investigation' depending on project intent or scale

- **Subdivision or Rezoning** – investigation will focus on regional or site-wide implications of OSSM (soil characterisation, system suitability, system density, cumulative impacts, planning considerations etc.)
- **Single-lot Development** – at this scale investigation will focus on site-specific attributes (buffers, soil controls, drainage etc.) and optimising OSSM (treatment / application) options

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Site and Soil Characteristics

- In NSW, the Environment and Health Protection Guidelines: On-site sewage management for single households (DLG, 1998) provides a simple guide to site (Table 4) and soil (Table 6) characteristics that should be considered in on-site wastewater investigations
- AS/NZS 1547:2012 provides similar information in Appendices B-D
- Other matters may also warrant consideration based on site-specific information

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DLG (1998) Assessment Criteria

- The guideline (Silver Book) adopts a prescriptive approach to assessing site and soil conditions
- The 'rating scale' preferred identifies the relative hazard or constraint posed by specific site and soil attributes and applies a risk (limitation) rating
- The risk rating incorporates a range of information (research, empirical and anecdotal) and reflects the consensus understanding of the authors at the time of publication
- Guideline currently under review (expected 2024?)

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Site Characteristics

- Flood potential
 - Exposure
 - Slope (%)
 - Landform
 - Run-on and seepage
 - Erosion potential
 - Drainage (indicative)
 - Fill
 - (Available) Land Area
 - Geology and rock outcrops
 - Vegetation
- Other Considerations:
- Built Features
 - Buffers
 - Adjacent land-use
 - Climate impacts

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Imagery

Information sources include:

- Satellite imagery www.google.com/earth/
- Free to download and activate
- Image quality varies
- Provides information on location (latitude/longitude), elevation and has capacity for measurement and historical imagery
- Images can be rotated for different views (including Street View)

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Google Earth



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Topographic Maps

Show:

- Landscape
- Contours
- Anthropogenic (human) features
- Cadastral boundaries
- Grid references
- 1:25,000 maps have 10m contours

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Topographic Maps

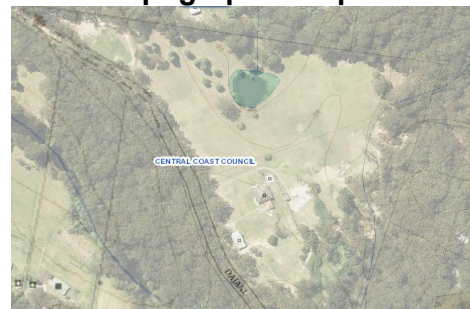
Can determine:

- Shape of land
- Drainage direction
- Water bodies and drainage lines
- Slope
- Relief (difference in elevation)
- Aspect (facing direction)

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Topographic Maps

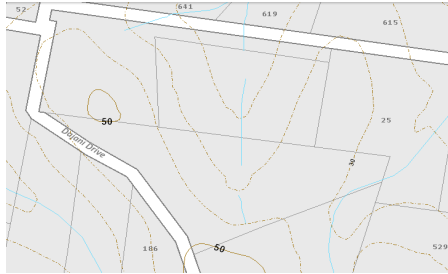


Topographic map SIX Maps

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Topographic Maps



Topographic map maps.gosford.nsw.gov.au

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Maps and Spatial Information

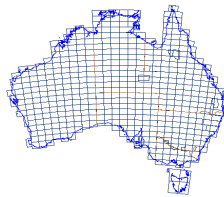
- NSW www.maps.six.nsw.gov.au
- NSW www.nratlas.nsw.gov.au
- TAS www.mrt.tas.gov.au
- VIC www.dpi.vic.gov.au
- VIC www.land.vic.gov.au
- WA www2.landgate.wa.gov.au

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Geological Maps

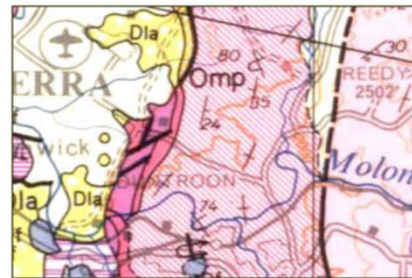
- Scanned 1:250,000 geological maps of much of Australia available from Geoscience Australia www.geoscience.gov.au
- Select location
- Choose resolution
- Relate landforms
- Solid geology
- Superficial deposits
 - Alluvium
 - Beach deposits
 - Colluvium



