

RMA National Direction

Initial high-level position statements

General high-level statements to direct all three submissions:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on these proposals. Horizons wishes to speak to this submission.

Horizons Regional Council (Horizons) is the regional authority for the Manawatū-Whanganui Region, extending from south of Levin to north of Taumarunui and from Whanganui across to the east coast, covering an approximate 22,000km² in total. Horizons' responsibilities include managing the region's natural resources, monitoring air and water quality, flood control, pest control, facilitating economic growth, leading regional land transport planning, and coordinating our region's response to natural disasters.

[Note any sector submissions alignment]

Over the last 35 years of our Council's work in this region, the landscape has changed and evolved. We continue to adapt and progress in the work we do through our relationships and the progression of best practice in the activities and work we undertake to achieve better outcomes for our communities and region.

Alignment of National Direction with Local Outcomes

We appreciate the intent to enhance community outcomes through resource management reform. However, the introduction of new national direction instruments in parallel with the system-wide RMA replacement adds complexity and ambiguity; especially where significant systemic change is proposed. We agree that there are areas for immediate improvement in niche areas which may benefit from a short-term implementation timeframe. Conversely, there are areas where wholesale changes are proposed. We are concerned about how these wholesale changes might transition into the new resource management system with an amended primary objective and that this may create gaps in implementation.

Our vision is a streamlined, locally responsive, and evidence-based resource management system where we are addressing real issues that affect our communities and genuinely seeking to support the balance for all. There are, of course, trade-offs in this decision-making process and it is crucial that the balance is struck in these trade-offs between aspects such as development, environmental management, and well-functioning communities. We seek clarity in decision-making as to how this balance is struck, especially at the regional and local level where the effects of these can and will be seen. We note that the current resource management system has been criticised for confusing essential functions – like setting environmental limits and making trade-offs across these, without clearly distinguishing between what must be protected and what may be compromised. To realise this vision, national direction must be implementation-ready; streamlined, integrated, and anchored in transparency and fairness, ensuring benefits and responsibilities are shared equitably while prioritising competing outcomes.

Ensuring successful implementation

There are inherent tensions that exist in allocating the use of scarce natural resources that must be reconciled in policy decision-making. We see room for improvement across the proposals in the efficiency of prioritisation of competing interests and outcomes. This includes how instruments work in conjunction with the other National Direction Instruments and RMA s5 and s6 matters. If this prioritisation is not resolved, this may lead to perverse outcomes in implementation – including increased costs due to increased complexity of decision-making. Prioritisation of interests and outcomes assists with providing certainty to resource users.

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We note these proposals intend to reduce consenting and compliance costs by enabling more activities, which is a positive step in terms of streamlining processes. At the same time, it is worth noting that monitoring and enforcement still carry ongoing costs. Under the current approach, these appear to shift from individual users to the general ratepayer. This raises a practical consideration around fairness and consistency – particularly where the benefits of property use are individual, but the costs are collectively borne.

Transitioning to change

The change that will be experienced by communities, local government entities, and practitioners should not be underestimated by central government. Funding, assistance, and guidance from central government throughout the reform process will be critical to support the already stretched capacity of councils, practitioners, and iwi/hapū. Resourcing for implementing the new system will be fundamental to the success of the reform. The funding mechanisms at local government's disposal are generally limited to rates, and decisions require consultation through Long-term Plan processes. Central government will need to adequately resource local government as well as iwi/hapū participation, at the very least through the transition period.

Potential for unintended consequences

There is potential for unintended consequences where new definitions are applied in National Direction instruments, or similar terms are used in the context of a different legislative purpose. In this instance, new case law is likely to be required to determine the meaning of these terms in the given context. Councils and applicants are likely to face increased costs due to difficulty implementing revised provisions where the National Direction is not 'directive', is unclear, and therefore is open to interpretation. The draft National Direction is unclear about how effects on natural resources are to be managed, and it is insufficient to say that this will come later in legislation. The implications of the policy settings need to be clearly set out so those responding are properly informed on how decisions where there are trade-offs might be made. This certainty is important where there may be competing space requirements for different types of infrastructure, or a need to allocate and reallocate natural resources to achieve better social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes, or where are significant values that the community wishes to keep and the effects are irreversible, compared to those values that are less important.

Our relationships with iwi and hapū

Horizons Regional Council's strategic framework, adopted through our 2024-34 Long-term Plan (LTP) prioritises Te whakakaha whanaungatanga ki te tangata whenua | Strengthening partnerships with tangata whenua to achieve the outcome of He whanaungatanga wai mana | Our region's relationships with iwi and hapū are respectful and mana-enhancing. This strategic approach empowers us to partner with iwi, hapū, and our wider communities to ensure resources are used in ways that benefit everyone.

