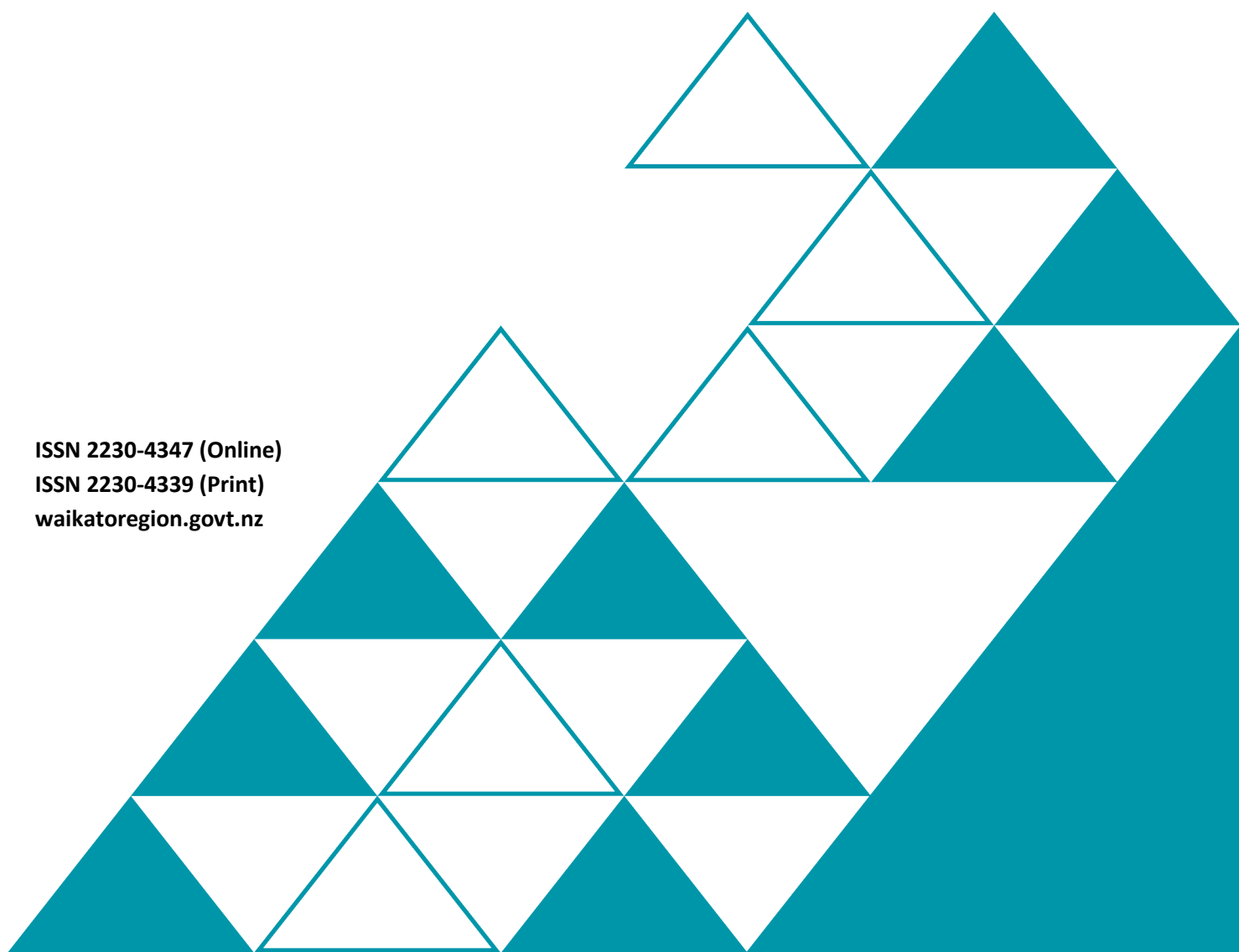


# **Te Arotake Kaupapahere Waimāori – Te pūrongo a Ngā Tira Mātauranga**

## **Freshwater Policy Review – Ngā Tira Mātauranga progress report 2 - 2025**

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This report includes Māori terminology. A glossary of Māori terms can be found in the Appendices.

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# Kōrero whakataki | Executive summary

This report provides an update on Ngā Tira Mātauranga (NTM), Waikato Regional Council's technical working group established to support the involvement of iwi and hapū in the Freshwater Policy Review. The report outlines the topics discussed at NTM meetings held between October 2023 and November 2025 and summarises the feedback shared by representatives on draft policy material and preliminary ideas presented for discussion.

NTM is made up of representatives nominated by tangata whenua entities across the Waikato Region who wish to participate in technical freshwater policy discussions. The purpose of NTM is to provide a forum for tangata whenua to engage with draft policy concepts, share mātauranga, and support the development of policy that aligns with the requirements of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020. Representatives are remunerated for their participation in accordance with Waikato Regional Council guidance.

Across the period covered by this report, NTM representatives engaged with draft material on Māori freshwater values and attributes, tauranga waka, mahinga kai, waitī/waimāori, water quantity and allocation, and culturally outstanding water bodies. Representatives shared a wide range of perspectives grounded in tikanga, whakapapa, and mātauranga Māori, and highlighted the importance of these concepts when defining, expressing, and monitoring freshwater values.

Across these discussions representatives shared key messages including that any regional framework for Māori freshwater values and indicators should allow for flexibility and local interpretation, as iwi and hapū are the experts within their own areas. Feedback reinforced the importance of tikanga-led monitoring approaches, data sovereignty, and active participation by tangata whenua in ongoing freshwater planning and implementation. Representatives also shared a range of aspirations and concerns relating to environmental outcomes, resource use pressures, and the need for policy tools to better protect culturally significant water bodies.

