

Te Ia O Manawatū: Discussion Document

Ko Manawatū te awa, he awa tapu, hei piringa mauri, hei piringa tangata.

Background

Horizons Regional Council is developing *Our Freshwater Future* as a strategy for managing fresh water in our region. Once finalised, it will set a framework for working together to achieve better freshwater outcomes. We expect it to include a set of principles and a general approach to guide catchment planning. This document sketches out a process, within that framework, that is specific to the Manawatū Catchment and its community.

The process is intended to be collaborative, and to produce a catchment plan that encompasses a full range of interventions to deliver better freshwater outcomes. Those actions are likely to extend well beyond the remit of the regional council. The catchment plan will help to focus and prioritise effort; it represents the end point for the ‘project’ described here, but not the end of the process. The work of implementation will still need to be done. Over time, our plans will need to adapt as we learn more or community expectations change. The relationships that underpin plan making will be crucial to implementation and adaptation—and the long-term health of the Manawatū.

The following principles underpin our approach to freshwater planning:

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.

Knowledge empowers good decisions

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

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.

The Catchment

The Manawatū has its source near the Hawkes Bay boundary north of Norsewood. It collects the Tiraumea, Mangatainoka, and Mangahao before carving its way through the ranges at Te Āpiti and being joined by the Pohangina. Historically, there were extensive wetlands near the Ōroua confluence at Rangiotu. The Manawatū estuary has one of the most diverse populations of birds anywhere in New Zealand and is recognised as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.



More than half of our region's people live within the Manawatū catchment.

Tangata Whenua

Tangata whenua have a special relationship with fresh water. It is a taonga of that supports all life and is of spiritual importance.

The Manawatū passes through the rohe of numerous iwi and hapū. Treaty settlement legislation provides for a Manawatū River Advisory Board to inform decisions about the river.

Local Government

In addition to the regional council, four territorial authorities (Tararua, Palmerston North, Manawatu and Horowhenua) have statutory responsibilities that relate to fresh water: provision of drinking water, treatment of wastewater, management of storm water. The Lower Manawatū is one of the country's largest flood protection and drainage schemes.

The One Plan

Values and numerical objectives for the Manawatū are laid out in the One Plan. They provide a sound starting point for deliberation. These are not time-bound, and differ slightly from the National Objectives Framework. Our understanding has advanced in the years since the One Plan was developed. Particular attention will need to be paid to spatial variability and catchment limits, and to determining appropriate timeframes for achieving outcomes.

Existing Collaborative Initiatives

Many groups are already actively involved in caring for the awa, including the Manawatū River Leaders' Forum, Environment Network Manawatu, and Tū te Manawa.

Objectives

The purpose of this process is to review freshwater objectives for the Manawatū and its catchment and to develop a plan to achieve outcomes within an appropriate period of time.

Its objectives are to:

- Ensure that freshwater objectives reflect the values and aspirations of the community and comply with statutory requirements (such as meeting national bottom lines);
- Align local metrics and methodologies with the framework laid out in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM);
- Develop an action plan that matches the outcomes sought and has the broad support of the community;
- Provide a sufficiently rigorous basis for Horizons to meet its obligation to implement the NPSFM, for the Manawatū Catchment, through a regulatory plan-change process;
- Provide clear direction for non-regulatory initiatives in the catchment;
- Agree a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the catchment plan.

The approach we take should aim to strengthen the relationships—and a collaborative way of working—to provide the foundation for implementation (and eventual review) of the catchment plan.

Scope

This process occurs within a complex web of issues and relationships. The principle of integrated management sits alongside the need for a clear focus if we are to deliver results.

| In-Scope | Out-of-scope |
|---|---|
| Development of a catchment plan | Plan implementation, ongoing environmental improvement projects |
| NPSFM implementation: objectives, limits & targets, methods | Regulatory plan change; drafting of policies and rules |
| The Manawatū, its estuary and tributaries; groundwater, lakes and wetlands in the catchment | Waterbodies outside the Manawatū catchment |
| Downstream effects on the coastal environment | Strategies focused on the coastal environment |
| Environmental, social, cultural, and economic aspirations as they relate to fresh water; foreseeable effects of climate change on fresh water | A general plan for achieving social, cultural, or economic outcomes, or to address other environmental issues |

A Model for Collaborative Decision-Making

Freshwater management is complex. It depends on different forms of technical information and knowledge; it involves people's values. It is important for the wellbeing of our communities—and to uphold the mana of our waterbodies themselves. We believe people should have an opportunity to contribute to decisions that affect them, and that decisions which people understand and support are more likely to be effective.