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Geological Map



Geology east of Canberra (Geoscience Australia)

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Slope Configuration

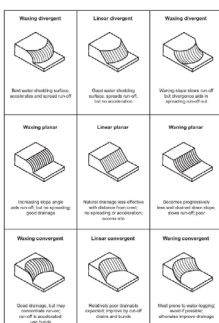


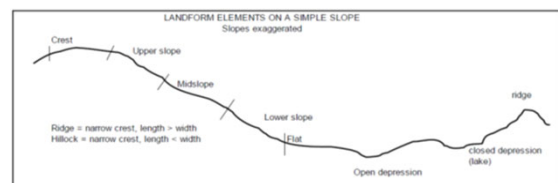
FIGURE C2 SLOPE CONFIGURATION AND SURFACE DRAINAGE

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- Slope (gradient and shape)
- Terrain-Soil combinations; important to understand how surface water will flow in or near available EMA
- Waxing / waning / linear
- Converging or diverging

Site Landform

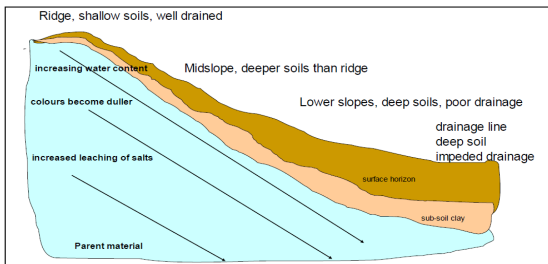


Landform elements on a simple slope

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Soil Properties and Topography



Position in landscape significant in soil profile characteristics

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Soil Landscape Resources

- Atlas of Australian Resources, Volume 1 Soils and Land Use (Division of National Mapping, Canberra, 1980)
- NSW Soil Landscapes (1:100,000) (NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation)

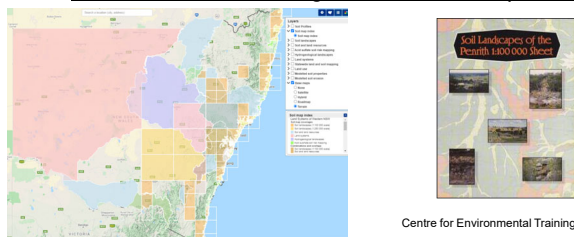
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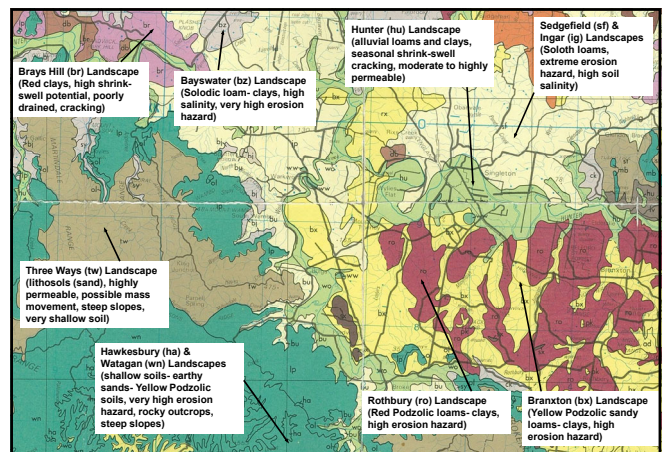
Soil Landscape Maps

- Soil landscape maps of NSW available from NSW Environment & Heritage

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/soils/soilmaps.htm



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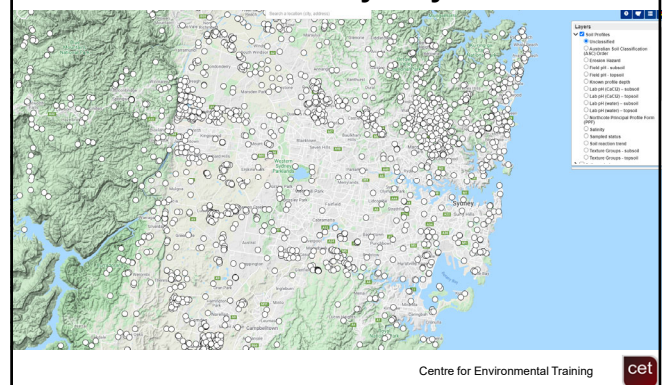
Soils Data Online

- NSW Soil and Land Information System (SALIS) provides a substantial database of information including soil descriptions
- SALIS can be accessed via: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/soils/data.htm
- Or the eSPADE portal: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/eSpade2Webapp>

