

Notes for track changes. Recommendations made by the Administration Officer's Report are shown in [Blue](#). Words recommended to be added are shown in underline, words recommended to be removed are shown in ~~strike through~~.

Terms defined within the plan glossary are *Italicised* and marked with a ' * ' symbol. Terms defined in the resource management Act 1991 are *Italicised* and marked with a ' ^ ' symbol.

1 Setting the Scene

1.1 Scope and Introduction

The challenge for the [Manawatu-Wanganui](#) Region is to strike the ideal balance between using natural resources for economic and social well-being, while keeping the *environment*[^] in good health. [Horizons The](#) Regional Council's role is to find a satisfactory way to make this seemingly conflicting challenge a reality for the community.

The blueprint for this work is the One Plan. It has a lifespan of 10 years. This is an insignificant timeframe in the natural world but in this short period tangible progress must be made to meet this challenge.

This Plan is a full-scale review of the first set of resource management plans for the Region. Progress under these plans was slow because [Horizons](#) tried to spread its resources over all the many issues identified during development of the plans.

[Horizons' The Regional Council's](#) approach in this Plan is to focus its resources on making significant progress on the four biggest environmental issues identified for the Region. That does not mean the remaining issues identified in this Plan are unimportant, simply that they are lower priority work for the 10-year life of this Plan.

To make the One Plan compact and easy to use we have tried to keep background and explanatory information to a minimum. Further information and explanations can be found in the State of the Environment Reports published by [Horizons the](#) Regional Council and in the technical reports and Consideration of Alternatives, Benefits and Costs (s32 report) which accompany the One Plan.

1.2 What is the One Plan?

The One Plan has been prepared by [Horizons the](#) Regional Council in accordance with ~~the Regional Council's~~ it's functions under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).

The One Plan can be described as a "one-stop-shop" regional planning document that defines how the *natural and physical resources*[^] of the [Manawatu-Wanganui](#) Region (including fresh air, clean *water*[^], productive *land*[^] and natural ecosystems) will be cared for and managed by ~~Horizons-the~~ Regional Council in partnership with ~~Territorial A~~uthorities[^] and the community.

The One Plan combines the requirements for preparation of a *Regional Policy Statement*[^] and a *Regional Plan*[^]. Under the RMA, preparation of a *Regional Policy Statement*[^] is mandatory, whilst the preparation of a *Regional Plan*[^] is discretionary (except for a *Regional Coastal Plan*[^]).

The Plan has effect over the entire [Manawatu-Wanganui](#) Region (although some objectives, policies and *rules*[^] apply only in specific parts of the Region).

To distinguish the different planning functions encompassed by the One Plan, the Plan is split into two main parts.

Part I is the *Regional Policy Statement*[^] section of the One Plan. It sets out the regionally significant resource management issues (identified through a process that drew on both community and technical information), and outlines the objectives, policies and methods that will be used to address these issues.

Part II is the *Regional Plan*[^] section of the One Plan. It specifies the controls on *natural and physical resource*[^] use (that is, policies and *regional rules*[^]). These controls cover both *permitted activities*[^] (which allow people to use and develop resources without the need for *resource consents*[^]) and the application for and issuing of *resource consents*[^]. Chapter 17 (Activities in the *Coastal Marine Area*[^]) is the *Regional Coastal Plan*[^], as required by [Section 64](#) of the [Resource Management Act 1991](#) (RMA).

1.3 Our Region's Challenges – the 'Big Four'

The focus of the One Plan is four keystone environmental issues: surface *water*[^] quality degradation, increasing *water*[^] demand, unsustainable hill country *land*[^] use and threatened native biodiversity. These issues were identified during public consultation and confirmed by [Horizons' the Regional Council's](#) science team research.

By focusing on these Big Four issues, substantial progress can be made at an affordable level of expenditure for the Region. The Big Four have significant interconnection and it is expected that work on one issue will also benefit progress on one or more of the other issues.

Issue 1: Surface *Water*[^] Quality Degradation

The Problem:

Run-off of nutrients, sediment and bacteria from farms is now the single largest threat to *water*[^] quality in the Region. In some *waterways/bodies*[^] it is risky to swim or gather food, and *aquatic life*[^] is being damaged.

An Example: The Manawatu River

In the Manawatu River nutrient enrichment is one of the most critical problems. Recent research found that on an annual basis, more than 80% of the nitrogen and 50% of the dissolved reactive phosphorous found in the Manawatu River at Hopelands is coming from run-off from agricultural land. This pattern is repeated in many other catchments.

Excessive nutrients cause nuisance algae growth on the river_{bed}, particularly during summertime low flows.

Proposed Approach:

Set *water*[^] quality standards for ecosystem, recreational, cultural and water-use values identified for catchment *water management zones*^{*}. Identify *water management zones*^{*} most affected by nutrient enrichment and/or bacterial contamination. Use a mixture of persuasion, advice and *rules*[^] to manage agricultural run-off in these *water management zones*^{*}.