It's not practicable, though, to actively involve a hundred thousand people in making decisions about our river. We think different groups will have different roles to play within the process.



Manawatū River Governance Group

We are considering establishment of a governance group of councillors and mana whenua representatives.

This group would oversee the process, appoint members to the catchment community group, manage risks, approve a catchment plan and recommend its adoption by the Regional Council.

The governance group may remain in place beyond the term of this project, to attend to implementation and evaluation of the catchment plan. We anticipate that, in due course, it would be dissolved and its functions taken over by the Manawatū River Advisory Board or returned to Regional Council.

We anticipate either 'empowering' or 'collaborating with' such a governance group. To allow for this, we would likely establish it as a committee of council.

4

Catchment Community Group

We propose to work with members of the community, through a collaborative group, to identify objectives, explore options, and develop a catchment plan that reflects the values and aspirations of the community.

Members should contribute a range of experience and expertise, and in-depth knowledge of the catchment and local communities. Our intention is that they not represent the interests of particular sectors or stakeholder groups, but reflect a broad cross-section of the community. Since this process will take place at a time when the regular highway connection between the eastern and western halves of the catchment is closed, particular attention will need to be paid to ensuring that the collaborative group is connected to communities throughout the catchment.

The appointment process, terms of reference, and arrangements for facilitation and chairing of the group will be determined by the Governance Group.

Technical Advisory Group

A technical advisory group (TAG) will support catchment planning across the region.

It will inform the process with the best available evidence and expert advice, drawing together data and analysis from a range of fields (biophysical and social science, economics, mātauranga, planning) to provide robust, independent, relevant advice.

The TAG will also have an important role to play in helping participants deal with uncertainty and conflict, and in clarifying which questions science can and cannot answer.

Other groups

Many other groups are already actively working to enhance waterbodies across the catchment. They have knowledge and experience that need to be considered in the process. Stakeholder groups will have important roles to play in implementing change, so it makes sense to involve them in developing interventions that will actually work.

We undertake to ‘involve’ those groups by providing opportunities for them to engage with the catchment community group to ensure their concerns and aspirations are reflected in the catchment plan.

The general public

The catchment community group will help us understand different perspectives, explore options, and test proposals—it will not replace wider engagement with the public. Public involvement in the process is likely to take many forms over the course of the catchment planning process.

The community at large should be provided with balanced, timely information to assist them in understanding problems, alternatives, opportunities and solutions. All information used in the process should be made available to the public via www.ourfreshwaterfuture.nz

5

There will also be opportunities within the process to ‘consult’ with the community on particular aspects of the plan being developed.

The Process

The process we propose broadly has four phases: set up, information, deliberation, and delivery. To that might be added implementation and evaluation—they are, however, beyond the scope of this initial plan.

In practice, the ‘information’ and ‘deliberation’ phases are likely to be somewhat iterative, looping back to earlier discussions to validate thinking and ensure alignment. Further information is likely to be required in response to the issues and policy questions that arise through the deliberation. The shift from ‘information’ to ‘deliberation’ is primarily a change in emphasis and initiative, as the focus moves from sharing knowledge to active enquiry.

A careful balance will need to be struck between allowing time for consideration of complex issues and maintaining momentum towards a plan to deliver better outcomes.

Set-up

September 2018 –
March 2019

To get started, we will have to establish the groups and communication channels the process will rely on: making appointments, agreeing terms of reference, ensuring appropriate resourcing and support, people getting to know each other.