The feedback from these meetings, and feedback summarised in this report has, and will be used to inform the development of draft provisions for the Waikato Regional Policy Statement and Waikato Regional Plan, alongside other tangata whenua feedback received through NTM and other engagement pathways. Further NTM hui may occur in 2026 to continue testing draft material and supporting tangata whenua involvement in the freshwater planning process.

# 1 He tīmatanga kōrero | Introduction

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) was released as part of the Essential Freshwater package to halt the degradation of freshwater and bring about improvements. The NPS-FM sets out expectations that tangata whenua and the community will be engaged on many aspects of freshwater management. These include the application of the concept Te Mana o te Wai to local freshwater, setting long-term visions, and working through the National Objectives Framework (NOF).

In addition to identifying how Te Mana o Te Wai will apply in the Waikato Region, and identifying long-term visions the process steps of the NOF require WRC to:

- Identify Freshwater Management Units (FMUs) in the region
- Identify values for each FMU (including Māori freshwater values)
- Set environmental outcomes for each value and include them as objectives in regional plans
- Set attributes for each value and set baselines for those attributes
- Identify attribute states, environmental flows and levels and other criteria to support the achievement of environmental outcomes
- Set limits as rules and prepare action plans (as appropriate) to achieve the environmental outcomes.

The NPS-FM requires Waikato Regional Council (WRC) to review the freshwater aspects of their regional policy statement and regional plan by 31 December 2027, and this has given rise to the council's Freshwater Policy Review project.

To support active involvement of tangata whenua in the development of draft policy and in discussions on values and subsequent NOF steps, WRC worked with mana whenua who saw merit in establishing a technical working group: Ngā Tira Mātauranga (NTM).

The feedback and discussion shared at the NTM workshops and meetings will be used to inform revisions to the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and Waikato Regional Plan. NTM feedback and discussion will be considered alongside other tangata whenua feedback and discussion. Some tangata whenua may choose to provide feedback through the mechanisms provided in any formal agreements they have with council (e.g., Joint Management Agreements).

This report follows the previous NTM progress report.<sup>1</sup> The previous NTM report includes the following matters which, for brevity, are not repeated in this report:

- Purpose of NTM
- Principles of NTM
- Wānanga format and structure

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<sup>1</sup> [PS23-20 - Freshwater Policy Review - Ngā Tira Mātauranga Progress Report 2023](#)

## 2 Programme Overview

The table below summarises the NTM programme to date, including Meetings 1 and 2 reported in the 2023 progress report. This progress report focuses on Meetings 3–8.

**Table 1: Overview of NTM programme**

Hui	Key topics	Location
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the NTM kaupapa</li> <li>• Review of draft Terms of Reference and work programme</li> <li>• Administrative arrangements and remuneration</li> <li>• Introduction to the policy framework</li> </ul>	The Link, Hamilton.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recap of policy framework</li> <li>• Te Mana o te Wai</li> <li>• Freshwater Management Units</li> <li>• Long-term visions</li> <li>• Establishing tikanga for NTM</li> </ul>	The Link, Hamilton.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on recent tangata whenua engagement</li> <li>• Tangata Whenua Chapter overview</li> <li>• Invite to Topic Advisory Groups</li> <li>• NPS-FM values and attributes</li> <li>• Monitoring considerations</li> </ul>	Wintec, Hamilton
Engagement paused in response to emerging legislation and policy change and project reset.		
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project refresh</li> <li>• Explanation of government changes</li> <li>• Introduction to Outstanding Water Bodies</li> </ul>	Cambridge Velodrome
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reintroduction to the revised programme</li> <li>• Mahinga kai</li> <li>• Tauranga waka</li> <li>• Waiti/Waimāori</li> <li>• Mātauranga Māori monitoring</li> </ul>	Wintec, Hamilton
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding Water Bodies (continued)</li> </ul>	Online (two hui)
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water quantity and allocation</li> <li>• Plan Change 1 update.</li> <li>• Update on central government direction</li> </ul>	Wintec, Hamilton
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy progress update</li> <li>• Summary of key NTM feedback themes</li> <li>• Overview of how NTM advice has shaped emerging policy direction</li> </ul>	Online

## 3 Taiutu | Remuneration

NTM representatives were remunerated to recognise the time commitment and expertise involved, support iwi capacity, and acknowledge their contribution to the freshwater policy development process. Remuneration was determined in accordance with WRC's *Kaupapa Māori Services Guidelines*. Following a WRC review of this guidance, remuneration rates were increased in 2025 to reflect updated council policy. Remuneration covered:

- Preparatory work, including reviewing pre-circulated material
- Attendance at NTM meetings
- Post-meeting activities such as reporting back to respective entities or reviewing detailed workshop material
- Mileage for travel within the Waikato Region

## 4 Mematanga | Membership

WRC is required under the Resource Management Act 1991 and the NPS-FM to engage with tangata whenua. Under section 2 of the RMA, 'tangata whenua' means, in relation to a particular area, the iwi or hapū that hold mana whenua over that area.<sup>2</sup> More than 208 iwi and hapū are present within the Waikato Region.<sup>3</sup>

During the establishment of NTM, invitations to participate were sent to over 270 tangata whenua contacts across iwi and hapū in the region, including groups with marginal overlapping interests from adjoining regions.

