



Media Advisory

Bluecliffs State of Emergency

Number: 01

Date: 08, February 2024

Time: 11.30am

Local State of Emergency declared for Bluecliffs erosion

This is an official message from the Civil Defence Controller Simon Mapp

At 10.50am, Southland District Mayor Rob Scott signed a declaration for a local state of emergency for the Bluecliffs area.

The declaration was made as a precautionary measure to ensure Emergency Management Southland is able to respond to the concerns around the threat to life and property from erosion and the landfill at Bluecliffs.

Heavy rain and sea swells have led to increased erosion of the banks at the Bluecliffs township and landfill, putting the homes at risk.

Emergency Management Controller Simon Mapp said while local residents are not required to evacuate, they should be prepared and watchful of the situation, and ready to leave at short notice.

“Declaring this local emergency means we’re able to take steps for a physical opening of the bar at the Waiau River mouth to manage the river flow causing erosion.”

“At this stage we’re building our technical understanding of the risks in the area and what might be possible to provide this community with some more time to manage their retreat.”

The opening of the bar will be weighed against the risks. “This is a highly volatile area and that makes this a very difficult engineering task.”

Southland District Mayor Rob Scott said conversations have been ongoing with the residents for some time now.

“This has been helpful as we have had good local knowledge alongside technical information to be able to make this decision. We have been open with the community that this work comes

with its own risks, and is most likely not going to provide a permanent solution, but will buy us time.

“Both Council and Environment Southland have been monitoring the area actively since the 2023 September floods and this enables us to move quickly to open up the mouth of the Waiau and protect the properties and landfill from further erosion.”

The community landfill, which Southland District Council had started work on removing last year, is continuing to erode into the sea. After reports of explosives buried in the landfill came to light, works have halted. Further options to manage the risk and remove the landfill are also being considered.

Community members are being engaged in this process and alternative accommodation is available should they feel unsafe.

Environment Southland is actively planning the opening of the bar with expert contractors. Weather and tide considerations as well as working with Meridian Energy on river flows are key to the opening attempt.

ENDS

This release has been issued by the Duty Public Information Manager on the authority of the Southland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Controller.

Contact Duty Public Information Manager, ph 027 384 0104

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