

Draft Regional Targets for the Horizons Region

Introduction

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (as amended in August 2017) directs all regional councils to set draft regional targets to improve the quality of fresh water, so they are suitable for primary contact more often. This information sheet has been prepared to meet this requirement. “Primary contact” includes swimming, and means people’s contact with fresh water that involves immersion in the water. Being suitable for primary contact more often includes improvements in water quality from one state to another (for example, orange to yellow, yellow to green, or green to blue).

All regional councils have worked together to use the best information available, to identify:

- The improvements that will be made to water quality in rivers and lakes, in the Horizons Region, under programmes that are planned or underway
- When the anticipated water quality improvements will be achieved
- The likely costs of all interventions, and where these costs will fall

A report on these theoretical improvements and costs, presented region by region, is available [here](#). The assumptions and limitations of the modelling approaches taken are described in the report.

Regional context and focus

The overall swimmable state of the Horizons Region’s rivers is 43 percent swimmable (that is, 43 percent of rivers that are fourth order, or larger are in the blue, green or yellow category in terms of *E. coli*). For lakes with perimeters greater than 1500 metres, 55 percent are in the blue, green or yellow category in terms of cyanobacteria based on the status quo.

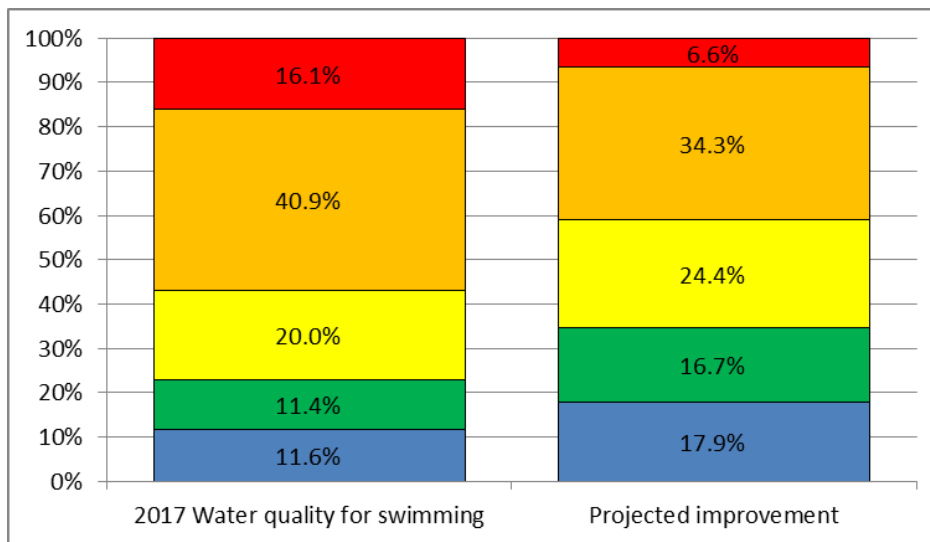
The One Plan already contains swimmability targets. Our existing policy is that the suitability our rivers and lakes for contact recreation be maintained or enhanced. There are methodological differences in how “swimmability” is measured, and the One Plan’s targets are not tied to specific dates – but they do apply to *all* rivers and lakes across the Region.

We also monitor 80 swim spots for bacteria (such as *E. Coli* and Cyanobacteria for lakes and rivers) each summer, from 1 November until 30 April. The swim spot results help us identify areas that need some extra work and where improvements are happening. Water quality trends across the Region for January 2007 to December 2016 show an improvement in *E. coli* trends at 17 percent of sites (for which there was ten years of data). No site showed a deteriorating trend. The Manawatu River, which is often thrust into negative limelight, is showing a 19 percent improvement for *E. coli*. Horizons was also recently awarded with a New Zealand River Award for the Whangaehu River due to improving *E. coli* trends. For more information on swim spots, [click here](#).

Measures like supporting farm plans, targeting action on highly erodible land, upgrading point source discharges, reducing the impacts of intensive land use, and fencing and planting stream margins, can effectively improve water quality. Horizons’ Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI), jointly funded by central government, ratepayers and landowners, aims to reduce erosion, improve water quality, and increase the resilience of the regional economy. This initiative includes tree planting and ‘retiring’ erosion prone land by fencing it off and letting it revert to shrub or native forest.

Draft regional targets

The primary contact draft regional targets for the Horizons Region, based on the modelling of programmes underway, are for 60 percent of rivers and lakes to be swimmable by 2030. It has not been possible to model, on a regional scale, the impact of programmes already underway to improve the swimmability of our lakes. For rivers, this target is an improvement of 14 percent from the current state, and reflects an annual commitment of around \$12.6 million by the community.



Projected improvement of water quality for swimming in Manawatū-Whanganui rivers

Regional process from here

Freshwater management is a high priority for our communities, central government, and Horizons Regional Council. We are seeing improvement in water quality in our Region – and the programmes we have in place will continue to deliver improvements, as these swimmability projections show.

Improving water quality is a result of the collective efforts of many parties, both voluntarily and through regulation. We believe that continued improvement is to be achieved by working together with local communities, in each of our catchments, to develop a broad-based action plan.

Our next phase of work will focus on the outcomes we all want, the changes that will be needed, and actions we can take to achieve both. It won't be focused on regulation – however will, in time, inform amendments to the One Plan and address the requirements of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM).

We need broad-based plans that communities and stakeholders stand behind. And we need to be able to adjust our plans as we learn more about our freshwater systems and which interventions work best. That means working together.

Work is underway to plan for Our Freshwater Future. The first of the catchment processes will start in the second half of 2018. To find out more, [click here](#).