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Soil Profiles – Sydney Basin



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Soil Essentials Report

Site Location:
Map Reference: MGA Grid Reference: Easting 341704, Northing 6297080 GOGFORD (9131) 1:100,000 sheet

Profile Details:
 Soil landscape of the District 1:100 000 Sheet Survey, Profile 319, collected by Casey Murphy on May 08, 1990

Physiography:
 footslope in low hills under dry sclerophyll forest on sandstone-quartz lithology and used for cattle-rhine pasture. Slope 4% (estimated), elevation 105 m, aspect south east, profile is rapidly drained, erosion hazard is high, and no salting evident

Soil Type:
 Fragile Humusquec Aeric Podsol (ASCI), Podsol (GGG), Ucl. 32 (PPF)

Soil Description:

Layer 0
 00 00 - 00 20 m
 A1 Horizon
 heavy sand with single granules (sandy), field pH is 5. Coarse fragments are not evident, and not evident, and not evident, pans are not evident, not evident, not evident. Segregations are not evident, not evident, sharp (<5 mm) boundary to

Layer 2
 00 20 - 00 70 m
 A2 Horizon
 sand with massive structure (sandy), field pH is 5. Coarse fragments are not evident, and not evident, and not evident, pans are not evident, not evident, not evident. Segregations are not evident, not evident, sharp (<5 mm) boundary to

Layer 3
 00 70 - 01 00 m
 B Horizon
 heavy sand with massive structure (sandy), field pH is 5. Coarse fragments are not evident, and not evident, and not evident, pans are vesicular, organic pan. Segregations are not evident, not evident, not evident, not evident

Laboratory Test Data:

Upper Bound	Layer	Lower Bound	% Clay	USCS	PH	EC	OC	Eng P	P-Swell	Cath Al	Cath Ca	Exch K	Exch Mg	Exch Na

For information on laboratory test data and units of measure, please see the SPACED Help page.

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Three reports:
 Soil Essentials
 Soil Profile
 Soil Technical
 (increasing level of detail)

Soil Data online

- Australian Soil Resource Information System (ASRIS)
<http://www.asris.csiro.au/mapping/viewer.htm>
- TERN ecosystem data collection (90m resolution) Australian Soil Classification
<https://www.tern.org.au/news-australian-soil-classification-map/>

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Climate Data

- Bureau of Meteorology www.bom.gov.au
- Rainfall
- Evaporation
- SILO or Data Drill data available if no suitable or local station

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Rainfall and Evaporation Data

- Use to prepare a water balance

Site name: BADGERYS CREEK MCMASTERS F.STN **Site number:** 067088 **Commenced:** 1936
Latitude: 33.87° S **Longitude:** 150.73° E **Elevation:** 85 m **Operational status:** Closed 31 Dec 1996

Statistics	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual	Years	Plot	Map
Mean rainfall (mm)	65.5	63.4	88.9	84.9	60.0	66.3	33.9	47.5	37.7	55.6	73.9	74.1	750.1	59	1936	1996
Highest rainfall (mm)	311.2	435.9	328.5	382.0	238.1	416.7	191.0	347.0	166.9	195.6	365.5	277.2	1699.2	59	1936	1996
Days	1972	1956	1956	1968	1943	1950	1952	1985	1995	1979	1961	1962	1980			
Lowest rainfall (mm)	4.4	0.0	2.3	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	329.7	59	1936	1996
Days	1965	1929	1949	1980	1957	1962	1946	1995	1997	1993	1956	1929	1944			
Decile 1 rainfall (mm)	13.9	19.2	18.0	12.8	5.4	6.2	1.6	3.0	1.6	6.4	8.0	6.4	427.2	59	1936	1996
Decile 5 (median) rainfall (mm)	76.4	62.8	71.4	36.4	31.2	30.0	16.6	27.4	33.8	43.9	61.6	80.8	770.7	59	1936	1996
Decile 9 rainfall (mm)	183.9	224.7	194.3	190.2	155.4	167.1	64.1	122.2	80.4	156.3	190.9	175.4	1142.8	59	1936	1996
Mean daily evaporation (mm)	5.9	5.4	4.4	3.3	2.1	1.7	1.9	2.9	4.0	4.5	5.6	6.1	4.0	13	1967	1994

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SILO Data Drill

- QLD DNR www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/silo/

SILO Climate data online resource
 SILO (Scientific Information for Land Owners) is a Queensland Government database containing point and gridded daily climate data for Australia from 1889 until present. SILO was designed to serve the needs of agricultural and hydrological modelling and bridges the gap between meteorological services and modellers.