There are key formal mechanisms that support this strategic approach and our relationships with iwi and hapū that are important to recognise as they will influence how these proposed changes can and will be implemented in our region. These include Memorandum of Partnership agreements, and the ten Iwi Management Plans lodged with Council, which assist in decision making alongside iwi and hapū at place. We acknowledge the Treaty settlement legislation that applies to our region. We also recognise there are more than thirty iwi that have interest in our region, and only seven of these iwi have settled. The remaining iwi are at various stages of the settlement process. It is important that provisions are made for all iwi and hapū, regardless of the stage of settlement. It is important the new Resource Management system continues to support and uphold the Treaty of Waitangi/ Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnerships, in all forms and relationships, to contribute to effective stewardship of our natural environment. This is repeatedly highlighted in the Waitangi Tribunal's reports (e.g. Wai 2358, Wai 262) which reiterate Māori rights to resource management and co-governance, and stress that national planning instruments must embed Treaty principles.

Additional high-level statements

Infrastructure and development

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The overarching outcome of this package is to enable infrastructure and development, which relies on clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities of local government, especially those of regional councils and territorial authorities. We see many instances where terminology is used interchangeably in these packages and definitions are not aligned with other packages, which will only result in confusion of regulated parties and inefficiencies in the implementation and consenting of these activities. We recommend that the national direction instruments align with the definitions set out in the National Planning Standards 2019 to provide consistency and support implementation, especially for new instruments.

Freshwater

There are Treaty settlements, in the Horizons Region that have resulted in specific statutory arrangements related to rivers – for example, those associated with Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui) and Te Waiū o Te Ika (Whangaehu). While the Council does not speak on behalf of these settlements, we would expect the Crown to recognise and provide for the intrinsic, enduring values set out in these settlements. From the documents available to us, we consider that the current consultation on freshwater lacks proper consultation with Māori, particularly in regard to Treaty rights and interests to freshwater, and also in regard to Treaty settlement obligations. More time and consultation is required, particularly to consider the cumulative effects of the proposals which we note the Treaty Impact Assessment has been unable to do.

We are concerned around the timing of the statutory consultation for the freshwater package and the local body election period. This clash may constrain councils in their ability to provide submissions.

Package 1: Infrastructure and development

National Policy Statement for Infrastructure	
How we see the issue in our region	There is a focus on enabling infrastructure as the Government see the resource management system does not adequately recognise or support infrastructure in promoting community wellbeing. We acknowledge the importance of infrastructure but cannot see evidence of this issue within our region, especially with existing enabling policies.
Do we support the proposal?	We partially support the proposal to introduce a new national policy statement to enable more streamlined and efficient support for infrastructure delivery and longer-term planning for infrastructure needs by simplifying consenting processes.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We support stronger national direction for infrastructure, particularly where it reinforces existing recognition in RPS and regional plans. However, the current objective lacks clarity regarding the intended environmental outcomes and there is no mechanism provided within the RMA to adequately assess the community value of infrastructure proposals.</p> <p>The policy direction appears to prioritise timely delivery of infrastructure over management of environmental effects, and trade-offs are implied rather than explicitly addressed. The policy approach should favour an assessment of alternatives and selection of the least effects option.</p> <p>The objectives should also clearly articulate outcomes that recognise Māori interests, which are insufficiently expressed in the current drafting. While enabling infrastructure is broadly supported, there are concerns where proposals may impact air, land, water, coastal environments, or cultural/ecological values of significance. We also support proposed Policy 5, which recognises that tangata whenua may have interests in developing or partnering in the development of infrastructure.</p> <p>The emphasis on “functional or operational need” in siting infrastructure should not override cultural and spiritual values, wāhi tapu, or traditional resource areas. A clear mechanism must be included to ensure cultural effects are given equal weight to technical or engineering considerations.</p>

National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation	
How we see these issues in our region	We are neutral on the stated issue that the current resource management system does not enable and protect REG to the extent needed to achieve New Zealand’s electrification, electricity security, and emissions reduction targets.
Do we support the proposal?	We are partially supportive of the proposals that there is a new objective that better recognises the critical role REG plays in society and the economy, the increase in REG required for climate reduction targets and policies that aim to protect existing assets, and changes to the NPSREG that also include more enabling and directive policies to enable and protect REG and REG assets.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We recognise the national importance of renewable energy, but the issue statement lacks clarity and evidence. The proposed objectives should lead to well-designed infrastructure that reflects cultural and environmental context, community needs, and a least-effects approach. However, the NPS as drafted may not practically deliver this.</p> <p>The NPS does not appear to assist in resolving ongoing tensions between REG direction and s5 and s6 of the RMA as it fails to provide specific outcomes where there are social, economic, environmental or cultural effects, or to require a least effects approach in the proposed provisions.</p>

