

Water is the source of life

He puna ora, he wai ora

Overview of the Freshwater Policy Review

Mō te Arotake Kaupapahere Waimāori

Healthy, clean water. How we manage our environment so freshwater bodies are healthy and safe is the focus of Waikato Regional Council's Freshwater Policy Review. This policy review is just one of the requirements under central government's Essential Freshwater package, which is about stopping further degradation of New Zealand's fresh water and improving its quality and ecosystem health.

We will be making changes to our *Waikato Regional Policy Statement* and developing a new *Waikato Regional Plan* over the next two

years, and we want your input to help understand what you value about the rivers, streams, lakes and other freshwater bodies in your area, what your aspirations are for fresh water in the Waikato, and how you think we should get there.

It's a massive task and the timeframe to do it is tight, but by working together now we will ensure our waterways can be used and enjoyed for generations to come, making our Waikato even better.

Let's talk Essential Freshwater

Mō te Waimāori Mātuatua

In August 2020, the Government released its Essential Freshwater package which aims to stop further degradation of New Zealand's freshwater resources, improve water quality within five years, and reverse past damage to bring freshwater resources, waterways and ecosystems to a healthy state within a generation.

To help realise this aim, the package introduced a new set of requirements with the following key elements:

- National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020
- National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020
- Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020
- Resource Management (Measurement and Reporting of Water Takes) Regulations 2020
- Freshwater farm plans (FW-FPs) under Part 9A of the Resource Management Act (RMA).

It also included a new plan-making process under the RMA to make regional plans more consistent and to speed up the planning process.

What does this mean for the Waikato?

Mō te pānga ki te rohe o Waikato

The Freshwater Policy Review is the council's response to Government's Essential Freshwater package. A key element of the package is an update to the *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020* (NPS-FM), which provides direction on how we manage fresh water under the RMA.

To give effect to the NPS-FM, we'll be revising the freshwater aspects in the *Waikato Regional Policy Statement* (RPS) and *Waikato Regional Plan* – our Freshwater Policy Review. This will cover all land and waterbodies in our region, including the Waikato and Waipā river catchment chapter currently being developed through Plan Change 1 and the Lake Taupō chapter.

Revisions to the regional plan will likely affect how activities are carried out in our region, including taking and using water; discharges to land and water from diffuse sources and point sources; structures and works in wetlands; and the beds of lakes and rivers as well as land use practices.

We recognise that these revisions will affect many communities across our region. That's why, over the next two years, we'll be seeking input from tangata whenua, farmers, industry, rural professionals and the general public to identify and understand their issues, values and aspirations for fresh water.

The whakaaro (views) and kōrero (feedback) shared with us will help to inform the development of a new RPS and regional plan, which we anticipate will be notified for public submission in 2024 and operative by 2026.

Other key components

Mō ētehi pūtake anō

To achieve consistency with the way fresh water is managed across the country, the NPS-FM contains some key components which we cannot opt out of and must implement in our Freshwater Policy Review. These components are outlined below:

Te Mana o te Wai

Te Mana o te Wai refers to the vital importance of water. It imposes a hierarchy of obligations by prioritising the health and wellbeing of water first. The second priority is the health needs of people (such as drinking water) and the third is the ability of people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

This concept underpins the Government's direction on how to protect and improve our rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands. It will also inform how we develop and revise the RPS and regional plan, and how we will work with tangata whenua.