SILO provides daily point and spatially interpolated data with continuous (no missing days) datasets covering the period of 1889 until present. Consistent long-term climate data-series supports various modelling efforts within the Australian environmental sciences community.

SILO climate data service:

- Historical daily climate data for Australia, 1889-present
- Observed data with data in-filing
- SILO data are complete and ready to use
 - Gridded datasets (spatial data for a given day)
 - Point data (time-series data for a given location)
- SILO does nightly processing:

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Groundwater

WaterNSW

All Groundwater Map
 All data shown on WaterNSW database

Groundwater bores around Queanbeyan, NSW (WaterNSW)

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Other Resources

NSW ePlanning portal

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/>

- Zoning Maps
- Hazard Maps (Flood, Bushfire etc.)
- Protection Maps (Vegetation, drinking water catchments etc.)
- Air photographs
- Local studies

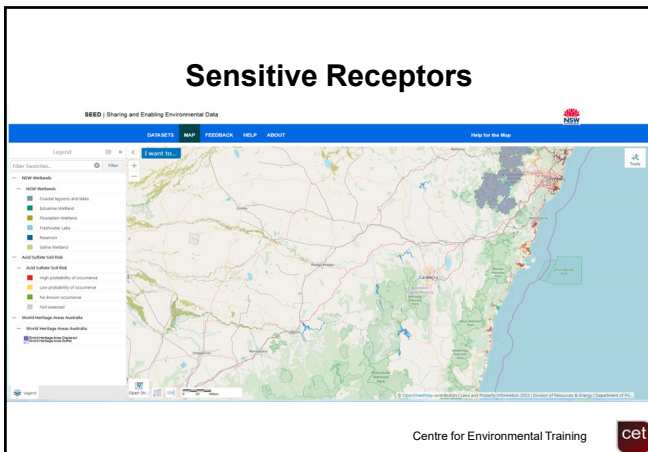
Sensitive Receptors

NSW 'Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data' (SEED)

<https://geo.seed.nsw.gov.au/>

- Acid Sulfate Soils
- Wetlands and Marine Reserves
- World Heritage Areas
- Priority Aquaculture Areas
- Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC)
- Threatened Species

Sensitive Receptors



Desktop Summary

- Tabulate data
- Assessment or rating – Level of 'constraint' or 'limitation' for OSSM
 - Design on most limiting feature/s,
 - Engineer out limiting features, or
 - Provide mitigation to address limitation.
- Designs should aim to reduce all Site limitations to 'low' or 'minor'

NSW Site Assessment: Rating

Site Feature	Relevant System(s)	Minor Limitation	Moderate Limitation	Major Limitation	Restrictive Feature
Flood potential	All land application systems	Rare, above 1 in 20 year flood contour		Frequent, below 1 in 20 year flood contour	Transport of wastewater off-site
	All treatment systems	Vents, openings, and electrical components above 1 in 100 year flood contour		Vents, openings, and electrical components below 1 in 100 year flood contour	Transport of wastewater off-site. System failure and electrocution hazard
Exposure	All land application systems	High sun and wind exposure		Low sun and wind exposure	Poor evapotranspiration
Slope%	Surface irrigation	0-5	6-12	>12	Run-off, erosion
	Sub-surface irrigation	0-10	10-20	>20	Run-off, erosion
	Absorption system	0-10	10-20	>20	Run-off, erosion
Landform	All systems	Hill crests, convex side slopes and plains	Concave side slopes and footslopes	Drainage plains and incised channels	Groundwater pollution hazard Resurfacing hazard
Run-on and upslope seepage	All land application systems	None - low	Moderate	High - diversion not practical	Transport of wastewater off-site.