	<p>Many REG projects are often located in sensitive receiving environments; a clearer interim framework is needed to guide decisions and reduce consenting uncertainty where there are environmental values to manage. The proposed NPS simply maintains the existing uncertainty over weighing of positive and adverse effects, without better outcomes or reduced complexity. There's also a concern that the framework is designed primarily for large-scale generation, without sufficient attention to small or micro-scale solutions. Māori interests are mentioned, but there is a sense that the weight lies with infrastructure outcomes, and not with equitable consideration. Māori interests should be upheld.</p> <p>The proposed changes may not resolve the consenting uncertainty and costs (outlined in the problem statement) because decision makers will still be faced with trying to reconcile the benefits of the REG activity with the potentially significant adverse effects on sensitive receiving environments.</p>
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National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission	
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How we see these issues in our region	We partially agree with the stated issue that transitioning to renewable energy generation (REG) will require more REG sites and a stronger electricity network, current NPS does not sufficiently recognise the national importance of electricity infrastructure or enable development of the electricity network efficiently.
Do we support the proposal?	We support the proposal with amendments. The proposal seeks expanded scope to include electricity distribution and will be renamed the NPS for Electricity Networks (NPSEN). Amendments focus on recognising and providing for the national significance and benefits of the electricity network and the distribution network. There is alignment of the NPSEN and the proposed NES for Electricity Network Activities (NESENA).
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	We are generally supportive of the proposals but see room for improved clarity on how to reconcile the tension between environmental protections and development.

National Environmental Standards for Electricity Network Activities	
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How we see these issues in our region	No clear position; insufficient detail to form a view.
Do we support the proposal?	No clear position; insufficient detail to form a view.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	We note a lack of detail in the proposal to evaluate how well it addresses key issues around the location, design and consenting for REG projects. In particular, there is no clear direction on how to weigh trade-offs between environmental and social and cultural effects, or how to factor in significant community values, security of supply, or hazard vulnerability.

National Policy for Telecommunication Facilities	
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How we see these issues in our region	We partially agree with the stated issue that the NESTF does not adequately support modern telecommunications upgrades and improvements in network resilience and off-grid energy solutions. Current standards are too restrictive for antenna and cabinet sizes, lack provisions for renewable energy use, and create costly barriers to fibre broadband access—especially for heritage buildings.
Do we support the proposal?	We partially support the proposals which aim to update and expand the existing permitted activity standards to be more enabling for renewable electricity generators for telecommunications. This will also enable customer connection lines to heritage buildings.

Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	We support improved clarity for telecommunication infrastructure. At a minimum, conditions should include protection for RMA s6 matters and include a clear requirement to consider alternatives or a least-effects approach during site selection and design.
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National Environmental Standard for Granny Flats (Minor Residential Units)

How we see the issue in our region	There is a housing affordability crisis across NZ, with a growing mismatch between household size and available housing. We acknowledge there are cost and regulatory barriers that may contribute to supply of one-two bedroom homes needed by smaller households, retirees and vulnerable groups.
Do we support the proposal?	We partially support the proposal to introduce a new NES that sets a national baseline for allowing more permissive local rules and limiting matters councils can regulate in relation to minor residential units. This also introduces a PA rule, with specific criteria, that will be implemented by territorial authorities.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We agree that housing supply and affordability are national issues and supports direction in this space. However, the proposed NES raises concerns for three waters infrastructure, particularly wastewater, and natural hazard management. There is a lack of clarity as to whether regional plan provisions (such as Horizons’ One Plan rules on on-site wastewater sizing or hazard overlays) would prevail. This is significant to inform appropriate development and appropriately sized on-site wastewater systems and reticulated networks.</p> <p>Misalignment with proposed NES for Papakāinga and unclear terminology across frameworks (e.g., “small stand-alone dwellings” under the Building Act) adds further confusion. Clarification is required around the application of regional provisions and consistency across regulations, especially the Building Act and the Building Act Amendment Bill (noting the factsheet states these will be consistent with other proposed Building Act 2004 changes that are being progressed through a separate legislative process”).</p>

