

Better Fresh Water: A Discussion Document

The mana of rivers and lakes is upheld. They sustain life and community prosperity into the future.

Working Together

Fresh water is a taonga. It supports all life, and is crucial for healthy ecosystems. It provides recreational areas for the community, and water supplies for people, industry, and agriculture.

There is no single solution to maintaining and improving freshwater quality. Every catchment has a different character and faces different issues—because of factors like land use and settlement patterns, climate and geology, natural hazards and climate change. There are already collaborative arrangements in place to look after some of our awa; in other places, we need to decide how to develop plans that reflect local circumstances.

The process of developing plans should involve communities. We think catchment plans should be about more than just changing regulations in the One Plan: they should provide a roadmap for what our communities want for fresh water, and how we intend to get there. Council plans should align with Treaty settlements and community-led initiatives. They will need to adapt as we learn more about our fresh water, the things that affect it, and better ways to manage it.

This document outlines our thinking about how we create better outcomes for our rivers, lakes, aquifers and wetlands at a regional level, including how the ongoing national water reforms will be implemented. This approach will be applied slightly differently in each catchment—because each catchment and each community is unique.

Guiding Principles

From our discussions with members of the community and partner organisations so far, we have found some principles that should guide our approach:

Ki uta ki tai

Our rivers and lakes form dynamic, connected systems from mountains to sea. They sustain all life and are the lifeblood of our communities. Decisions about the parts should be made in consideration of the whole.

Uniqueness

Each of our water bodies is different. Communities across the region have already come together, in different ways, to work towards better outcomes. Our approach within each catchment will reflect its special characteristics.

Kaitiakitanga

Freshwater is a taonga. We have responsibilities towards it, the life it supports, and future generations.

Partnership

There are many different perspectives on freshwater issues and solutions. We all have a part to play in achieving better freshwater outcomes; none of us can deliver them alone. Success will depend on the strength of our relationships and an inclusive process that people can trust.

Shared purpose

Action should be driven by a long-term vision. We need to prioritise to make progress on the issues we are most concerned about. We need plans that help us align our efforts toward our goals—and that give us the confidence to respond to new opportunities along the way.

Knowledge empowers good decisions

Different types of knowledge—including mātauranga Māori, western science, and on-the-ground know-how—will be relevant to decision making. Evidence informs sound judgement. We must be prepared to learn together, and to communicate openly.

Our Fresh Water

The Horizons Region extends from Pureora to Pukehou, from Whangamomona to Cape Turnagain. It's a large and diverse region, home to quarter of a million people.

Our major river systems start at the maunga of the Central Plateau and along the central spine of the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges. They flow through the dense forests of the Whanganui, the terraces and papa cliffs of the Rangitikei, and the valleys and plains of the Manawatū. The dune lands along our west coast are studded with dozens of lakes. Smaller rivers spring in the Puketoi Ranges and flow to sea on the east coast.

Horizons has a responsibility to manage fresh water across the region. Part of that job is planning—determining which outcomes to pursue, and what action to take. We think the community should be part of that process: it is the community's values that set the direction, and the community that will ultimately need to make changes to achieve better outcomes.

We intend to work with communities to develop freshwater management plans for seven large catchment areas:

Te Awa Tupua

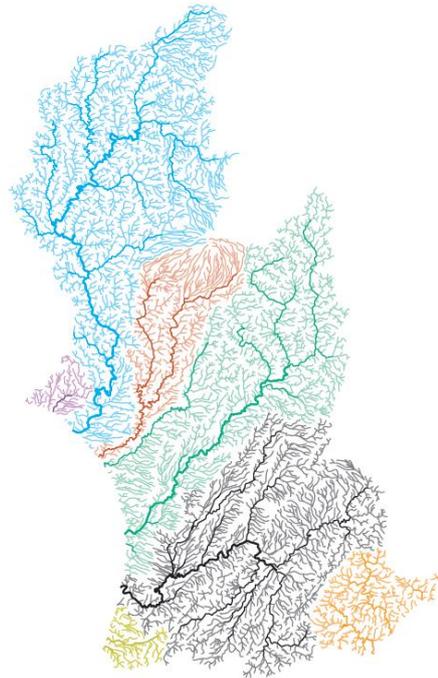
The Whanganui River is the largest awa in our region. It is a legal person, an indivisible and living whole from the mountains to the sea, incorporating all its physical and metaphysical elements.