Preliminary Constraints Mapping

- Undertaken in advance of, and to prepare for, field study
- Guides field study
- Identifies data gaps to be filled by field study
- Most importantly, saves time and money

Buffers or Setbacks

- Provide mitigation against unidentified or unintended hazards
- Reduce potential pathways for human and environmental exposure
- Valuable and cost-effective risk management strategy for OSSM
- Appropriate buffer selection based on procedures in DLG, 1998 and AS/NZS 1547:2012

DLG (1998) Buffers

Table 5: Recommended Buffer Distances for On-site Systems

System	Recommended Buffer Distances
All land application systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 100 metres to permanent surface waters (eg river, streams, lakes etc) ➤ 250 metres to domestic groundwater well ➤ 40 metres to other waters (eg farm dams, intermittent waterways and drainage channels, etc)
Surface spray irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 6 metres if area up-gradient and 3 metres if area down-gradient of driveways and property boundaries ➤ 15 metres to dwellings ➤ 3 metres to paths and walkways ➤ 6 metres to swimming pools
Surface drip and trickle irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 6 metres if area up-gradient and 3 metres if area down-gradient of swimming pools, property boundaries, driveways and buildings
Subsurface irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 6 metres if area up-gradient and 3 metres if area down-gradient of swimming pools, property boundaries, driveways and buildings
Absorption system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 12 metres if area up-gradient and 6 metres if area down-gradient of property boundary ➤ 6 metres if area up-gradient and 3 metres if area down-gradient of swimming pools, driveways and buildings

AS/NZS 1547:2012 Buffers

TABLE 01
GUIDELINES FOR HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL SETBACK DISTANCES
(to be used in conjunction with Table 02)

Site Feature	Setback distance range (m) (See Note 1)	Site coverage based on specific context (See Note 2)
Property boundary	1.5 – 3.0 (see Note 3)	A, G, J
Building footings	2.0 – 3.0 (see Note 3)	A, G, J
Surface water (see Note 4)	10 – 100	A, B, D, E, G, J
Bank, well (see Note 5 and 6)	75 – 100	A, G, H, J
Recreational areas (E20 back-slip areas, swimming pools and so on) (see Note 7)	3 – 15 (See Note 8 and 9)	A, G, J
In-ground water tank	4 – 10 (see Note 10)	A, G, J
Retaining wall and Excavated areas, excavations, cuttings (see Note 11)	3.0 – 10 (45° angle from toe of wall) (See Note 12 and 13)	D, G, H
Groundwater (see Note 5, 6, and 10)	0.8 – 1.5	A, C, F, H, L, J
Hardcore or bedrock	0.5 – 1.5	A, G, J

NOTES

- The overall setback distance should be commensurate with the level of risk to public health and the environment. To reduce the risk, the minimum setback distance should be reduced after consultation with an expert in the field of the relevant area. The setback distance should be based on an analysis of the potential human and environmental exposure pathways. Table 02 provides measures to provide additional protection for vulnerable receptors.
- Table 02 provides measures to provide additional protection for vulnerable receptors. The separation of a site from a water body or an unconfined aquifer, for release greater than 50%, may be reduced to 0.5 m.

TABLE 02
SITE CONSTRAINTS TABLE FOR DETERMINATION OF SETBACK DISTANCES
(used as a guide to determining appropriate setback distances from site plans shown in Table 01)

Code	Feature/Constraint	Contextual/Additional Information	Setback Distances
A	Residential	Urban residential areas	100 metres to permanent surface waters (eg river, streams, lakes etc)
B	Commercial	Commercial areas	250 metres to domestic groundwater well
C	Industrial	Industrial areas	40 metres to other waters (eg farm dams, intermittent waterways and drainage channels, etc)
D	Unconfined aquifer	Unconfined aquifer	6 metres if area up-gradient and 3 metres if area down-gradient of driveways and property boundaries
E	Recreational	Recreational areas	15 metres to dwellings
F	Subsurface irrigation	Subsurface irrigation	3 metres to paths and walkways
G	Swimming pools	Swimming pools	6 metres to swimming pools
H	Surface water	Surface water	6 metres if area up-gradient and 3 metres if area down-gradient of swimming pools, property boundaries, driveways and buildings
I	Bank, well	Bank, well	6 metres if area up-gradient and 3 metres if area down-gradient of swimming pools, property boundaries, driveways and buildings
J	Absorption system	Absorption system	12 metres if area up-gradient and 6 metres if area down-gradient of property boundary

Into the Field We Go.....

Desktop Study – the study will have identified potentially suitable effluent management areas (EMAs) from available information sources. A preliminary constraints map will also identify:

- Appropriate setback areas from natural or built features (existing and proposed)
- Identified physical constraints (e.g. bedrock, fill)
- Data gaps (areas for investigation)
- Regional soil landscapes (including boundaries)
- Recommended soil (test pit) locations
- Indicative groundwater depth