National Environmental Standard for Papakāinga

How we see the issue in our region	There are broad provisions for papakāinga, but no consistent national direction that sets out how papakāinga can be developed. This restricts opportunities to increase affordable housing, support Māori self-determination, and achieve positive social, cultural, and economic outcomes. We agree there needs to be consistent provisions to enable papakāinga.
Do we support the proposal?	We support the proposal to introduce a new NES in principle. The NES introduces PA rules and provisions to enable specific papakāinga development and non-residential activities in specific planning zones on identified Māori land.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We support the intent of the NES-P but would like clarity on the roles of local authorities, especially where both regional and territorial functions are affected. The terms “local authority” and “territorial authority” are used interchangeably in the draft, creating ambiguity.</p> <p>While papakāinga development typically falls within district plans, regional functions are often triggered. It should also expand the list of underlying rules that prevail to include domestic wastewater, storm water disposal, land disturbance, flood control infrastructure, and setbacks from wetlands. We have specific concerns around rural properties where on-site wastewater would be required for several dwellings and visitors, there is also a clear need to consider natural hazards (especially flooding) and many other regional considerations (like Granny flats).</p> <p>We also see opportunities for improvements with the NESP to align more closely with the intentions of the NPSUD in enabling papakāinga for all iwi and hapū.</p>

	<p>The stated issues in the NESP and discussion document highlight the need for development of papakāinga on rural land, including general rural zone and rural production zone land. However, there is no mention of how this works if the land is classified as Highly Productive Land under the NSPHPL in either of the national direction instruments or supporting policy documents. The NESP and NSPHPL need to be clear about enabling papakāinga on LUC3 land, to assist iwi/Māori with self-determination and addressing housing issues on their own whenua, which is what we believe the NPSP is intending to achieve. In addition to this the NESP needs to be founded on robust wānanga with landowners/iwi Māori) to ensure the framework appropriately articulates the outcomes required by iwi Māori in relation to papakāinga.</p> <p>The NSPHPL definition of ‘specified Māori land’ may enable a pathway to provide for this; however, it is different to the ‘Māori ancestral land’ definition in the NESP, therefore, this will require clear direction on how these different definitions will work together or which instrument will prevail.</p>
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National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards	
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How we see the issue in our region	There is currently no national direction for the management of natural hazards aside from the section 6 RMA matter of national importance. Although, existing direction can be seen in regional and district plans, the lack of national guidance and definitions under the RMA has resulted in inconsistent local approaches, legal and practical challenges, and uncertainty for communities and developers, sometimes enabling risky development or unnecessarily restricting safe, resilient growth.
Do we support the proposal?	We support, with amendments, the introduction of a NPS for natural hazards. The NPSNH aims to improve how natural hazard risk is managed through the resource management system by directing local authorities to take a risk-based, proportionate approach to new development. The NPSNH will require councils to use the best available hazard information, consider risk-reduction measures in consent decisions for new developments (including new subdivisions, use and development) in all environments and planning zones.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We are supportive of a proportionate risk-based approach with the use of the best available information. However, the NPS is designed for consent decision making and does not direct how decisions are to be made when there is a high or significant hazard risk. There is a lack of clear avoidance policy in the NPS itself (noting RM Bill 2 made amendments enable decline of consents in areas of significant natural hazard risk), which is the key issue the NPS needs to resolve to give councils a greater ability to manage hazard risk and decline inappropriate development.</p> <p>Prescription is needed to direct when avoidance should occur, when mitigations are appropriate, and which climate change scenarios decisions should be based on. Given the conservative nature and time lag of climate models, it is prudent to consider higher-end climate change scenarios when assessing risk. This approach supports more resilient decision-making.</p>

Package 2: Primary Sector	
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National Environment Standards for Marine Aquaculture	
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How we see the issue in our region	Horizons’ does not have marine aquaculture activities in our region and as the issue is with re consenting we have no comment.
Do we support the proposal?	We are proposing not to submit on this instrument and its amendments.

National Environment Standards for Commercial Forestry	
How we see the issue in our region	There are some issues with the current regulations that give room for councils to be more stringent, which can reduce certainty and consistency for the sector. We acknowledge some of the current regulations may generate significant costs and effort for both councils and foresters. There are also some duplication and drafting errors that should be rectified.
Do we support the proposal?	There is a mixed technical position on the proposed changes. The proposal restricts when councils can be more stringent and repeals the provision that enables councils to be more controlling of afforestation. The proposal requires Slash Mobilisation Risk Assessments for all forest harvest as part of existing harvest management plans and repeals requirements for afforestation and replanting plans. There are simplifications made for wilding tree control and enabling provisions for low intensity harvesting.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We have concerns about the reduced ability for regional councils to manage aspects of commercial forestry activities such as afforestation and harvesting effects. Ensuring that trees are not planted in the wrong place can reduce the environmental effects of harvesting that tree 25 years into the future. The management of afforestation assists with the management of sediment.</p> <p>[We are yet to land a position on if the effects of forestry additional to erosion management are something we want the ability to be more stringent on, Māori freshwater values have been suggested]</p> <p>We support the requirement for slash mobilisation risk assessments as an improvement on the current slash rules. However, we are interested in who will monitor slash mobilisation risk assessments if the activities are permitted and how cost recovery is provided for. If regional councils cannot cost recover, this does not make activity monitoring cheaper but transfers this cost to the general ratepayer rather than the user. Our view is the cost of monitoring should be borne by those undertaking the activity.</p> <p>We support the addition of clarity through the amendments to the wilding conifer standards.</p>

