

Meet Sharyn Westlake

Published on LEARNZ (<https://www.learnz.org.nz>)

Job:

Senior Engineer, Strategy and Advisory Specialist, Flood Protection Department, Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC).

Job description:

Provide engineering, policy and planning related advice across GWRC around rivers and streams and the management of flood risk.

Work background:

Since university I have worked on re-lining the dam intake area at Arapuni and a gold mine development at Waihi in NZ. Then I worked at the expansion of the Boeing (aeroplane) factory in Seattle in the US. After that I went to England and worked for the National Rivers Authority in Somerset. I then spent three years in Delft, the Netherlands doing a Masters and working for the Dutch Public Works Department on a beach nourishment project. Returning to New Zealand I worked as a coastal engineer for Opus and am now with GWRC working with rivers and streams.

Favourite part of job:

Making a difference, site visits, helping solve problems.

Least favourite part of job:

People who don't listen to my advice.

What I am working on now:

Giving advice to people looking at building in flood hazard areas, working with the Kapiti Rooding projects - the large motorway north out of Wellington that crosses rivers which GWRC manages and maintains. Working with other Councils about managing flood risk and putting maps and rules in Councils planning documents.

A quick story about a job well done:

The job was getting a beach put in Oriental Bay (no, it hasn't always been there)! Working as a coastal engineer I put forward the concept design and pushed acceptance of the idea to Wellington City Council. Another highlight is working on the Kapiti Rooding projects and making sure the roads work well in their interaction with the rivers.

A (humorous) story about a job that went badly and what you learned:

In GWRC we work with communities about flood risk, which involves mapping the hazards and then making sure people know about them - mostly with regard to their

Meet Sharyn Westlake

Published on LEARNZ (<https://www.learnz.org.nz>)

properties. However people have been unhappy with the information, how we told them the information and about what they thought it could mean for them – such as affecting what they could build or property values. These meetings were not fun! I learned about how to work with people and how to let people know about this type of information so that they can be more accepting of it.

Qualifications:

School Certificate (now NCEA Level 1), University Entrance and Bursary (now NCEA Levels 2 and 3), Bachelor of Civil Engineering, Diploma and Master of Science in Hydraulic Engineering, Chartered Professional Engineer.

Interests outside work:

Tennis, campervanning, body boarding, handcrafts, spending time with my family.



[1]

Sharyn Westlake is a Senior Engineer, Strategy and Advisory Specialist in the Flood Protection Department of the Greater Wellington Regional Council.
Image: GWRC.

Source URL: <https://www.learnz.org.nz/location173/meet-sharyn-westlake>

Links

[1] https://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/styles/picture_strip_240x180/public/b-lc173-sharyn-westlake.jpg