

Report to the Collaborative Stakeholder Group – for Agreement and Approval

File No: 23 10 06
Date: 23 May 2016
To: Collaborative Stakeholder Group
From: Emma Reed, Policy workstream
Subject: **Recommendations to support Plan Change 1**
Section **For Agreement and Approval**

Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by Waikato Regional Council staff for the use of Collaborative Stakeholder Group Healthy Rivers: Wai Ora Project as a reference document and as such does not constitute Council's policy.

1 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Collaborative Stakeholder Group (CSG) with text to accompany Plan Change 1 and s32 when delivering recommendations to the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Committee and Waikato Regional Council.

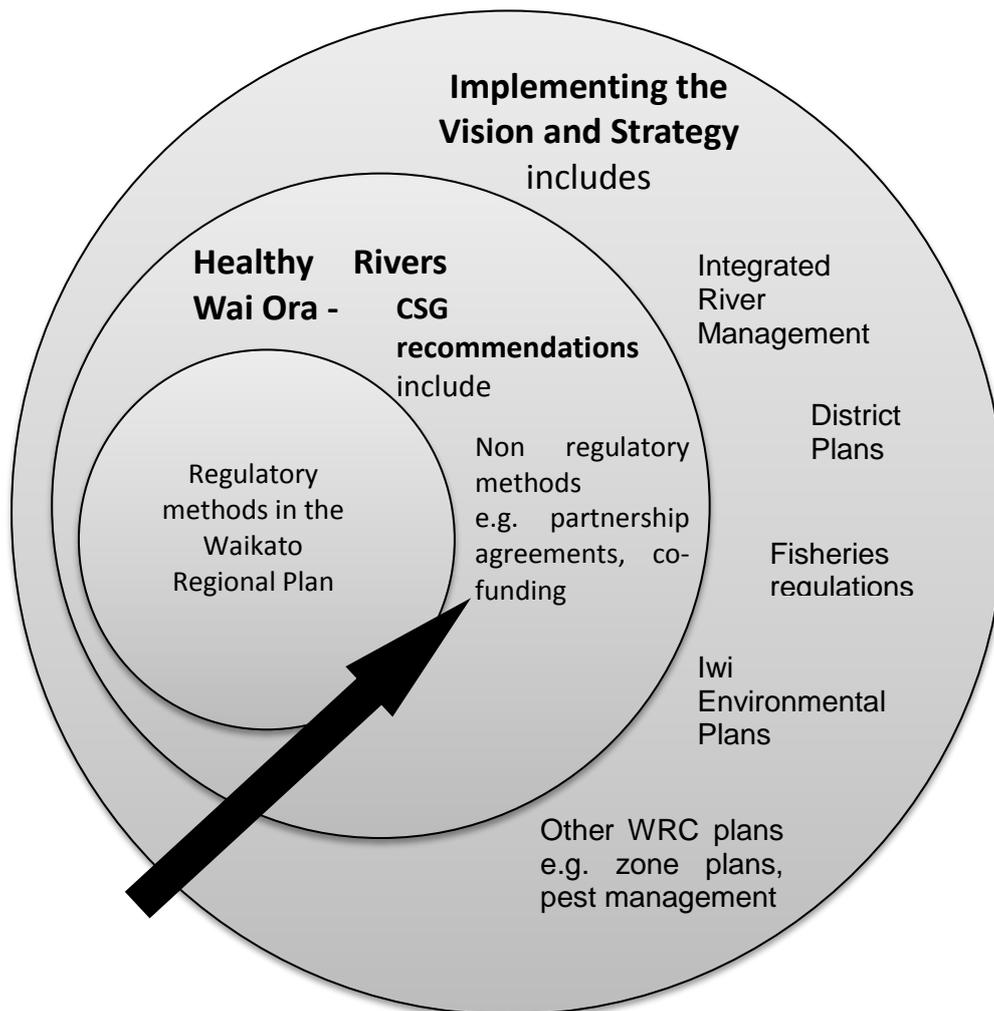
Recommendation:

1. That the report '**Recommendations to support Plan Change 1**' (Doc # 6183680 dated 23 May 2016) be received, and
2. That the Collaborative Stakeholder Group agree to:
 - a) A recommendation on funding as an accompanying message to the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Committee and Waikato Regional Council, when delivering Plan Change 1 and the s32 document; and
 - b) EITHER
 - i) Include recommendations on:
 - Working with others to achieve the Vision and Strategy,
 - Promoting community dialogue and involvement,
 - Working with urban communities and
 - Promotion of wetland development,as accompanying messages, which repeat methods contained in Plan Change 1;
OR
 - ii) Not re-state the methods contained in Plan Change 1, which cover all the topics CSG wish to communicate to Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Committee and Waikato Regional Council.

2 Implementation methods in Plan Change 1

CSG is developing a plan change, which includes objectives, policies, methods and rules, and forms a new Chapter 3.11 of the Waikato Regional Plan.

Resource Management Act planning documents do not usually contain detail about topics such as developing partnerships and funding to assist speeding up the rate of change to achieve objectives. Instead, these matters are followed up by the council in parallel to the RMA First Schedule process. In order to make their recommendations as a complete package to ensure freshwater objectives are achieved, the CSG has discussed that alongside the plan change, it can provide other recommendations to Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Committee and Waikato Regional Council. This is shown in the diagram below:



The CSG developed a policy mix package called ‘Restoring and protecting our water: Te whakapaipai me te tiaki i ō tātou wai’, and presented that to the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Committee (HRWOC) on 22 March 2016 (Waikato Regional Council, March 2016). That document contained a list of methods (see Waikato Regional Council, March 2016, Section 18 Methods to support the regulatory requirements). Since then, CSG and the plan drafting sub-group have looked at those methods, and all have been included as non-regulatory methods in Plan Change 1, except for the recommendation on funding.