NZ Coastal Policy Statement 2010	
How we see the issue in our region	NZCPS includes “activity policies”, “protection policies”, and all other policies designed to be read together. These policies were drafted prior to evolutions in how policy statements are interpreted arising from court decisions so it will be valuable to align with current legal understandings. There are also ways where the protection policies are seen as a barrier for development by some industries.
Do we support the proposal?	We are neutral on the proposals to strengthen language that will make it easier to give consent to priority activities and give more recognition
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	We agree in part that priority activities could be planned for and better enabled and that this may result in some additional adverse effects than under the current NZCPS framework. Additionally, the courts have grappled with wording of ‘avoid’ and ‘activity’ policies recently, so clarity would be useful. However, the coastal environment is sensitive, and care needs to be taken that enabling policies do not have significant effects on cultural or ecological values. There are risks if the policies are not well written. Recognising and weighting of competing priorities is required to streamline the assessment in consenting. These competing priorities also include certain uses, such as recreation, of public land, which may require protection.

National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land

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<p>How we see the issue in our region</p>	<p>The inclusion of LUC class 3 land in the NPSHPL has highlighted greenfield development and how the NPSHPL may restrict land supply for housing and urban development. While we have a lot of LUC3 land in our region that may be highlighted for urban development, there isn't clear evidence it is restricting growth as much of our regions' greenfield development prior to the NPSHPL was for rural lifestyle and subdivision.</p>
<p>Do we support the proposal?</p>	<p>We partially support the proposal to amend how LUC 3 land is protected. The proposal also presents an option for 'Special Agricultural Areas' as an alternative way to continue to protect additional areas of agriculture land that support national food production, which is likely to include Horowhenua. There is a question in the proposal to extend timeframes or suspend it until further direction.</p>
<p>Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.</p>	<p>We support the continued protection of highly productive land (HPL) and the intent to reduce unnecessary constraints on urban growth. However, we recommend considering the exclusion of LUC 3 only for urban rezoning, and not for rural lifestyle and rural subdivision. This aims to avoid unintended land fragmentation and cumulative loss of productive soils, whilst supporting the proposal's housing objective and the objective for increased productivity. Underscoring the need for any changes to support the implementation and mapping of HPL and ensure consistency with how it is managed.</p> <p>(Note, this aligns with previous Horizons submissions on this policy and presents a more balanced approach and aligns with prioritising mapping in growth areas as we consulted on as part of our methodology through the LTP)</p> <p>Regional Councils remain responsible for the mapping of HPL, it is vital that the amended NPS enables this to be undertaken in a clear and straightforward way (i.e. dealing with large and geographically cohesive areas will be tricky without LUC 3, or dealing with mapping of LUC 3 but it having a different level of protection).</p> <p>We also note concerns with the proposed identification and mapping of Special Agricultural Areas (SAAs), particularly if this responsibility sits with regional councils. They have specifically referenced Horowhenua as an example of where SAAs may exist, so the inclusion of these will have implications for our methodology with increased complexity, and potential for appeals. We are recommending a nationally led approach or stronger implementation provisions to provide clarity and alignment.</p> <p>Although the Government has previously spoken of introducing regulatory taking compensation when restricting activities on land, there is no mention of this in the proposal. If this is introduced at a later stage, it could have significant financial implications for mapping HPL.</p> <p>There are conflicting messages with when this will be implemented, we are recommending the HPL mapping be incorporated into the spatial mapping process as part of the next phase of resource management reform as an environmental constraint (as recommended by the EAG report).</p> <p>There is also a potential issue with enabling papakāinga on HPL as the NESP signals enabling development on rural zoned land. It is unclear which instrument will prevail as the definition in the NPSHPL of 'specified Māori land' differs from the 'Māori ancestral land' definition in the NESP.</p>

<p>Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020</p>	
<p>How we see the issue in our region</p>	<p>The regulations require all stock to be excluded from wetlands that support threatened species, regardless of the size of the wetland or the intensity of the farming system. This may mean stock exclusion from wetlands is inflexible and unable to be adapted to individual situations– especially in other regions that have different ecology and topography.</p>

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Do we support the proposal?	We oppose the proposal to amend these regulations to remove the requirement to exclude grazed beef cattle and deer in low intensity farm systems from wetlands which support a population of threatened species.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	We agree that in some places it may not be feasible or advisable to exclude all stock from all wetlands, however, this is generally not the case for our region. The proposal will benefit certain parts of the country where the problem has been identified, but this is not the case everywhere. Some types of wetlands present in our region are heavily impacted by even low levels of cattle and deer. Our region is reliant on the stock exclusion regulations to protect from these impacts, as our regional plan does not require stock exclusion from wetlands. We seek retention of the regulations for the Manawatū-Whanganui region.

