

MEDIA RELEASE

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Short and long-term One Plan change pathways to be investigated

At their Strategy and Policy committee meeting yesterday Horizons Regional Councillors moved a recommendation that Council staff begin a programme of both short and longer term One Plan changes to address nutrient management consenting issues while maintaining freshwater management progress.

Horizons Regional Council chair Bruce Gordon says that in the short-term Council is looking for smaller, less complex plan change options that will allow it to continue the process of consenting farms for intensive land uses.

“This process seeks to reduce nutrient loads entering waterways. Whether these short-term options are viable will be the subject of intense investigation in the coming months,” says Mr Gordon.

“In the longer term, Council has directed officers to start the process of catchment by catchment studies to ensure that Council’s approach in the One Plan is consistent with the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM).

“While a recent Ministry for the Environment report has highlighted that Horizons has given effect to most of the NPS-FM there is still work to do on aligning objectives, limit settings and interventions.

“Managing freshwater is a complex environmental, cultural, social and economic challenge and the answers to continued improvement lie in working across all of these fields.

“Although 95 per cent of the One Plan has been successfully implemented, rules and policies for intensive agriculture have been particularly challenging.

“However, it is important to note that good progress has been made around the Region in improving water quality, and Council is committed to continuing to build on these successes.”

The Horizons Region has already seen significant progress in improving water quality, with largely positive or stable trends across its catchments. Water quality trends from January 2006 to December 2015 indicate that 58 per cent of 36 monitored sites for total oxidised nitrogen (TON) show improvement and none are in decline.

These monitored sites have recently been increased to over 70, which will allow for even more in-depth data to help inform future decision making and where Horizons can best target their work programmes.

“Like last summer, we are also monitoring over 80 swim spot sites,” says Mr Gordon.

“This summer monitoring programme not only helps our communities to make informed decisions about where and when to swim, but also informs our science and freshwater programmes.

“Through regulatory and non-regulatory means, our Council is committed to improving freshwater for everybody in our Region to enjoy.”

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