Look For:

Objectives, policies and methods that address this keystone issue in Chapter 6 and *rules*[^] in Chapter 13.

Issue 2: Increasing *Water* Demand

The Problem:

The amount of *water* used from ground and surface *water* resources increases each year. At certain times of the year *public water supply* and irrigation demand exceed what some *waterways/bodies* in the Region can supply.

An Example: The Upper Manawatu River

Across the Region, total consented abstraction volumes have more than doubled since 1997 (Horizons Regional Council, 2005, SOE Report). In the upper Manawatu River and its tributaries, the current demand for *water* is close to three times that of 1997. Most of this increased demand is for agricultural irrigation which, in 2005, was four times the 1997 levels and took up over 80% of the *water* allocated.

Proposed Approach:

Horizons has set minimum flows and defined core allocation volumes for water management zones under pressure from surface takes. These will be used to manage and allocate *water*. [Horizons The Regional Council](#) is also working with *water* users to encourage *water*-use efficiency and accurately define abstraction rates using telemetered *water* meters.

Look For:

Objectives, policies and methods that address this keystone issue in Chapter 6 and *rules* in Chapter 15.

Issue 3: Unsustainable Hill Country *Land* Use

The Problem:

Unsustainable pasture-based farming practices in ~~our~~ the Region's fragile hill country damage the soil and accelerate erosion and muddy some *waterways/bodies*, increasing *river* siltation downstream and reducing the protection level of flood control schemes.

An Example: February 2004 Storm

The Region has 300,000 hectares of hillcountry *land* at risk of moderate to severe erosion. In the severe storm events of February 2004, huge quantities of soil poured off the hills of the middle catchments west of the Ruahine Ranges and into some *waterways/bodies* such as the Whanganui, Rangitikei, Oroua and Pohangina ~~R~~Rivers. Many areas of the Region were badly affected, with severe hillside scarring and valley in-filling often reported in national media coverage.

Proposed Approach:

Implementation of a Sustainable Land Use Initiative on [highly erodible hillcountry land that is vulnerable to erosion](#)¹ within the Region in combination with *rules* where appropriate. The initiative is underpinned by the development of whole farm business plans. These voluntary plans provide paddock-scale best *land* management advice while optimising economic return to the landowner. The first whole farm business plan was piloted on a farm in the Pohangina Valley in 2005 and the programme is currently being rolled out in priority areas.

The Sustainable Land Use Initiative has the additional benefit of assisting the Region to adapt to the *effects* of *climate change*.

Look For:

Objectives, policies and methods that address this keystone issue in Chapter 5 and *rules* in Chapter 12.

¹ Officer's report – Setting the Scene, Administration, Introduction to Rules and Financial Contributions - Recommendation STS 7

Issue 4: Threatened Native Habitats

The Problem:

Due to more than a century of landscape modification, ~~our~~ [the](#) Region has lost much of its native habitat. Habitat remnants continue to be threatened by *land*¹ development and by plant and animal pests.

An Example: Vanishing *Wetland*¹ Habitats

The Manawatu Plains were once covered by a mosaic of *wetland*¹ habitats. Large-scale drainage has reduced this *wetland*¹ habitat to about 23%² of its former area and, although drainage has mostly stopped, the few remaining *wetland*¹ habitats are still vulnerable.

Proposed Approach:

~~Horizons~~ [The Regional Council](#)² will be the lead agency for biodiversity management for the Region by controlling activities in rare [habitats](#), ~~and~~² threatened habitats, at-risk habitats, and working with landowners to protect and enhance these habitats.

~~Horizons~~ [The Regional Council](#) has identified the Region's top 100 *wetland*¹ habitats and is encouraging their *owners*¹ through advice and financial incentives to actively manage these habitats. The objective of the programme is to have all 100 *wetlands*¹ under active management within 10 years.

Look For:

Objectives, policies and methods that address this keystone issue in Chapter 7 and *rules*¹ in Chapter 12.

1.4

~~Adapting to~~ [Planning for](#) ³ ~~Cc~~Climate ~~Cc~~Change¹

*Climate change*¹ is not one of the Big Four issues dealt with in the One Plan, but it is an overarching issue for our community and touches on many of the keystone issues.

The Problem:

There is conclusive evidence that our climate is changing. Our Region can expect (New Zealand Climate Change Office 2005):

- a 30-50 cm rise in sea level in the next 100 years
- an increase of up to 3°C in temperature in the next 70-100 years
- more rainfall in the western part of the Region and less in the east
- more westerly winds
- an increase in more extreme weather events – floods, droughts and high winds.