In April 2025, WRC reviewed and updated its contact list for NTM. To support participation, additional invitations were provided to tangata whenua groups who had not been involved previously. Newly nominated representatives were provided with materials from earlier NTM meetings to help them engage with the work completed to date.<sup>4</sup>

NTM nominations were primarily done in writing by the board or chair of their iwi, hapū, or marae. This process aimed to ensure representatives were mandated to speak on behalf of their group. Table 2 below provides an overview of attendance across the duration of the NTM programme.

**Table 2: Overview of NTM meeting attendance**

Tangata whenua group represented	Represented at hui by one or more representatives (green = attended)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Hineuru Iwi Trust						█		
Ngaati Aamaru						█		█
Ngaati Koroki Kahukura	█	█	█	█				
Ngaati Maahanga	█							
Ngaati Wairere					█	█	█	
Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust	█	█						█
Ngāti Hauā Mahi Trust		█	█	█				
Ngāti Hinerangi				█		█		
Ngāti Kea Ngāti Tuara	█	█						
Ngāti Maniapoto / Te Nehenehenui Trust	█	█	█					█
Ngāti Maru					█			
Ngāti Porou Ki Hauraki	█	█	█		█			
Ngāti Pukenga Ki Manaia	█	█						
Ngāti Rangiwewehi	█	█	█	█		█	█	█
Ngāti Raukawa	█	█			█		█	█
Ngāti Rereahu / Roopuu o Rereahu	█	█	█		█	█	█	
Ngāti Tamaterā					█		█	█
Ngāti Tara Tokanui	█					█	█	█
Ngāti Tura Ngāti Te Ngakau	█	█						
Ngāti Whanaunga			█			█		
Tahaaroa Lakes Trust						█	█	
Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa	█	█	█					

<sup>2</sup> Resource Management Act 1991 <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1991/0069/latest/DLM230272.html>

<sup>3</sup> Waikato Regional Council (2017). Māori Engagement Framework: He Ritenga Mahitahi. Accessed <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/assets/WRC/Council/Policy-and-Plans/11340016-Maori-Engagement-Framework-Guide.pdf>

Tangata whenua group represented	Represented at hui by one or more representatives ( <i>green = attended</i> )							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Uenuku / Maringi								
Waikato Tainui								

Some tangata whenua groups nominated representatives who did not attend the meetings; however, all received the full suite of NTM correspondence and materials. This included:

- Ngāti Te Kohera
- Tūhourangi Tribal Authority
- Ngāti Pāoa.

Member availability was influenced by a range of factors, including capacity constraints, competing commitments, and scheduling pressures. WRC sought to accommodate these by:

- Enabling both primary and secondary representatives to support continuity.
- Not limiting the number of representatives who could attend each hui.
- Scheduling online hui during both daytime and evening.
- Accepting early or late written or virtual feedback.
- Progressively increasing remuneration.
- Meeting individually with representatives when needed.
- Offering follow-up discussions on request.
- Publishing materials on the *Engagement HQ* project page.
- Pre-circulating meeting material approximately two weeks in advance.

## 5 Ngā mātāpono waimāori me ngā tātai āhuatanga | Values and attributes

### 5.1 Background

The third NTM meeting was held Tuesday 10 October 2023 at the Long Room, Wintec, Hamilton. The following tangata whenua entities were represented by one or more representatives:

- Raukawa Charitable Trust
- Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa
- Te Nehenehenui
- Ngāti Hauā Mahi Trust
- Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust
- Ngaati Koroki Kahukura
- Ngāti Maringi - Uenuku
- Ngāti Porou Ki Hauraki
- Rereahu
- Ngāti Rangiwewehi
- Ngāti Whanaunga.

The focus of the meeting was on Māori freshwater values and attributes to give effect to the NPS-FM NOF. Representatives were also provided opportunities to be involved in chapter drafting of the Tangata Whenua Chapter of the Waikato RPS and participate in Topic Advisory Groups.

## 5.2 Values

To support the workshop on freshwater values in the NOF, WRC shared preliminary analysis highlighting that matters raised by tangata whenua ranged across potential NOF values, broader Māori principles, and matters potentially better suited to other policy tools. The following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of values:

- Representatives emphasised the importance of whakapapa (genealogy), kawa (protocols), tikanga (correct procedures), and related Māori principles in shaping Māori freshwater values and informing freshwater management and mātauranga Māori.
- Views differed on the role of WRC in identifying values. Many representatives noted that Māori freshwater values are best defined locally by iwi and hapū, are often site-specific, and reflect local tikanga.
- Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust shared an example of its own values framework, which illustrated distinctions between Māori principles and NOF values and supported discussion with WRC staff.
- Representatives highlighted the need for flexibility so that iwi and hapū can apply their own understandings of values, tikanga, and practice within their respective rohe.
- Some representatives supported exploring wai tapu (sacred waters), tauranga waka (canoe landing site), and mahinga kai (food harvesting) as possible Māori freshwater values within the NOF structure, subject to further discussion and local interpretation.
- Kaitiaki (guardians) were recognised as best placed to identify site- and catchment-specific values based on their relationships, knowledge, and responsibilities.

## 5.3 Attributes

WRC provided an overview of the purpose of attributes within the NOF, including how scientific, cultural, and mātauranga Māori measures may support the expression of Māori freshwater values. Preliminary material was shared to assist discussion, outlining different types of indicators that could support monitoring. This material was not intended to determine or limit the range of cultural indicators, and representatives were invited to contribute their own understandings, mātauranga, and monitoring approaches. Table 3 summarises the themes raised by representatives during discussion of indicators and attributes.