Amendments to quarrying and mining provisions

How we see the issue in our region	The terminology and consenting pathway differ across NPSIB, NPSFM, NESF, and NPSHPL for mining and quarrying.
Do we support the proposal?	We disagree with the proposal to make the consent pathways and gateway tests for quarrying and mining affecting wetlands, significant natural areas, highly productive land more enabling.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We agree that inconsistencies in terminology, gateway tests, and consenting pathways across national direction is an issue. However, we disagree with the direction of the proposal to weaken the gateway tests which currently protect biodiversity, infrastructure and private properties from the adverse effects of mining and quarrying.</p> <p>Amending the definition to align with the National Planning Statements clearly addresses the issue of inconsistent definitions. However, the changes remove some of the contextual considerations that are important in ensuring environmental effects are managed. Specific implications are likely to arise from these changes, with the NPSIB highlighting changes for mining and quarrying impacts on significant natural areas and the NPSFM highlighting changes for activities affecting wetlands.</p>

Package 3: Freshwater

Rebalanced Objective(s) (NPSFM)	
How we see the issue in our region	The Government see the hierarchy being interpreted as requiring pristine water quality to be achieved before allowing any other uses of freshwater. We have not been interpreting the hierarchy as requiring pristine water quality in our region.
Do we support the proposal?	We are neutral on the proposals for new objectives that include reflecting the interests of water and health of people and communities while enabling social, cultural, economic needs, including productive economic opportunities, considering the pace and cost of change, and who bears the cost, maintaining or improving freshwater quality and providing for vegetable growing and water security.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We are not interpreting the hierarchy as requiring pristine water quality to achieved before use.</p> <p>Multiple objectives are fine, but direction is required on how to reconcile competing outcomes.</p> <p>Some of what is proposed is already required by s32 of the Act.</p> <p>Question for Council: do you support the hierarchy?</p>

Te Mana o te Wai (NPSFM)	
How we see the issue in our region	The Government see the fundamental concept is not correctly balanced and lacks clarity about its meaning and how it is intended to operate. The hierarchy is being interpreted as requiring pristine water quality to be achieved before allowing any other uses of freshwater. We do not see this as an issue, as stated above this is not in alignment with how we interpret the hierarchy.
Do we support the proposal?	We are neutral on the proposals to rebalance Te Mana o te Wai.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We are not interpreting the hierarchy as requiring pristine water quality to achieved before use.</p> <p>If the hierarchy is removed, we support retaining the rest of the 2020 version of Te Mana o te Wai, as it's better drafted, and our conversations with iwi to date have been based on this version (avoids rework).</p> <p>The Crown must ensure it is meeting its obligations under Te Tiriti.</p>

NOF Framework - Values (NPSFM)	
How we see the issue in our region	The Government highlights councils and communities could have more flexibility to choose they values they consider appropriate for their region. However, we don't see an issue with the four compulsory values as they are important in our region.
Do we support the proposal?	We support the status quo of the four compulsory values being retained, rather than looking at other options for which values should be compulsory and which could be optional.

Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	We are happy with the current set of 4 compulsory values.
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NOF Framework – Attributes, national bottom lines, and flexibility (NPSFM)

How we see the issue in our region	We agree that nationally defined thresholds are sometimes inappropriate in a specific catchment (such as due to naturally high sediment levels) and that it may not always be necessary to manage all attributes to achieve desired environmental outcomes.
Do we support the proposal?	We are generally supportive of the proposal with amendments. The proposal tests whether attributes should be retained as compulsory or optional should be monitored with response to degradation, national bottom lines are required or can be deviated from, and if councils and communities should determine where limits are set, based on consultation.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We agree that some of the current attribute tables are problematic, such as sediment and E. coli.</p> <p>Our preference is that these attributes are improved, rather than removed. If the Govt is not able to improve them, then we should be given flexibility. Many of the 2B attributes would be more suitable as monitoring attributes rather than target setting or action planning attributes.</p> <p>By directing, national direction can create efficiencies by avoiding having to develop and litigate matters council by council. Any flexibility should be balanced with this efficiency.</p> <p>Our first preference is that national bottom lines be retained, but more analysis be done on the scale of change required to meet them before deciding if an NBL is acceptable for New Zealand. If the Govt is not able to do this work, then we should be given flexibility.</p> <p>We should have flexibility on the role of limits on resource use vs action plans.</p>