*Climate change*¹ could result in both positive and negative *effects*¹ for the Region. People are likely to enjoy the benefits of warmer winters with fewer frosts but hotter summers will bring increased risks of heat stress, drought and possibly the introduction of new pests and subtropical diseases. The Region is likely to experience more frequent heavy rainfalls and floods. Changing weather patterns may provide new horticultural or *cropping*^{*} opportunities, but may also impact on biodiversity by affecting the balance of ecosystems. Species that are already under threat or are at the limit of their climatic range may not be able to survive.

² Officer's report – Setting the Scene, Administration, Introduction to Rules and Financial Contributions - Recommendation STS 8

³ Officer's report – Setting the Scene, Administration, Introduction to Rules and Financial Contributions - Recommendation STS 9

Proposed Approach:

Horizons' primary focus is to help the Region adapt to the effects of *climate change* by:

- promoting resilient *land*-management practices under the Sustainable Land Use Initiative, which will reduce the effects of *climate change* and provide carbon sinks at the same time
- managing *water* quality within a values framework responsive to *climate change*
- managing *water* quantity according to minimum flows and core allocation framework responsive to *climate change*
- planning for changes to the scale and frequency of *natural hazards*.

Look For:

Objectives, policies and methods that directly or indirectly address *climate change* in Chapters 5, 6 and 10.

1.5**Working Towards a Better Future**

Achieving the right balance between encouraging and supporting change, and requiring it using *rules* in this Plan is a significant challenge. [Horizons' The Regional Council's](#) overall approach to One Plan implementation is to use methods which encourage responsible resource use, benefit responsible resource users and punish irresponsible resource users.

To make progress on the Big Four issues, a number of changes to the way natural resources are developed and used will need to be made. Some changes are a significant departure from existing practice and may be viewed as daunting by resource users. This is understandable and part of [Horizons' The Regional Council's](#) role is to encourage and support resource users through this period of change.

[Horizons' The Regional Council](#) holds the view that:

- (i) working with people and communities to evaluate and deliver local solutions for local issues is the preferred approach to resource management
- (ii) solutions need to be practical, appropriate to the scale of the problem and affordable for ratepayers and communities in the [Manawatu-Wanganui](#) Region.

To deal with the issues Horizons will use a suite of policies and methods. Our preference in this Plan is to use approaches that promote and encourage voluntary adoption of environment-friendly resource use practices. These could include encouraging activities that do any of the following:

- (i) operate in accordance with codes of practice and other good practice initiatives
- (ii) have net environmental benefits, especially where the benefits support progress on the Big Four issues
- (iii) assist the Region to adapt to *climate change*
- (iv) reduce the demand for *water* at low *river* flows – for example, *water* harvesting
- (v) provide habitat enhancement, especially if it results in benefits to native biodiversity
- (vi) could result in innovative ways to reduce the impact of otherwise adverse *effects* on the *environment* – for example, the use of new technology or science.

If this emphasis on promoting and encouraging change is not effective, [Horizons the Regional Council](#) will be forced to switch its policy emphasis to using *rules* to require appropriate changes *either*⁴ at the time of the next Plan review *or through the plan change process*⁴.

1.6 Codes of Practice and other Good Practice Initiatives

It is acknowledged that the initiatives of others can be more effective than *rules* developed by the Regional Council. For this reason, industry-developed codes of practice and other good practice initiatives are encouraged and supported by [Horizons the Regional Council](#).

Horizons is especially supportive of codes of practice or good practice initiatives that:

- (i) are consistent with the RMA and the environmental provisions of this Plan
- (ii) are prepared by the users, for the users
- (iii) in cases where they are used as *conditions* in a *rule* or *resource consent*, ensure that they satisfy legal tests.

[Horizons The Regional Council](#) will recognise codes of practice and other good practice initiatives in one or more of the following ways:

- (i) preparing *rules* that give favourable treatment to activities complying with the code of practice or other good practice initiatives
- (ii) granting consents for longer durations for activities complying with the codes of practice or other good practice initiatives
- (iii) recognising codes of practice and other good practice initiatives in consent *conditions*
- (iv) reducing compliance monitoring, especially where the codes of practice or other good practice initiatives include a component of independent audit.

In keeping with its focus on the Big Four issues, [Horizons The Regional Council](#) has a particular interest in collaborating with resource users undertaking such activities as forestry, pastoral farming on *highly erodible hill country land that is vulnerable to erosion*⁵, dairy farming, pig farming, *Territorial Authority* utilities and *river* and drainage scheme works. The purpose of this collaboration is to develop and recognise codes of practice, training programmes and other good practice initiatives that complement changes needed to make progress on the Big Four issues. [Horizons The Regional Council](#) will also willingly be involved in the preparation of any code of practice or other good practice initiative that is likely to be of environmental benefit in the Region.

⁴ Officer's report – Setting the Scene, Administration, Introduction to Rules and Financial Contributions - Recommendation STS 10

⁵ Officer's report – Setting the Scene, Administration, Introduction to Rules and Financial Contributions - Recommendation STS 11