**Table 3: Summary of feedback on attributes**

Theme	Summary of feedback on attributes
Scientific indicators	Representatives acknowledged the value of scientific measures such as E. coli, turbidity, contaminants, flows, water clarity, habitat quality, groundwater levels, and taonga species condition particularly where these affect cultural values or practices such as mahinga kai harvesting.
Foundational concepts and principles	Representatives emphasised that whakapapa, tikanga, kawa, and mātauranga Māori should guide how cultural attributes are identified, assessed, and monitored. These concepts underpin Māori understandings of freshwater health.
Adverse effects on cultural values	Representatives noted a range of historic and ongoing pressures affecting water bodies and cultural values, including hydro schemes, land loss, wastewater discharges, contaminants, pesticides, urban stormwater, and activities such as boating. Concerns were raised that these impacts should be reflected in monitoring approaches.
Policy considerations	Representatives highlighted that cultural attributes should be grounded in tangata whenua visions, tikanga, whakapapa, and kawa. They also noted interest in partnership approaches to monitoring, shared training, science tools, and data, while acknowledging that some information may be sensitive
Mātauranga Māori indicators	Representatives discussed a wide range of potential mātauranga Māori indicators, including sensory observations (sight, smell, sound, feeling), metaphysical indicators (wairua (spirit), mauri (life force), taniwha (water spirit)), maramataka (Māori lunar calendar), taonga (treasure) species presence and condition, vegetation indicators, and local tikanga practices.

Theme	Summary of feedback on attributes
General comments	Representatives noted that different monitoring approaches may be appropriate for different iwi and places, and that flexibility is required. Some cultural indicators or knowledge may be sensitive or not suitable for broad publication.

## 5.4 Outstanding water bodies (introduction)

WRC staff introduced representatives to the topic of Outstanding Water Bodies (OWB) and explained the general concept to attendees. Feedback was sought on outstanding water bodies and possible approaches to creating a list, or cultural criteria. The following themes were raised by representatives during the introductory discussion on outstanding water bodies:

- Some representatives shared past experiences such as where foot traffic was used as a criterion for an outstanding waterbody which was not supported by the iwi.
- Representatives commented that tangata whenua have not always been included in previous decision making about OWB lists. They emphasised the importance of meaningful involvement in any revised approach.
- Some water bodies can be outstanding for a period then once things change; water bodies are removed from being outstanding.
- Queries raised around the policy tools to make water users accountable for breach of freshwater rules, and the protection of wai tapu waterbodies.

# 6 Ngā wai pounamu | Outstanding Water Bodies

## 6.1 Background

WRC hosted the fourth NTM wānanga on 30 May 2024 at the Velo Lounge, Grassroots Velodrome in Cambridge. The following tangata whenua entities were represented by one or more representatives on the day:

- Ngaati Koroki Kahukura
- Ngāti Rangiwewehi
- Ngāti Hauā Mahi Trust
- Ngāti Tangata
- Ngāti Hinerangi

WRC shared preliminary material to support discussion. This included an outline of the OWB purpose, the draft identification process, and a list of 34 candidate water bodies from the Waikato RPS. Representatives were invited to provide feedback on the draft approach and to consider how tangata whenua might contribute evidence about outstanding cultural values.

## 6.2 Legislation changes

WRC staff provided an update on recent central government freshwater reforms, including changes to stock exclusion provisions, Te Mana o te Wai application, fast-track consenting proposals, and the revised timeframe for notifying new freshwater planning instruments, which shifted from 2024 to 2028. Staff informed representatives that the project plan and programme timeline were being adjusted in light of these changes.

## 6.3 Waitī/Waimāori

WRC presented a revised concept for the draft value previously labelled 'wai tapu', proposing 'Waitī/Waimāori' as an alternative for discussion. The intent was to test whether a broader framing could better reflect the range of Māori understandings of water states. Waitī is one of the stars in Te Kāhui o Matariki, the Pleiades star cluster. A star connected to fresh water and the creatures that live in rivers, streams and lakes. Waimāori is freshwater. The rationale of this change was tested, and draft list of possible states of Waitī/Waimāori was presented to representatives:

- Waiora: Healing and life-giving water, pure and healthy
- Waiariki: Healing or curative waters, often hot springs
- Waitapu: Sacred water used for ritual and ceremony
- Waimāori: Consumable, sustaining life, and runs free and unrestrained
- Waiparu: Clouded waters
- Waipiro/pirau: Odorous waters
- Waikino: Dangerous/polluted water; mauri altered through pollution
- Waimate: Stagnant, dead, or death-inducing waters

Representatives noted that groundwater and aquifers should also be considered, and highlighted related terms such as waipuna (spring), and waiake. Others raised that te reo Māori terminology can carry risks of misinterpretation if not applied through tikanga and with appropriate guidance. Some representatives supported further exploration of this concept and encouraged WRC to continue refining it.

## 6.4 Outstanding Water Bodies

WRC shared a proposed approach to identifying outstanding water bodies for feedback from NTM representatives. This included early discussion material on the purpose of OWB provisions, the draft identification steps, draft criteria, and the Waikato RPS shortlist of 34 candidate sites. The following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of outstanding water bodies:

- Some representatives noted that terms such as 'outstanding' and 'significant' can feel arbitrary and may not align with tikanga Māori or with how iwi and hapū understand the importance of water bodies.
- One representative raised concern over the term 'cultural' values and suggested instead that 'tangata whenua' values is more accurate.
- Some representatives identified the risk that the criteria for outstanding may be changed in subsequent planning processes.
- Many representatives would feel uncomfortable being asked to assess the significance of a waterbody that they do not interact with, or affiliate to.
- Some representatives noted the challenges of applying quantitative assessment methods or scoring across different water bodies, as each iwi and hapū have their own perspectives and tikanga.
- Some representatives raised a concern with one criterion that simply counting the number of significant sites on a waterbody is arbitrary and does not reflect the differing significance of each of the sites.

