

Permitted activities

The committee has already discussed permitted activities for taking and using water. The Proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region includes a general permitted activity rule for water takes and a permitted activity rule for farm dairy water takes at current amounts. In addition, the RMA allows water to be taken for an individual's reasonable needs and the reasonable needs of an individual's animals for drinking water, provided the taking and use does not have an adverse effect on the environment (most stock water is from groundwater). It's appropriate for the Committee to review these rules and decide on water takes in the Whaitua that should be permitted.

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management requires both permitted and consented water takes to be subject to limits and to be accounted for. Current permitted rules are not accounted for within allocation limits. Nor do current rules require permitted water takes to cease or reduce at low flows, as required for consented activities.

The general permitted activity rule allowing 20m³ of water per day to be taken without a resource consent on a property greater than 20ha, and 10m³ per day to be taken on a property of less than 20ha is now far too permissive. Greater Wellington has no information on how much water is being taken under the rule or what it is being used for. Such a rule is inconsistent with the NPS-FM requirements for allocation limits or accounting for water use. Water taken for non-specific uses could provide for a nominal amount as a permitted activity (e.g. 5m³ per day).

The quantities of water taken in the Ruamahanga River catchment for each of the current permitted activities are compared with current allocation limits in the table below.

Management unit (includes directly connected groundwater)	Management sub-unit (includes directly connected groundwater)	Core allocation (consented) (L/s)	Permitted activities		
			General permitted activity rule	Stock and domestic use (L/s)	Existing farm dairies for wash down (L/s)
Ruamāhanga River	Kopuaranga River	180	No information available	17	6.5
	Waipoua River	145		10.5	
	Waingawa River	1,197		0.5	
	Upper Ruamāhanga	1,200		15	
	Parkvale Stream	151		10.5	18
	Booths Creek	109		19.5	
	Mangatarere	473		1.5	
	Waiohine River	1,590		1.5	
	Papawai Stream	340		48.5	4.5
	Middle Ruamāhanga River	1,240		15.4	
	Huangularua River	110		22.2	
	Lower Ruamāhanga River	2,447			
Lake Wairarapa,	Otukura Stream	140	9.9	12	
	Tauherenikau River	410	0.5		

Questions

What permitted activity rules for taking and using water should apply in the Ruamahanga catchment?

Is any general permitted activity warranted for the take and use of water? If, so how much?

How should permitted activities be treated at minimum flows (when other water takes are required to cease or reduce takes)?

Should water for stock and domestic use be restricted in fully allocated catchments?

Is taking water for farm dairy washdown an appropriate permitted activity?