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Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee  
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## **Review of Consented Takes and Water Resources in Wairarapa**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee of a recent review of consented takes and water resources in the Wairarapa and to seek endorsement and approval for the implementation of two new initiatives to ensure the sustainable management of water resources in the Wairarapa.

### **2. Background**

Water resources in the Wairarapa are currently managed by groundwater zones and surface water management zones.

2.1 For groundwater zones, estimated annual safe yields were determined for aquifers in each groundwater zone when the Regional Freshwater Plan was being developed in the mid 1990's. These safe yields provide guidance for groundwater allocation as they are a specific policy in the Regional Freshwater Plan.

2.2 Surface water management zones have been determined since the Regional Freshwater Plan was developed. These zones were drawn up based on water resource characteristics. In many cases the zones may incorporate a number of catchments. Guidance for the management of surface water resources in terms of consented takes or allocations and minimum flows is achieved through water allocation plans. Key provisions of such plans are reflected as specific policy in the Regional Freshwater Plan. Currently the Regional Freshwater Plan provides guidance for water allocation in some catchments within the surface water management zones. However there are many gaps for guidance on water allocation in various surface water management zones.

### **3. Why Complete a Review?**

There were two principal reasons for completing a review of consented takes and groundwater resources:

#### **1. The considerable development and use of water resources in the past few years.**

There has been a significant increase in the number and size of consents issued for groundwater and surface water takes in the past five years. As a consequence a number of groundwater zones/aquifers and catchments have come under increasing pressure. A review of consented takes and water resources was considered essential in order that a proactive response can be made to this demand for water resources.

#### **2. Assess the progress and relevance of Method 8.5.5 of the Regional Freshwater Plan.**

Method 8.5.5 of the Regional Freshwater Plan provides guidance on which catchments require more information to establish surface water allocation mechanisms that can be incorporated as policy into the Plan. Water allocation plans have been completed in three surface water management zones in the past two years and these are now in the process of being included as policy in the Regional Freshwater Plan. The list of catchments provided in Method 8.5.5 was developed over five years ago. Since that time pressures on water resources in those catchments has changed and a review of priority catchments for managing surface water was considered appropriate.

### **4. How the Review was Undertaken**

The review looked at variety of factors including:

- Relative level of groundwater and surface water allocation against appropriate thresholds i.e. aquifer safe yields and statistical low flows.
- Methods and policies in the Regional Freshwater Plan.
- Information provided through state of the environment monitoring.

A full copy of the review is available on request.

### **5. Review Outcomes - Surface Water Resources**

5.1 New priority ratings for collecting information and determining appropriate surface water allocation mechanisms in various catchments and surface water management zones have been developed (refer to Attachment). The priority rating will be used as a guide for surface water resource management.

5.2 A moratorium on resource consent applications is recommended for a number of catchments and surface water management zones (refer to Attachment 2). This recommendation is based on the following considerations:

- The level of allocation in each particular zone or catchment.
- The level of stress on instream habitat based on state of the environment monitoring.
- The level of policy guidance in the Regional Freshwater Plan in how particular watercourses should be managed.

The moratorium is a short term method to avoid over allocation of surface water resources whilst robust water allocation mechanisms are developed. The moratorium will apply to any new resource consent applications and variation applications for increased takes for existing consents from the date the moratorium is approved.

## 6. Review Outcomes - Groundwater Resources

A moratorium is recommended for the Parkvale groundwater zone (aquifers 2 and 3) and the Martinborough Eastern Terraces groundwater zone (refer to Attachment 3).

6.1 In the case of the **Martinborough Eastern Terraces** groundwater zone, the aquifer is considered to be over allocated. This has come about as the Regional Freshwater Plan has defined only one zone for the Martinborough Terraces area. A recent report was commissioned by the Council as a result of declining groundwater levels. The report recommends that the Martinborough Terraces groundwater zone be divided into two groundwater zones with revised safe yield estimates. The revised safe yield estimate for the Martinborough Eastern Terraces groundwater zone is less than the amount of water allocated through resource consents, hence a moratorium on resource consent applications for this zone is considered essential.

6.2 In the case of the **Parkvale groundwater zone**, aquifers 2 and 3 are not yet fully allocated according to the estimated safe yield in the Regional Freshwater Plan. However, there is a concern about a decline in groundwater levels experienced in one of the Council's monitoring bores. A report has been commissioned for this financial year that will reassess safe yield estimates for these aquifers. In the meantime a precautionary approach should be taken and hence a moratorium on resource consent applications is recommended.

6.3 The review of consented takes in relation to groundwater resources highlights the need for accurate measurement of large water takes, and water taken under resource consents in stressed groundwater zones. Hence it is recommended that water meters be required for existing consent holders who take groundwater in the following groundwater zones:

- Huangarua groundwater zone (aquifer 2 and 3).
- Lower Valley groundwater zone (Kahutara sub aquifer).
- Martinborough Eastern Terraces groundwater zone.
- Parkvale groundwater zone (aquifers 2 and 3).

- 6.4 In addition to the takes in the above groundwater zone, all groundwater takes over 40 litres/sec (averaged over a 24 hour period) will be required to be monitored. The current Resource Management Charging Policy requires annual inspections of takes greater than 40 litres/sec. Metering those takes is seen as the best way to monitor the takes on an annual basis.
- 6.5 The determination of compulsory water metering in the above circumstances was based on assessing the following factors:
- The level of allocation in a particular groundwater zone/aquifer.
  - Observation of any declining groundwater levels trends.
  - Any uncertainties about the sustainability of the groundwater resource.
- 6.6 Water meters will be required to be in place prior to the commencement of the 2002/2003 irrigation season. This allows consent holders approximately 10 months to make appropriate arrangements. The requirement for installing water meters is provided for in conditions on all existing consents.

## 7. Communications

The following communications are planned:

1. Copies of the review will be distributed to key stakeholders including the Department of Conservation, Wellington Fish & Game Council, Federated Farmers, and local iwi authorities.
2. All consent holders required to have water metering in place will be notified during December 2001.
3. Public awareness of the moratoriums on stressed groundwater zones/aquifer and surface water management zones will be increased through interaction with appropriate media.

## 8. Recommendations

1. *That the report be received.*
2. *That the Committee approve that a moratorium be placed on the consenting of new or increased groundwater takes in the following groundwater zones and surface water management zones:*

- *Mangatarere surface water management zone*
  - *Makoura Stream catchment (in Masterton Streams surface water management zone)*
  - *Otakura surface water management zone*
  - *Papawai surface water management zone*
  - *Parkvale surface water management zone*
  - *Donalds Creek and Dock Creek catchments (in Tauherenikau surface water management zone)*
  - *Taueru surface water management zone*
  - *Parkvale groundwater zone (aquifers 2 and 3)*
  - *Martinborough Eastern Terraces groundwater zone*
3. *That the Committee endorse the decision to require water metering to be in place by the 2002/2003 irrigation season in the following groundwater zones:*
- *Huangaaru groundwater zone (aquifer 2 and 3).*
  - *Lower Valley groundwater zone (Kahutara sub aquifer).*
  - *Martinborough Eastern Terraces groundwater zone.*
  - *Parkvale groundwater zone (aquifers 2 and 3).*
4. *That the Committee endorse the decision to require water metering to be in place by the 2002/2003 irrigation season for all large takes greater than 40 litres per second (averaged over a 24 hour period).*

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