CSG want to highlight some aspects of implementing Plan Change 1, in particular those related to funding. In addition to the methods, at the CSG workshop CSG27, 9 May 2016, CSG outlined a number of matters to highlight to HRWOC and accompany the plan change and s32 documents when they are recommended to the committee. These aspects are listed below, as well as the connection to where that concept is contained in Plan Change 1.

Also, a plan drafting sub-group meeting was held on 18 May 2016, which is recommending to CSG that some clauses of the funding method be removed and included as a recommendation to the committee. Other edits to the implementation methods in the plan change we also suggested (Plan drafting sub-group notes, 2016). All edits to the implementation methods can be seen in the tracked change version of the plan change which is part of the CSG agenda pack for 30-31 May, and should be read in conjunction with this report.

3 CSG recommendations to accompany plan change and s32

Section 3.1 contains the clauses of the funding method which the plan drafting sub-group recommends should be removed from the plan change and included as accompanying recommendations to the committee and Waikato Regional Council.

Section 3.2 contains the concepts CSG requested at CSG27, 9 May 2016, drafted as accompanying recommendations. These are already methods in Plan Change 1, and so highlights certain areas of the methods which CSG may wish to elaborate on and explain further. Which method in Plan Change 1 they related has also been included.

3.1 Funding recommendation

Funding

Rates can be set under the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002, and go through a public process, including consultation. Waikato Regional Council should consider setting rates through annual planning processes. CSG recommend the distribution of costs should be as follows:

- On-farm mitigation of effects which are regulatory requirements, and associated administration costs of consents or compliance, should be funded by the landholder.
- A catchment-wide rate, specific to the Waikato and Waipa catchments, should be established and used for certain projects, which include actions which are at the broader scale or are part of a coordinated sub-catchment planning process. Examples of such actions include constructed wetlands, lakes restoration or land retirement.
- A region-wide rate should be established and used for the costs of processes needed to implement Plan Change 1. This includes collecting baseline data, establishing a Farm Environment Plan accreditation system, and council resource needs.

The reasons for these funding principles is to share the costs of better water quality between polluter and beneficiary, to acknowledge that the state of water quality includes a legacy of past actions over a long period (and therefore it would be inequitable to require current dischargers to bear the full cost of mitigating the effects of historic actions), and to speed up action on the ground for broad-scale projects.

3.2 Other recommendations

Working with others to achieve the Vision and Strategy

The scope of the Healthy Rivers: Plan for Change/ Wai Ora: He Rautaki Whakapaipai project is focussed on nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and E.coli. The work outlined in the plan change to address these contaminants is extensive, and will require a partnership approach.

Furthermore, the Vision and Strategy is broader than these four contaminants, and requires implementation by a number of agencies. Waikato Regional Council should work with others, including river iwi partners, Waikato River Authority central and local government and Waikato communities, to promote the Vision and Strategy and work towards achieving all of its objectives. This should also include taking action now to facilitate short term benefits, whilst working towards achieving the long term goals of improved water quality in the Waikato and Waipa Rivers.

Implementation methods in Plan Change 1

- *Method 3.11.4.1 Working with others*

Promoting community dialogue and involvement

An important part of Plan Change 1 is the sub-catchment planning process. This should include providing information on water quality state and trends, sources of contaminants and promoting community dialogue about possible solutions. The aim is to increase awareness and ownership of the Vision and Strategy and be able to develop local solutions. For example, Waikato Regional Council could link the Waikato River Authority report card project to sub-catchment planning processes, when investigating sub-catchment critical source areas of contaminants and possible solutions.

Implementation methods in Plan Change 1

- *Method Working with others*
- *Method Sub-catchment scale planning*

Working with urban communities

Some of the sub-catchments in the Waikato and Waipa contain areas which are predominately urban. These areas have different sources of contaminants and solutions to water quality issues than rural areas, and also contain higher populations. Some of these urban sub-catchments are in the top priority areas which will be investigated first. When undertaking sub-catchment planning in a predominately urban environment Waikato Regional Council should provide information and advice on what communities in urban areas can do to help improve water quality, as well as working with territorial authorities in their role in urban development.

Implementation methods in Plan Change 1

- *Method Sub-catchment scale planning*
- *Method Managing the effects of urban development*

Promotion of wetland development

Understanding about mitigations to reduce discharges of contaminants is increasing. Wetlands are a mitigation which provides reductions in all four contaminants, with secondary benefits for biodiversity. The Waikato and Waipa catchments historically featured large areas of wetlands, which over time have been drained. Wetland areas could be re-developed back to their natural state. There are also areas where constructed wetlands could be built. Larger wetlands can be placed in the landscape which cross property boundaries, or service multiple properties in the catchment area of the wetland. These larger scale wetlands have the opportunity to provide water quality benefits, but their construction and location needs to be planned, coordinated with landowners, and funded. Waikato Regional Council should ensure wetland development is a key focus of subcatchment planning, and has appropriate funding.

Implementation methods in Plan Change 1

- *Method Subcatchment scale planning*

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References

CSG workshop notes. CSG27, 9 May 2016. Doc#6285783

Plan drafting sub-group notes 2016. Draft notes. 18 May 2016. Doc#6240461

Waikato Regional Council 2016. Restoring and protecting our water: Te whakapaipai me te tiaki i ō tātou wai. Overview of Collaborative Stakeholder Group's Recommendations for Waikato Regional Plan Change No. 1 – Waikato and Waipa River catchments. March 2016. Doc#3351821

Waikato Regional Council 2016. Waikato Regional Plan Change No. 1 – Waikato and Waipa River Catchments (Proposed) DRAFT 4 May 2016. Doc#4091077