

Title: National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014

Purpose: To assist the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee to understand the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014 (changes to the 2011 version)

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1. Introduction

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) supports improved freshwater management in New Zealand. It directs regional councils to establish freshwater objectives and set limits for fresh water in their regional plans.

As of 1 August 2014, the NPS-FM 2011 has been replaced by the NPS-FM 2014.

The NPS-FM 2014 provides additional direction to regional councils on how to safeguard the life-supporting capacity of fresh water, and to maintain and improve overall water quality.

Two compulsory national values for freshwater (ecosystem health and human health for recreation) must be managed at or above national bottom lines. The requirement to maintain or improve the overall water quality of the region is unchanged.

2. Key Additions to the NPS-FM

The NPS-FM 2014 expresses the national significance of fresh water and Te Mana o te Wai (the mana of water) thus recognising there are a range of community and tangata whenua values associated with fresh water.

The NPS-FM lends support to Greater Wellington Regional Council's (GWRC) use of the whaitua committee process to implement a collaborative, catchment-scale approach to managing water for the values that communities hold for water.

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee should be aware of the following two key additions that the NPS-FM requires of regional councils:

- the National Objectives Framework (NOF) must be used to support and guide the setting of freshwater objectives in regional plans. Freshwater objectives cannot be set in regional plans at levels below national bottom lines specified in the framework
- a list of national values is provided (see Appendix 1 in the NPS-FM) to assist the setting of freshwater objectives within the NOF

The deadline for regional councils to implement the NPS-FM has been moved forward five years to 2025. This is the date by which objectives and methods and timeframes selected to meet those objectives need to be set in the regional plan.

The new NPS-FM has also introduced a requirement for additional monitoring and establishment of a system to account for all water taken out of rivers, lakes and groundwater, and the sources and amounts of contaminants going into them.

3. More detail on the NOF

The purpose of the NOF is to provide a nationally consistent approach to establishing freshwater objectives. As noted in the section above, the NOF must be used to support and guide the setting of freshwater objectives in regional plans. In addition, the water quality of rivers and lakes must be improved where the water quality is less than the national bottom lines for the two national compulsory values of ecosystem health and human health as affected by secondary contact with fresh water.

The **first step** required by the NOF is the identification of freshwater management units and the identification of what values the freshwater management units are to be managed for. A fresh water management unit is simply a spatial unit within the whaitua to which fresh water objective or a limit is attached. A freshwater management unit might be a water body, multiple water bodies or any part of a water body. The spatial scale must be fit for purpose, including what values are to be managed and monitored.

The **second step** is to determine what values the freshwater management units are to be managed for. As community values for freshwater also help determine the appropriate boundaries of freshwater management units, step one and step two will be a back and forth process. As mentioned previously, the values identified must include the two compulsory values of ecosystem health and human health for recreation. The discussion of values must also consider eleven other national values listed in **Appendix 1** of the NPS-FM (natural form and character, mahinga kai – kai are safe to harvest and eat, mahinga kai – kei te ora te mauri (the mauri of the place is intact), fishing, irrigation and food production, animal drinking water, wai tapu, water supply, commercial and industrial use, hydro-electric power generation, transport and tauranga waka). **Other values** appropriate to local and regional circumstances may also be considered.

The **third step** is to determine what attributes (see **Appendix 2** of the NPS-FM) are to be used to set objectives and the **fourth step** is to decide at what level these attributes should be maintained at or improved to, and over what timeframes. For the values of ecosystem health and human health for recreation objectives must be set for those in Appendix 2 and at a level above the national bottom lines and in a way that the overall water quality is maintained and improved. Objectives for other attributes that the committee sees fit may also be set, for example; macroinvertebrate index, water clarity or suspended sediment concentration.

For example, the compulsory value of ecosystem health in lakes an objective must be set for concentrations of phytoplankton, total nitrogen and total phosphorus, as shown in Appendix 2 of the NPS-FM. The objective must be set at a level that is above the bottom line, and in a way that the overall water quality is maintain or improved. The committee can determine that an improvement in water quality is required, the amount of improvement and the timeframes over which the improvement is likely to occur.

Similarly, an objective for the compulsory value of human health (contact recreation) must be set for the number of the indicator bacterium, *E. coli*, in a volume of water (Appendix 2 of the

NPS-FM). Where the committee determines that waterbodies should be suitable for swimming the objective must be set above the bottom line (for *E. coli*) for swimming. The committee may determine that an objective may be set in some waterbodies below the swimming level, but not below the bottom line for secondary contact. However, the requirement to maintain and improve water quality must also be met.

4. For more information

Ministry for the Environment's National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014
<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/central/nps/freshwater-management.html>

MfE's Answers to Frequently asked questions
<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/central/nps/freshwater-management-questions-answers.html>

Website with information on the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee
<http://www.gw.govt.nz/ruamahanga-whaitua-committee/>

Implementing the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2011. June 2014
<http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Plans--Publications/Regional-Plan-Review/Whaitua/REPORT-Implementing-the-National-Policy-Statement-for-Freshwater-Management-2011-16-June-2014.pdf>

The roles of regional and district council. April 2014 <http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Plans--Publications/Regional-Plan-Review/Whaitua/The-Roles-of-Regional-and-District-Councils.pdf>

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