- Some representatives queried if any of the 34 water bodies have had archaeological work done. Prior information about sites such as pā (forts), middens, urupā (burial places), cooking pits, and terraces may be required to assess some of the proposed criteria.
- Some representatives questioned how cultural, ecological and landscape values would be balanced, and noted that cultural values should not be treated as secondary. Some suggested cultural values should serve as a waharoa (gateway) or starting point.
- Representatives noted that tangata whenua should be meaningfully involved in any future panel or collective assessment process.
- Several representatives considered the shortlist of 34 sites incomplete and requires addition of surface water bodies such as the Mangapiko, Pūtangi, Raingaitiki, Taaharoa Lakes and aquifers such as the Kaimai Mamaku aquifer.

## 7 Ngā hua taiao me ngā tātai āhuatanga | Outcomes and Attributes

### 7.1 Background

On 14 May 2025, WRC hosted the fifth NTM wānanga at the Long Room, Wintec, Hamilton. The following tangata whenua entities were represented by one or more representatives on the day:

- Ngaati Wairere
- Rereahu
- Raukawa Charitable Trust
- Ngāti Porou ki Hauraki
- Ngāti Tamaterā
- Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Pū (Ngāti Maru)

The hui began with an update on central government freshwater reforms and discussion on how recent changes were affecting representatives. The wānanga then focused on draft values, environmental outcomes, and possible attributes for tauranga waka, mahinga kai, and waitī or waimāori. WRC shared preliminary material to support discussion and sought feedback on the draft concepts. Representatives were invited to share their own experiences, feedback, aspirations and indicators for each value.

### 7.2 Tauranga waka

The first value discussed was tauranga waka. WRC shared draft environmental outcomes for the draft value of tauranga waka for feedback and discussion. WRC sought feedback from representatives on these draft outcomes, what conditions and protections were needed for tauranga waka sites, and what other aspirations representatives had for tauranga waka values. The following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of environmental outcomes for tauranga waka:

- Representatives described tauranga waka as a distinctly Māori practice connected to a range of tikanga such as mahinga kai, movement along waterways, manaakitanga (protection and care), and customary use of wetlands and rivers.
- A good waka (canoe) site was described as having safe and accessible launching areas, suitable beaching space, and conditions that support customary use.
- Representatives emphasised the need to protect tauranga waka sites from development, loss of access, invasive species, and other disturbances.

- Some representatives noted that many tauranga waka sites have been lost or altered over time. They suggested the use of registers and accidental discovery protocols to recognise and manage these areas.
- Tauranga waka sites were noted as having strong whakapapa and iwi or hapū specific significance. Some representatives commented that district plans should be encouraged to restore access to historic sites.

WRC shared draft freshwater attributes for testing with NTM representatives as possible indicators of the state of tauranga waka values. This included potential human contact attributes such as *E. Coli*, as well as narrative bands for accessibility and condition, that could be assessed by iwi using their own mātauranga and tikanga, at their own monitoring sites. The following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of attributes and indicators for tauranga waka:

- Representatives supported partnership approaches to monitoring, including resourcing and training where tangata whenua undertake assessments.
- Some noted that knowledge of historic tauranga waka sites may be incomplete and suggested that attributes could recognise a category for lost or no-longer-accessible sites.
- Representatives emphasised the importance of local mapping and identification of tauranga waka sites by iwi and hapū.
- The potential use of an attribute relating to accessibility was discussed, with some representatives noting it may be subjective and require further refinement.
- Representatives noted that conditions considered unfavourable for waka use, such as the presence of grasses or weeds, may still hold ecological value for species such as tuna.
- Signage and local interpretation were viewed as opportunities to support recognition of tauranga waka sites.

### 7.3 Shared monitoring

WRC sought feedback on whether some monitoring activities associated with values such as mahinga kai, tauranga waka, and waitī/waimāori could be undertaken jointly. Representatives offered the following perspectives.

- There was general support for tangata whenua involvement in monitoring, provided appropriate resourcing, training, and professional development are in place.
- Some representatives noted that many iwi have limited capacity and may face challenges taking on additional monitoring responsibilities.
- Joint training and knowledge sharing between mana whenua and council staff was viewed as valuable and should be incorporated into ongoing partnership arrangements.
- Representatives emphasised the importance of data sovereignty. Tangata whenua should decide how environmental and cultural data is collected, stored, accessed, and shared, with clear protocols established.

### 7.4 Mahinga kai

The second value discussed was mahinga kai. WRC shared draft environmental outcomes for the draft value of mahinga kai for feedback and discussion. The following themes were raised by representatives during the discussion:

- Representatives emphasised the need to distinguish between water bodies ‘used for’ mahinga kai and those ‘valued for’ mahinga kai and noted that customary resources are exclusive to Māori and include a broader range of species and practices beyond kai.
- Representatives highlighted the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer and taonga tuku iho (treasure handed down) within mahinga kai.

- Some representatives encouraged council to support opportunities such as aquaculture training where these are sought by mana whenua.