Commercial Vegetable Growing (NPSFM or new NES)

How we see the issue in our region	We generally agree with the stated issue, that domestic CVG is a nationally important intensive land-use typically concentrated in certain areas which can disproportionately contribute to nitrogen load in a catchment. We agree that providing for crop rotation is an issue.
Do we support the proposal?	We have strong concerns about the proposal. We would like to see the promised benefits of phase 3 being realised as early as possible and recommend this issue is deferred to phase 3. The proposal tests whether there should be a new objective in the NPSFM to enable CVG and provide for crop rotation OR a new NES to permit CVG.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We agree that enabling the continued supply of fresh vegetables is important, and providing for crop rotation within environmental limits is important.</p> <p>We agree that it is challenging to permit commercial vegetable growing without wider reform of the resource management system, for the reasons given in the discussion document, that doing so would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pre-empt the allocation of scarce resources (i.e., the ability to discharge nutrients), which would impact on competing resource users and occur in the absence of an allocation framework

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be likely to have the greatest impact in areas that are already, or are close to being, overallocated in terms of nutrient or other discharges. <p>We would like to see the promised benefits of phase 3 being realised as early as possible. As such, while we acknowledge that providing for crop rotation is an issue that requires a solution in our region, any regulatory change made in Phase 2 should be temporary and be able to be easily and quickly replaced in the new RM system. For example, if a consented pathway is created in phase 2, we would be concerned about long duration consents.</p> <p>Setting minimum standards that are achievable for growers, but which do not contribute materially towards receiving environment water quality improvement will not assist Councils and communities to improve degraded water quality – this is particularly important for sensitive receiving environments such as lakes. We would be concerned about any national regulation that would deliver less expected practice improvement (and therefore water quality improvement) than Council’s proposed Plan Change 2, or equally any national regulation which delayed the realisation of said benefits.</p> <p>Care should be taken when opting to use a permitted activity instead of a controlled activity pathway, the permitted activity conditions need to be workable for diverse growing systems, and drafted so that they are clearly enforceable.</p> <p>Evidence based decision-making is important, and any changes to national direction should ensure that central government and regional councils receive the information from the CVG sector necessary for this.</p> <p>Any decisions on CVG must ensure that the Crown is meeting its obligations under Te Tiriti.</p>
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Water security and storage (NPSFM)	
How we see the issue in our region	We agree with the stated issues around freshwater scarcity, and that water security is becoming increasingly important as the climate changes and the natural availability of water becomes more unpredictable.
Do we support the proposal?	We are generally supportive of the proposal with amendments. The proposal looks to introduce a new Objective or Policy in NPSFM to address water security as part of climate change resilience OR a new NES that permits off-stream water storage construction (includes draft standards).
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>Support but the standards need strengthening to better protect wetlands and water quality.</p> <p>Potential unintended consequences from high flow harvesting which need to be managed.</p> <p>We also caution that water storage can be used to enable intensification, and expectations on this will need to be managed in catchments which are over-allocated for nutrient loss.</p>

Wetlands provisions – definitions (NPSFM and NESF)

DRAFT – Not Council policy

How we see the issue in our region	We agree with the stated issue that the definition for natural inland wetlands could be made simpler but disagree that it is costly and complex.
Do we support the proposal?	We are generally supportive of the proposal with amendments. The proposal looks at removing the pasture exclusion and defining induced wetlands as those developed unintentionally through human behaviour.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We agree that the definition of natural inland wetland could be simpler and more effective. However, we disagree that the current definition is costly and complex to apply because we provide this service for free and find it straightforward. Regardless of the presence of the pasture exclusion, the delineation protocols would still need to be followed, and our view is that the pasture exclusion does not add additional time to following these and in some instances reduces this time.</p> <p>The inclusion of induced wetlands results in some wetlands being protected that shouldn't be (e.g. ones that have resulted from poor stormwater management, a leaking bore, or heavy cattle pugging). This requires careful definition to ensure it is enforceable. Regionally significant induced wetlands should still be included as there are some within our region with high ecological value.</p>

Wetlands provisions – farming activities (NPSFM and NESF)

How we see the issue in our region	We agree in part that low impact farming activities could be better enabled.
Do we support the proposal?	We support the proposal in part, provided appropriate conditions are included. The proposal introduces a new PA for farming activities unlikely to have an adverse effect on a wetland (feedback sought around which activities and conditions should be included).
Revised high position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	A new permitted activity pathway for low impact activities (such as fencing or water irrigation) could be beneficial. Clear and enforceable drafting will be important, to ensure that the activity does not reduce the extent or quality of the wetland. Permitted activities must have known effects and these effects must be no more than minor.