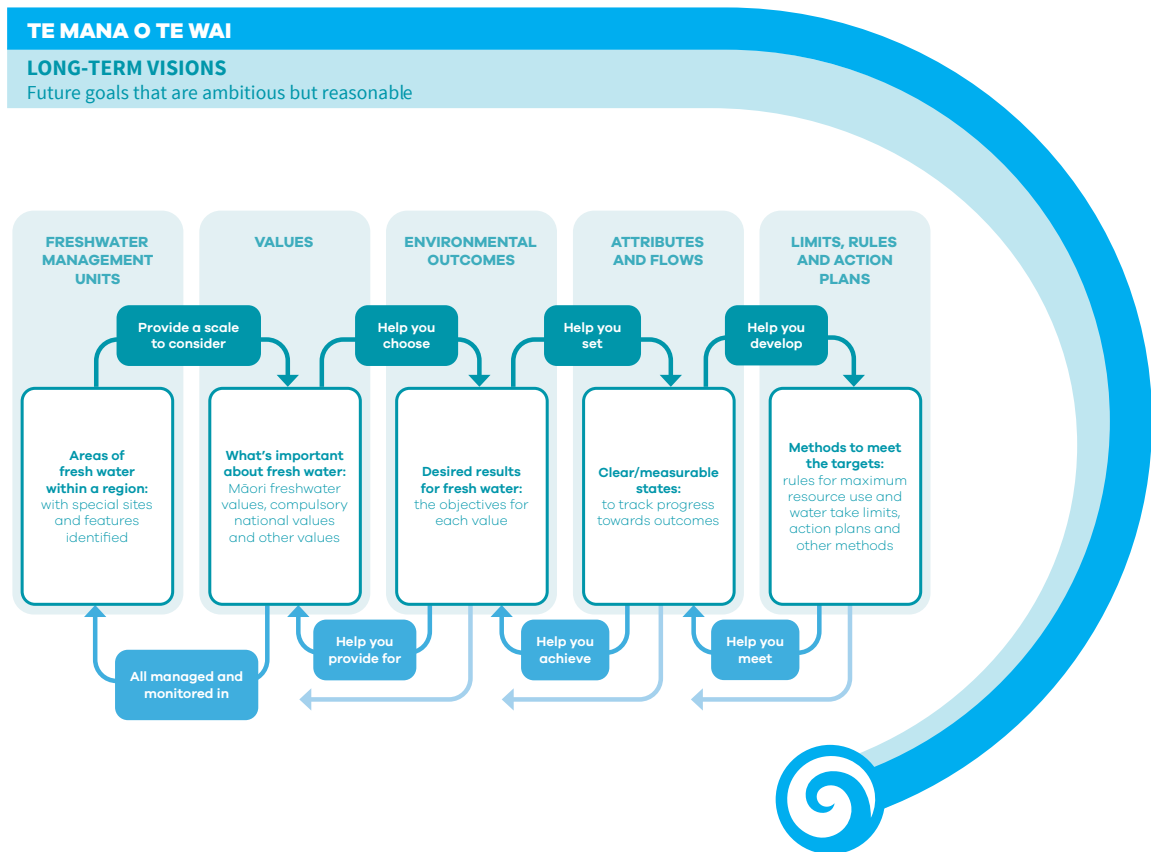
National Objectives Framework

The National Objectives Framework (NOF) is a process that connects the long-term visions, values and aspirations for fresh water held by tangata whenua and communities with potential solutions to realise these visions and values.

By following the NOF process (see figure 1), the revisions to the RPS and regional plan will consider:

1. what we would like to achieve or see for fresh water and ecosystem health in the future
2. how we will measure or know if we have achieved these objectives
3. what the rules and actions will need to be to achieve our aspirations for fresh water.

We will also incorporate mātauranga Māori and use science monitoring data and analysis to support the NOF process, and take into account the foreseeable impacts of climate change to further inform the Freshwater Policy Review.



Legislation and other statutory documents

Key legislation and statutory considerations which will inform the Freshwater Policy Review are listed below:

- Resource Management Act (1991)
- National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020
- Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato – the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River
- Treaty of Waitangi settlement legislation
- Other national direction documents, including national policy statements and national environmental standards.

We also acknowledge that the Government has commenced a comprehensive review of the resource management system. This will involve the repeal and replacement of the RMA with the Natural and Built Environments Act, the Spatial Planning Act and the Climate Change Adaptation Act. As this reform progresses, we will gain greater clarity on its implications for our Freshwater Policy Review.

Other national direction is expected to be released within the timeline of the Freshwater Policy Review and will need to be considered as far as it applies to fresh water.



Engagement with tangata whenua and communities

Mō te mahi ngātahi

We are required to work with our iwi partners and tangata whenua throughout the Freshwater Policy Review. There are clear directions set out in iwi environmental management plans and in Treaty of Waitangi settlement agreements, including primary direction-setting document *Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato – The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River*.

An important part of implementing the NPS-FM is receiving feedback from communities on the values they place on fresh water, and improvements they would like to see over time. We will use this feedback to prepare the revisions to the RPS and regional plan.

Our staff will continue to work with Waikato farmers, industry and rural professionals to understand the issues and seek practical ways forward, including solutions that work for our farming systems here in our rohe.

Freshwater Policy Review timeline

Mō te ara tutuki

Engagement with tangata whenua and communities for the Freshwater Policy Review will take place over 2022 and 2024.

We are legislated to notify all ‘freshwater planning instruments’ that give effect to the NPS-FM by 31 December 2024. This includes revisions to the RPS and regional plan. The process for a ‘freshwater planning instrument’ starts when it’s publicly notified for submissions, and must be completed within two years.

Where can I find more information? | Mō te puna kōrero

Check out waikatoregion.govt.nz/freshwater-policy-review to find:

- information sheets breaking down the Freshwater Policy Review
- how to share your views
- a summary of key milestones
- update on our progress.

You can also email us at policy@waikatoregion.govt.nz or call 0800 800 401 to speak to a member of our Freshwater Policy Review team.

