

# PLAN CHANGE 2

## EXISTING INTENSIVE FARMING LAND USES



### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### What is the One Plan?

Horizons Regional Council's One Plan combines the Regional Policy Statement, Regional Plan and Coastal Plan. The One Plan defines how the natural and physical resources of the Region, including fresh water, air, productive land and natural ecosystems, will be cared for and managed by the Regional Council in partnership with Territorial Authorities and the community. The objective of the One Plan is to ensure that social well-being and economic productivity can be achieved, while keeping the environment in good health.

#### Why does intensive farming need a consent under the One Plan?

Intensive land uses defined in the One Plan are dairy farming, commercial vegetable production, cropping and intensive sheep and beef farming. Intensive farming requires a high level of inputs (e.g. fertiliser), and generate high levels of outputs (e.g. effluent, nutrient surplus). When excess nutrients make their way into surface and ground water they can boost algal growth and affect the water quality and life supporting capacity of our regional freshwater resources and our aquatic environments. Requiring intensive land users to apply for a consent allows better management of these nutrients in our target catchments, and improvement of freshwater quality over time.

#### How does a consent for intensive farming land use protect the environment?

The One Plan nutrient management rules require that land users manage their operations to mitigate the amount of nutrients, sediment and pathogens that get into fresh water from intensive land use activities. Over time, the reduction in nutrients and sediment runoff and pathogens entering our waterways will help improve freshwater quality, and provide long term protection against further degradation.

#### Why does the One Plan rule framework need to change?

The nutrient management framework stalled at implementation due to the conflict between provisions in the One Plan, leaving a number of land users with no viable option to be considered for a consent. This needed to be addressed. The rule framework clarifies and amends the provisions so that:

- a) The cumulative nitrogen leaching maximums (Table 14.2) in the One Plan are aligned to reflect updates to the Overseer software that was used to calculate the values in the table.
- b) A pathway is provided for land users to apply for consent if they do not meet the values in the cumulative nitrogen leaching maximums (Table 14.2) in the One Plan.

#### How can N leaching increase under agricultural land and not in the river?

The increase in the values in the cumulative nitrogen leaching maximum (Table 14.2) reflects the ability of Overseer to more accurately model the nitrogen loss at the root zone. This increase in accuracy has increased the table values, and because Horizons monitor water quality (including nutrient loads) we have the evidence to show that the N loss to the river systems remains the same. Therefore, if the Overseer model predicts more nitrogen is measured beyond the root zone, and measurements show the loss to the river is the same, the resulting difference is explained through the amount converted to gas being more than originally estimated. For more information, see the [PPC2 infographic](#) on Horizons' website [www.horizons.govt.nz](http://www.horizons.govt.nz).

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### Why are One Plan policies being changed?

The policies were directive, and did not allow for land users who were unable to meet the cumulative nitrogen leaching maximum (Table 14.2). That was not the intent of the Plan – as is reflected in the objectives and rule framework. Therefore, the policies needed to be amended and clarified. Without these amendments, intensive land users would continue to experience significant obstacles in being considered for a consent, and therefore delaying environmental improvements – particularly to freshwater quality.

### Why is Horizons imposing more regulation on the sector?

No new regulation is being imposed. This regulation has applied to existing farms in target catchments since 2010 for dairy farming and 2013 for commercial vegetable growing, cropping, and intensive sheep and beef farming. This change is about trying to make the regulation workable and practical so that land users can operate with confidence, and we can achieve environmental improvement in our region.

### Who does this affect?

This plan change affects existing intensive land users (dairy, intensive sheep and beef, commercial vegetable growing, cropping) and the receiving environment in target catchments.

Horizons will continue to monitor consents that have already been granted under the intensive land use rules, however the plan change does not in any way impact on these consents.

### What is the process for changing the One Plan?

Horizons will follow the standard plan change process set out in the Resource Management Act. The plan change will be publicly notified and includes a consultation process. Anyone with an interest can participate in by making a submission. There will be a formal hearing of submissions and evidence by a panel of commissioners, who will make a decision on what the changes should be. Anyone who made a submission will then have the right to appeal that decision to the Environment Court. All of the steps including how to make a submission and timings of the plan change process will be detailed on Horizons' website [www.horizons.govt.nz](http://www.horizons.govt.nz).

### How can people have a say?

Anyone who wishes to make their views known and taken into account needs to make a submission. This should indicate whether they support or oppose all or some aspects of the plan change, providing information to support their views. Submitters will then have an opportunity to present their views or evidence to the panel of commissioners at a hearing.

### Where can people go for help and advice?

Horizons will be appointing a 'Friend of the Submitter' – an independent planner whose only role is to assist anyone who wishes to understand the plan change process and how they can get involved. There are also some useful guides on how to get involved on the Ministry for the Environment website [www.mfe.govt.nz](http://www.mfe.govt.nz).