Information

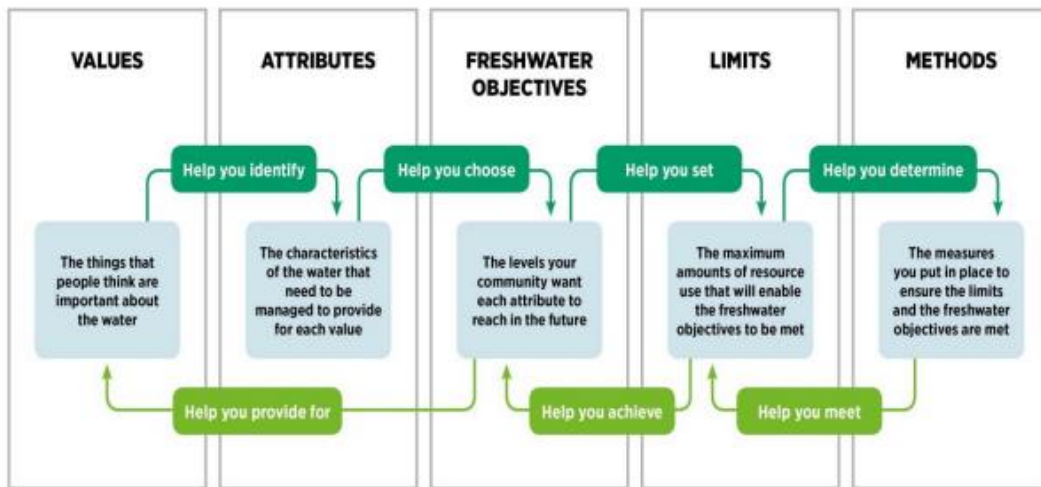
April 2019 –
December 2019

The next step will be to build a shared understanding of fresh water in the catchment and the factors that influence it. Initial information is likely to include the state of the environment, cultural and historical perspectives, policy considerations, and challenges such as natural hazards and climate change. It will include a stocktake of progress against the One Plan’s objectives, and advice as to how they translate to NPSFM measures.

Deliberation

January 2020 –
June 2021

Deliberations will broadly follow the process outlined in the NPSFM. Against the background of the information provided in the previous phase, and with appropriate input from the wider community, the collaborative group will review values and objectives for the catchment. With input from the TAG, it will identify corresponding limits (or targets). Working together with key stakeholder groups, the CCG will scope out options to achieve catchment objectives and, where targets are not met, timeframes for meeting them.



Delivery

July 2021 –
December 2021

Once a preferred set of solutions has been identified, the catchment plan will need to be drafted. The process by which the plan was developed, and relevant reference material, will need to be clearly documented. Good recordkeeping throughout prior phases will assist greatly in this.

The Governance Group will have delegated authority to approve the catchment plan. Once approved, it will be referred to organisations with identified actions for implementation. In the case of the regional council, this may include preparing any changes to the One Plan that may be required.

Related Activities

Proposed Plan Changes 2 & 3 (nutrient management)

Targeted changes to improve the workability of the One Plan's current nutrient management provisions are being investigated. Any provisions developed through this process are expected to supersede Plan Changes 2 & 3 in due course. The main interaction between the two processes arises from the potential confusion in the public domain while they are running in parallel.

Swimmability targets

Horizons was required to set draft swimmability targets in March 2018—70 percent by 2030. Final targets for 2030 and 2040 are to be published by December 2018. Although these are not differentiated by catchment, they will shape the choices available.

National regulations

Evolving national direction is part of our operating environment. There will be ongoing amendments to regulations, including the NPSFM. The government has, for example, signalled an intention to provide stronger direction around nutrient management, including a consistent methodology for nitrogen allocation (presumably modulated by catchment-specific targets).

This process needs to proceed towards developing a comprehensive set of tools to achieve better freshwater outcomes for the Manawatū, but be flexible enough to accept that some mechanisms may be determined by central government.

Ongoing environmental improvement initiatives

Several initiatives led by Horizons (e.g. SLUI), iwi (e.g. Tū te Manawa) or community groups (e.g. Source to Sea) run in parallel with this process. While the purpose of the catchment plan is to facilitate better alignment and coordination of effort, practical on-the-ground work should not be deferred while a plan is developed.

Implementation of the catchment plan

Implementation of the catchment plan is beyond the scope of this document. It is likely to include amendments to statutory plans, adjustments to funding policies, freshwater improvement projects, education, and in time review of the catchment plan itself. This process must deliver a robust basis for regulatory change, and sound relationships for further collaboration.

Horowhenua and Rangitikei catchment processes

Nutrient allocation mechanisms and other technical details should be consistent across catchments, as far as possible. Information that comes to light in considering other catchments may influence how recommendations from this process are operationalised.

Subject to practicalities, regulatory plan changes to support these three catchment plans are likely to be progressed through a single statutory process.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Freshwater management has both biophysical and social elements: so does success, and so should its evaluation.

The catchment plan will include a framework for monitoring progress. This is likely to draw on the environmental data required by the NPSFM and routinely collected and published by Horizons. It should also include agreed indicators of social, economic, and cultural outcomes.

Evaluation of the catchment planning process itself is also desirable, so that lessons can be learned and applied to future processes. As the first collaborative catchment planning process conducted in this region, it will be important to understand the resourcing (financial and human) required. In addition, social perception (satisfaction, fairness, transparency) should also be assessed. An evaluation plan should be approved by the Governance Group early in the process.

What do you think?

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

8

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