WRC shared draft attributes for testing with NTM representatives, as possible indicators and attributes for the state of mahinga kai values. This included taonga species health (tuna (eel), kōura (freshwater crayfish), watercress) and mahinga kai site accessibility that could be assessed by iwi at their own mahinga kai sites. WRC also shared suggested monitoring methodologies with NTM representatives for their feedback. The following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of environmental attributes and indicators for mahinga kai:

- Tangata whenua should retain control over how data relating to mahinga kai species, practices, and sites is collected and shared. Sensitive information should only be used or published with explicit permission.
- Accessibility was seen as important to measure, and some representatives preferred the term unrestricted access rather than safe or somewhat accessible.
- Some representatives suggested adding a measure relating to condition for assessing species health.
- Representatives supported monitoring methods that avoid euthanising tuna and supported the use of visual size assessments.
- Attributes should allow flexibility for mana whenua to provide site-specific information, including seasonal factors, substrate, or maramataka.
- Monitoring for kōura should allow flexibility for alternative methods where bracken is not appropriate.
- Representatives supported the inclusion of watercress as a taonga species in attributes.

## 7.5 Waitī/Waimāori

WRC provided a recap of the proposed shift from wai tapu to waitī or waimāori and outlined possible water states to support discussion. No draft environmental outcome was provided, and representatives were invited to share aspirations and considerations for the value. The following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of environmental outcomes for waitī/waimāori:

- Representatives noted that outcomes should support water being usable for intended cultural and traditional purposes.
- Representatives expressed that mauri should be enhanced and that tikanga should be able to be exercised.
- There was interest in ensuring policy supports local setting of desired states and outcomes for different water bodies.

WRC shared a possible monitoring approach for the draft waitī/waimāori value for discussion and feedback with NTM representatives. This included various biophysical water quality attributes that measure the physical health of water, as well as a suggested mauri scale measuring the health of the water from a cultural and spiritual perspective. The draft states of waitī/waimāori that were discussed on the day is displayed in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Draft 'Bands' or states for Waiti/Waimāori discussed with NTM representatives**



The following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of attributes and monitoring for waiti/waimāori:

- Representatives supported approaches that incorporate both scientific indicators in combination with kaitiaki led visual or sensory assessments.
- Representatives noted that conventional NOF style banding may not align well with te ao Māori perspectives, and suggested approaches that use a spectrum or binary 'waimāori' or 'not waimāori' concept instead.

- Representatives noted that all water states can have mauri and cultural value and that policy should aim to recognise to the intrinsic value of water, not only the more pristine states.
- Some representatives observed that it may not be realistic or appropriate to seek to achieve the highest purity state of waitapu for all water bodies.
- Some representatives suggested adding 'taonga tuku iho' to the description of wai tapu.
- There was desire among some representatives for attributes to be flexibly and locally identified.

## 8 Ngā wai pounamu | Outstanding Water Bodies

### 8.1 Background

WRC hosted the sixth NTM meeting via two online meetings on 11 June 2025 via Microsoft Teams, and a two follow up meetings for one group who was unable to attend, and another who wished to provide feedback verbally after the initial online meeting. Across these meetings, the following tangata whenua entities were represented by one or more representatives:

- Hineuru Iwi Trust
- Ngaati Amaru
- Ngaati Wairere
- Ngāti Hinerangi
- Ngāti Rangiwewehi
- Ngāti Rereahu / Roopuu o Rereahu
- Ngāti Tara Tokanui Trust
- Ngāti Whanaunga
- Taaharoa Lakes Trust

The focus of the wānanga was on outstanding water bodies.

### 8.2 Outstanding Water Bodies

WRC presented an overview of the policy context and function of outstanding water bodies, and the draft process for identifying culturally outstanding values. Staff shared a draft shortlist of 34 candidate outstanding water bodies previously identified in the Waikato RPS, and informed representatives how tangata whenua could share, collate, and provide evidence to support the identification of culturally outstanding water bodies.

WRC invited all NTM representatives to share evidence that may support the identification of culturally outstanding values for the shortlisted water bodies. WRC pre-circulated a draft assessment criteria including prompts to support NTM representatives in gathering and collating their evidence. Some representatives provided feedback during, or after the meetings. The following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of outstanding water bodies:

- Some representatives shared concerns that terminology like 'outstanding' and 'significant' are arbitrary policy ranking tools that often conflict with tikanga Māori.
- Some representatives noted that the spatial extent of 'outstandingness' should consider the relationship to upstream and downstream areas.
- Representatives noted that many sites used to have outstanding cultural values but have been diminished due to contamination, land alienation, and development.

- Waterbodies might be outstanding that are not on the shortlist.
- Taaharoa Lakes Trust provided information on the ecological and cultural values of Lakes Taaharoa, Numiti, and Rotoroa.
- Ngāti Hineuru’s representative noted that the Rangitaiki River should be considered outstanding.
- Ngāti Hinerangi’s representative provided information on the Mangapiko Stream, from Maungatautari to Pirongia and its cultural values.
- Ngaati Amaru consider Te Puuaha o Waikato (Port Waikato) as ‘ngaa tapu’ and that ‘sacrosanct’ better describes its value.
- Ngāti Rereahu / Roopuu o Rereahu’s representative shared concerns that the shortlist didn’t include the waterbodies within their rohe.
- Ngāti Rangiwewehi’s representatives shared their interest in protecting their local aquifer of the Kaimai Mamaku area.