Wetlands provisions – wetland construction (NPSFM and NESF)

How we see the issue in our region	We partially agree with the stated issue that it can be too hard to construct wetlands which have nutrient and habitat benefits but note that this is often due to other types of resource consents such as earthworks.
Do we support the proposal?	We are broadly supportive of the proposal. The proposal aims to define constructed wetland as an area artificially engineered to mimic wetland functions where one did not previously exist. It also introduces a new PA for wetland construction and a new objective/policy in NPSFM to enable wetland construction and edge-of-field mitigations.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	We agree that there are currently difficulties in the process for constructing wetlands. The benefits provided by constructed wetlands justify simplifying and enabling their construction. Care needs to be taken with the permitting of online wetlands to ensure that potential adverse environmental effects are managed. Kaitiakitanga must be observed in this process.

Wetlands provisions – mapping requirements (NPSFM and NESF)

How we see the issue in our region	We agree with the stated issue, that councils may struggle to meet the requirements to map all natural inland wetlands by 2030, due to a lack of adequate resourcing and available mapping technology. There is no consistent mapping methodology being used nationally and any change to
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	definitions would change what needs to be mapped. The wetland mapping plan endorsed by council would not give effect to the direction under the NPSFM.
Do we support the proposal?	We support the proposal with amendments. The proposal aims to remove the mapping requirements.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We agree that the timeframe is challenging to meet, and we do not intend to meet it. We also do not intend to map wetlands under forest cover, nor wetlands under c.23(1)(b).</p> <p>We consider that wetland mapping in some form remains important, and we support making the wetland mapping provisions more practicable.</p> <p>We understand that the c3.26(6) [wetland monitoring plan] will be retained, which realistically will require some wetland mapping anyway, so on this basis, we are comfortable with the removal of the wetland mapping requirements.</p>

Fish passage (NESF)	
How we see the issue in our region	We partially agree that there are issues with the NESF for fish passage, particularly around the information requirements and to satisfy the permitted activity conditions. However, the issues for our region (such as artificially large drain channels triggering resource consent for culverts due to the size requirements) are not stated.
Do we support the proposal?	We support the proposals to condense the information requirements into a single regulation, remove requirements unrelated to likelihood of impeding fish passage and some conditions for culverts, and amend culvert conditions to reflect practice and provide for boxed culverts, with amendments.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>Generally support, with the following amendments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The requirement to remove a velocity threshold needs to be carefully considered. 2. The key issue in our region is the sizing requirements in our lowland drainage systems and this has not been addressed.

Farmer-facing regulations (NESF)	
How we see the issue in our region	We agree that the costs do not outweigh the benefits for dairy farmers to provide receipts for synthetic nitrogen fertiliser but do not agree there is an issue with the synthetic nitrogen cap.
Do we support the proposal?	We support the proposals to align the reporting date in the NESF with the farming calendar and to repeal the requirement for dairy farmers to provide receipts for synthetic nitrogen fertiliser, but oppose the repeal of the N-cap.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>N-cap should be retained. As far as we know no farmers in our region apply more than 190kg N/ha/year. However, this could be due to factors other than the NES-F.</p> <p>Support alignment of reporting date with farmer calendar.</p> <p>Suggest efficiencies could be made by having N fertiliser use assessed in a freshwater farm plan audit, rather than providing receipts to Council.</p>

Drinking water (NPSFM)	
How we see the issue in our region	We agree with the stated issue that many New Zealanders are exposed to unsafe drinking water and waterborne illnesses, with higher risk of exposure to those serviced by small supplies. Some land use activities are located too close to drinking water sources and are negatively impacting the quality and safety of drinking water. Some councils are not adequately managing the risks that some land use activities pose to drinking water safety.
Do we support the proposal?	We support the proposal to require councils to map Source Water Risk Management Areas for supplies that serve more than 500 people, with amendments.
Revised high-level position statements and considerations to guide our submission.	<p>We agree that there are issues with source water protection and there is a real need for multi-barrier protection, starting with source water. This was highlighted through the Havelock North Inquiry (HNI).</p> <p>We agree that mapping SWRMAs is a good first step to protect source water – you must first know where source water is to protect it. However, drinking water safety is not improved by including lines on maps. Associated rules within each SWRMA are vital.</p> <p>We see there being three key findings of the HNI that will not be adequately addressed through these proposed changes without additional direction in the NESDW and/or NPSFM to direct what consents decision-makers do with the SWRMAs.</p> <p>Regulation of land use is a current gap in the NES; this proposal will not fix this.</p>