Te Awa Tupua Act 2017 establishes a legal framework for Te Awa Tupua. This includes Te Kōpuka, a collaborative group to advance the health and wellbeing of the awa. The role of te Kōpuka includes development of a river strategy, Te Heke Ngahuru.

Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika

The Whangaehu River has its source at te Wai ā-moe, the Crater Lake. Its waters—naturally acidic much of the time—sustain the land and its communities from the maunga down to the sea.

Once settlement legislation comes into effect, te Waiū-o-Te-Ika will be recognised as a living and indivisible whole. Iwi and local authorities will work together to advance the health and wellbeing of te Waiū-o-Te-Ika and develop a Whangaehu Catchment strategy document.



*Manawatū
Horowhenua
Rangitikei-Turakina
Coastal Tararua
Kai Iwi*

Catchment Planning Process

In each of these five areas, we propose that a governance group of iwi and local authorities oversee the planning process.

In most places, we anticipate catchment community groups will help us understand different perspectives, explore options, and test proposals. In some of our smaller catchments, establishing a formal community group may not be necessary.

Formal collaborative groups will complement, but not replace, wider community engagement. We will endeavour to provide opportunities for community members to be involved throughout the process. Stakeholders groups have important roles to play in implementation, and so must also be involved in planning.

Robust evidence is important for sound decisions. Catchment planning will be supported by a Technical Advisory Group, made up of independent experts from a range of fields—mātauranga Māori, physical and social sciences, economics. It will ensure the process is informed by the best available data and analysis, and provide advice on how to deal with unknowns and uncertainties.

Catchment plans will be broad in scope and non-statutory in nature. They will express the outcomes we aim to achieve, review our freshwater objectives, and consider time-bound targets. They will consider all available tools—government, council, community, and industry—and provide direction for any regulatory plan changes necessary to implement our collective resolutions.

Producing plans is not the end of the story. Plans must lead to action. They must adapt as our understanding and circumstances change. This will require ongoing cooperation and commitment from us all.

Ongoing Freshwater Improvement Work

There are many things we can do to improve fresh water without waiting for changes to a plan. Te Mana o te Wai projects, the Freshwater Improvement Fund, community riparian enhancement work, the Sustainable Land-Use Initiative, the Manawatū River Leaders Forum, and the Lake Horowhenua Accord are just some examples.

While we need to look to the future, we must also take action today.

Ko te pae tawhiti whāia kia tata, ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tina!

Forward Work Programme

2018	Publish our strategy for freshwater management Publish water quality update , including assessment against NPSFM metrics Establish Manawatū catchment process Publish final swimming targets
2019	Work towards a Manawatū catchment plan Establish Horowhenua catchment process
2020	Continue work towards a Manawatū catchment plan Continue work towards a Horowhenua catchment plan Establish Rangitīkei-Turakina catchment process
2021	Complete Manawatū catchment plan Complete Horowhenua catchment plan Continue work towards a Rangitīkei-Turakina catchment plan Establish Coastal Tararua catchment process Establish Kai Iwi catchment process
2022	Complete Coastal Tararua catchment plan Continue work towards a Rangitīkei-Turakina catchment plan Continue work on Kai Iwi catchment plan Begin work on Whangaehu catchment strategy Notify regulatory plan changes arising from south-eastern catchment plans
2023	Complete Rangitīkei-Turakina catchment plan Complete Kai Iwi catchment plan Continue work on Whangaehu catchment strategy Publish swimming progress report
2024	Complete Whangaehu catchment strategy
2025	Notify regulatory plan changes arising from north-western catchment plans

Once timelines for work towards Te Heke Ngahuru (the strategy for Te Awa Tupua / the Whanganui River) become clear, they will be incorporated into the schedule above.

Monitoring and Review

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM) requires that regional councils monitor progress towards freshwater values and objectives, such as those set through our catchment planning processes. This will be built into our routine science programme. Data is available to the public through the LAWA website (www.lawa.org.nz) and Horizons' annual State of the Environment reporting.

Broader evaluation of the efficacy of our freshwater management programme will be built into each catchment planning process, so that lessons can be applied to subsequent catchment processes.

What do you think?

This discussion document outlines some of the things we need to consider in taking care of freshwater across our region. It lays out our thinking about how we might best work together to agree what we want to achieve and how we get there.

What do you think? Have we got it right? What have we overlooked? Would you like us to come and speak with you?

Let us know by emailing info@ourfreshwaterfuture.nz