## 9 Te nui me te toha o ngā wai | Water quantity and allocation

### 9.1 Background

On 27 August 2025, WRC hosted the seventh NTM workshop at Wintec, Hamilton. A follow up meeting was also hosted online on 22 October 2025 for a member who was unable to attend. The following tangata whenua entities were represented by one or more representatives at the meetings:

- Ngaati Wairere
- Ngāti Rangiwewehi
- Ngāti Rereahu / Roopuu o Rereahu
- Ngāti Tamaterā
- Ngāti Tara Tokanui
- Raukawa Charitable Trust
- Tahaaroa Lakes Trust

The focus of the meeting was groundwater, water quantity and allocation, and the use of water. WRC also provided updates on Healthy Rivers Plan Change 1 and recent Government reform announcements.

### 9.2 Water quantity and allocation

WRC pre-circulated to all representatives a brief memo outlining the current approach to water quantity management, as well as a series of potential policy approaches for feedback from NTM representatives. WRC shared an overview of select policy options and discussed the options and implications with NTM representatives. The themes raised by representatives during discussion of outstanding water bodies are captured in Table 4 below.

**Table 4:** Summary of feedback themes during water quantity wānanga

Policy Option	Feedback themes
Cultural allocations of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall support for the suggested cultural activities as a starting point.</li> <li>• Many iwi/hapū lack the capacity, technical expertise, and funding needed to engage in or benefit from water allocation processes.</li> <li>• The complexity and cost of RMA water allocation systems place cultural allocation out of reach for many groups.</li> <li>• Rangatahi training and iwi workforce pathways (planning, law, science, council roles) are seen as essential long-term solutions.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Cultural allocation’ should cover a broad set of practices, including mahinga kai, restoration, marae supply, traditional uses, and kaitiaki responsibilities.</li> <li>• Some iwi, such as Ngāti Tamaterā, emphasise allocating water back to the environment first, ensuring ecosystems can sustain cultural practices.</li> <li>• Navigation and waka use remain important cultural practices requiring adequate flows.</li> <li>• Maintenance of wai tapu and rongoā (medicine) resources is a critical cultural activity needing recognition.</li> <li>• Ngāti Rangiwewehi’s example shows a ‘wai first’ joint consent model, embedding mātauranga into setting kaitiaki flows for municipal takes.</li> <li>• Ambiguity in the term ‘cultural’ could undermine the intent; iwi prefer terms like ‘wellbeing’ or ‘holistic allocation.’</li> <li>• Overallocation (e.g., Waihou, Piako) and development pressures limit iwi ability to access water, with some communities dependent on rainwater and bore supplies.</li> </ul>
Reducing the pressure on surface water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The transition may be an unfortunate reality due to high pressure on surface waters.</li> <li>• Mauri and tikanga must guide groundwater decisions, as aquifers are also part of iwi identity and whakapapa.</li> <li>• There is concern about hidden or unforeseen impacts, including long-term depletion or ecological effects.</li> <li>• The mixing of waters (groundwater/surface water) may be culturally inappropriate and must be considered carefully.</li> <li>• Tangata whenua want ready and transparent access to science and monitoring data, including real-time information.</li> <li>• There are concerns about impacts on the marine environment, especially where river flows influence estuaries and coastal ecosystems.</li> <li>• Concern was expressed for small rural bore users, who may be vulnerable to drawdown if groundwater abstraction increases.</li> <li>• Representatives reiterated concern for marine impacts.</li> </ul>
Enabling water storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership and responsibility issues must be resolved. Landowners and contractors need clear agreements about who owns or controls water storage infrastructure.</li> <li>• Water sharing may help with allocation pressures but is context-dependent and could ease water accounting, but in some areas established users may be reluctant or unwilling to relinquish their allocation.</li> <li>• Water users in some rohe may resist parting with their volumes, signalling practical limits to storage-based solutions.</li> <li>• Storage is seen as a partial tool to help rebalance the first-in, first-served system.</li> </ul>

## 10 Te whakahoki kōrero atu | Reporting back to NTM

On 19 November 2025, WRC hosted the eighth NTM meeting online via Microsoft Teams. The following tangata whenua entities were represented by one or more representatives at the meetings:

- Ngaati Amaru
- Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust
- Te Nehenehenui Trust
- Ngāti Rangiwewehi
- Raukawa Charitable Trust
- Ngāti Tamaterā
- Ngāti Tara Tokanui

The focus on this meeting was reporting back to NTM representatives on how their recommendations and feedback had shaped and influenced the development of the emerging policy direction, and an overview of key themes heard from NTM.

WRC pre-circulated a memo summarising key themes from all NTM meetings. WRC also pre-circulated a discussion document that outlined many of the emerging freshwater objectives based on past work and how NTM feedback has informed it. This meeting was primarily to close the loop with regards to how where and how WRC had actioned and implemented the feedback of participating NTM representatives. In response to the key themes, the following themes were raised by representatives during discussion of NTM feedback themes:

- Concern over proposed new standards, legislation, and reform easing the restrictions and allowing increased contaminant discharges.
- Local 'lived' experiences and knowledge are important resources for freshwater policy development.
- Provide more specific solutions for the management of water takes, particularly for large municipal takes such as Watercare abstraction near Port Waikato.
- Resource consent applicants for large volume abstraction applications should be required to engage with tangata whenua.
- Cross boundary management of farm plans and cross agency functions are becoming more complicated to interact with as iwi.
- Policy must consider downstream impacts on coastal communities, harbours, estuaries, and the coastal marine area.

## **11 Kupu whakatepe me te ara ki tua | Conclusion and next steps**

NTM representatives have provided extensive feedback on freshwater values, attributes, wai tapu, tauranga waka, mahinga kai, water quantity and allocation, and culturally outstanding water bodies. Their perspectives, experiences, and mātauranga have helped shape the development of draft policy material and have strengthened the understanding of how tikanga, whakapapa, and local context should guide freshwater planning.

The feedback summarised in this report will continue to inform the preparation of draft provisions for the Waikato RPS and Waikato Regional Plan alongside other tangata whenua engagement pathways. As the policy programme progresses, WRC will consider how best to support tangata whenua involvement in this work.

WRC acknowledges the commitment and expertise that NTM representatives have contributed throughout the programme. Their participation has strengthened the quality of discussions and improved understanding of iwi and hapū priorities for freshwater across the region. WRC will continue to update NTM representatives and other tangata whenua partners as next steps in the freshwater planning process are determined.

## 12 Ngā kupu whakamārama | Glossary of terms

Māori term	English translation
Ahi kā	Home fires: those who are here preserving one's connection to the land
Ahi mātao	Cooling fires of occupation - a term used where the customary title to land may be lost through lack of occupation over two to three generations.
Ahi teretere	Flickering fire, unstable fire - a term used when members of a whānau have not returned to their tribal lands to 'keep the fires burning' for three or four generations and their rights have almost been extinguished
Awa	River, stream, creek
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Heke kōrero	Dissemination of knowledge
Huhu	Longhorn beetle endemic to New Zealand
Ika	Fish
Īnanga	Common galaxias, juveniles are a component of the whitebait catch
Iwi	Tribe, nation, people, society
Kāeo	Freshwater mussels
Kākahi	Freshwater mussels
Kai	Eat, food, dine
Kaitiaki(tanga)	Guardian, caretaker, (guardianship)
Karakia	Incantation, prayer, chant
Kaumātua	Elders (plural), not gender specific
Kaupapa	Topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan
Kōiwi	Māori skeletal remains
Kōaro	Climbing galaxias, juveniles are a component of the whitebait catch
Kōkopu	Kokopu is a common name used for three species of fish of the genus Galaxias. They are found in the rivers, lakes and swamps of New Zealand, to which they are endemic.
Kōkōwai	Red ochre
Kōmitimiti	Joining
Kōrero	Speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation
Kōrero tuku iho	Dissemination of knowledge, oral tradition
Koroua	Male elder
Kōura	Freshwater crayfish
Kuia	Female elder
Mahi	Work, perform, practice
Mahinga kai	Food safe to harvest, customary resources available
Mana	Prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma - mana is a supernatural force in a person, place or object
Manaakitanga	Protect, take care of, support
Mana whakahaere	Governance, authority, jurisdiction, management, mandate, power
Mana whenua	Authority over land or territory
Maramataka	Māori lunar calendar
Marae	Sacred meeting place, courtyard in front of the whareniui (meeting house)
Matamata	Whitebait species
Matariki	Māori New Year and the Pleiades star cluster
Mātauranga	Māori knowledge. The body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori world view and perspectives, Māori creativity and cultural practices
Maunga	Mountain
Mauri	Life principle, life force, vital essence, special nature. The essential quality and vitality of a being or entity
Moko(puna)	Grandchild(ren), descendant(s)

<b>Māori term</b>	<b>English translation</b>
Morihana	Goldfish
Muka	Flax fibre
Pā	Fortified area
Pā tuna	Eel weirs
Paru	Dirty, muddy, soiled
Pepeha	Tribal saying, tribal motto, proverb
Pōrohe	Common smelt (fish)
Puhi	Silver belly eel
Puna	To well up, spring of water
Pūrākau	Cosmogonic stories / ideology
Pure	Ceremony or ritual to remove tapu
Pūtea	Funds, finance
Rāhui	To put in place a temporary ritual prohibition, closed season, ban, reserve - traditionally a rāhui was placed on an area, resource or stretch of water as a conservation measure or as a means of social and political control for a variety of reasons which can be grouped into three main categories: pollution by tapu, conservation and politics
Rangatahi	Youth, younger generation
Ranginui	The sky father
Repo	Wetland(s)
Rohe	Area, territory
Rongoā	Medicine, to remedy
Tāhuhu kōrero	History
Taiao	Nature, environment
Tamariki	Children
Tangata whenua	People of the land, locals, host, resident, indigenous people - people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried
Taniwha	Water spirit
Taonga	Treasure, prized possession
Taonga tuku iho	Treasure handed down, cultural property, heritage
Tapu	Sacredness
Tauranga waka	Canoe landing place
Tikanga	Correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention
Tinana	Physical wellbeing, physical body
Tohi	Blessing, baptism, dedication ceremony
Tohu	Sign, symbol
Tūāhu	Sacred place for ritual practices, consisting of an enclosure containing a mound (ahu) and marked by the erection of rods (toko) which were used for divination and other mystic rites
Tuna	Freshwater eel
Tupāpaku	Deceased person's body
Tūpuna	Ancestor(s)
Urupā	Cemetery, burial place, graveyard
Wāhi tapu	Shrine, sanctuary, sacred area/place
Waharoa	Gateway
Wai	Water
Wai ariki	Healing or curative waters
Wai māori	Freshwater, mineral water
Wai ora	Healing and life-giving water, pure and healthy
Wai puna	Spring of water
Wai tapu	Sacred waters
Waitī	One of the stars in Te Kāhui o Matariki, the Pleiades star cluster. A star connected to fresh water and the creatures that live in rivers, streams and lakes.
Wai whakarite	Cleansing
Wairua	Spirit, soul

<b>Māori term</b>	<b>English translation</b>
Wānanga	To meet and discuss, forum
Whakanoa	Removal of tapu
Whakapapa	Genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent, ancestry
Whānau (whānui)	Extended family, family group, to be born
Whenua	Land