

Setting limits and rules, and preparing action plans | Te whakatau herenga, ture rānei, me ngā mahere whakatutuki

Overview | Tirohanga whānui

Waikato Regional Council is carrying out a Freshwater Policy Review in response to central government's Essential Freshwater package, which is about stopping further degradation of New Zealand's fresh water and improving its quality and ecosystem health.

A key element of the package is an update to the *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020* (NPS-FM), which provides direction on how we manage fresh water under the Resource Management Act (RMA).

To give effect to the NPS-FM, we must ensure that environmental outcomes identified by tangata whenua and communities will be

achieved. We'll be able to do this by setting limits on resource use, establishing rules to reflect these limits and preparing action plans.

For the purposes of the Freshwater Policy Review, environmental outcomes are tracked through target attribute states – the measurable characteristic that tell us the health of the water. Rules and action plans are methods we use to help our rohe meet these targets. For some attributes, the achievement of target states and environmental outcomes will be by limits on resource use, and for some by the preparing of action plans.

What do we mean by setting limits?

Mō te whakatau herenga

As prescribed by the NPS-FM, we are required to place limits on the use of resources to achieve target attribute states¹. These limits are set as rules in the *Waikato Regional Plan*.

Under the NPS-FM, we must include limits on resource use to achieve the target attribute states for the following attributes:

- phytoplankton for lakes
- periphyton for rivers
- total nitrogen and total phosphorus for lakes
- ammonia toxicity for rivers and lakes
- nitrate toxicity for rivers
- dissolved oxygen for rivers below point-source discharges
- suspended fine sediment for rivers
- escherichia coli (E. coli) for lakes and rivers
- cyanobacteria for lakes and lake-fed rivers.

We are also required to limit nutrients (where they might have an effect on a desired target attribute) by setting nitrogen and phosphorus exceedance criteria and instream concentrations.

We are directed to set water take limits for waterbodies² to protect environmental flows and levels and can choose to include additional limits to achieve other target attribute states or environmental outcomes³.

Rules on resource use may include:

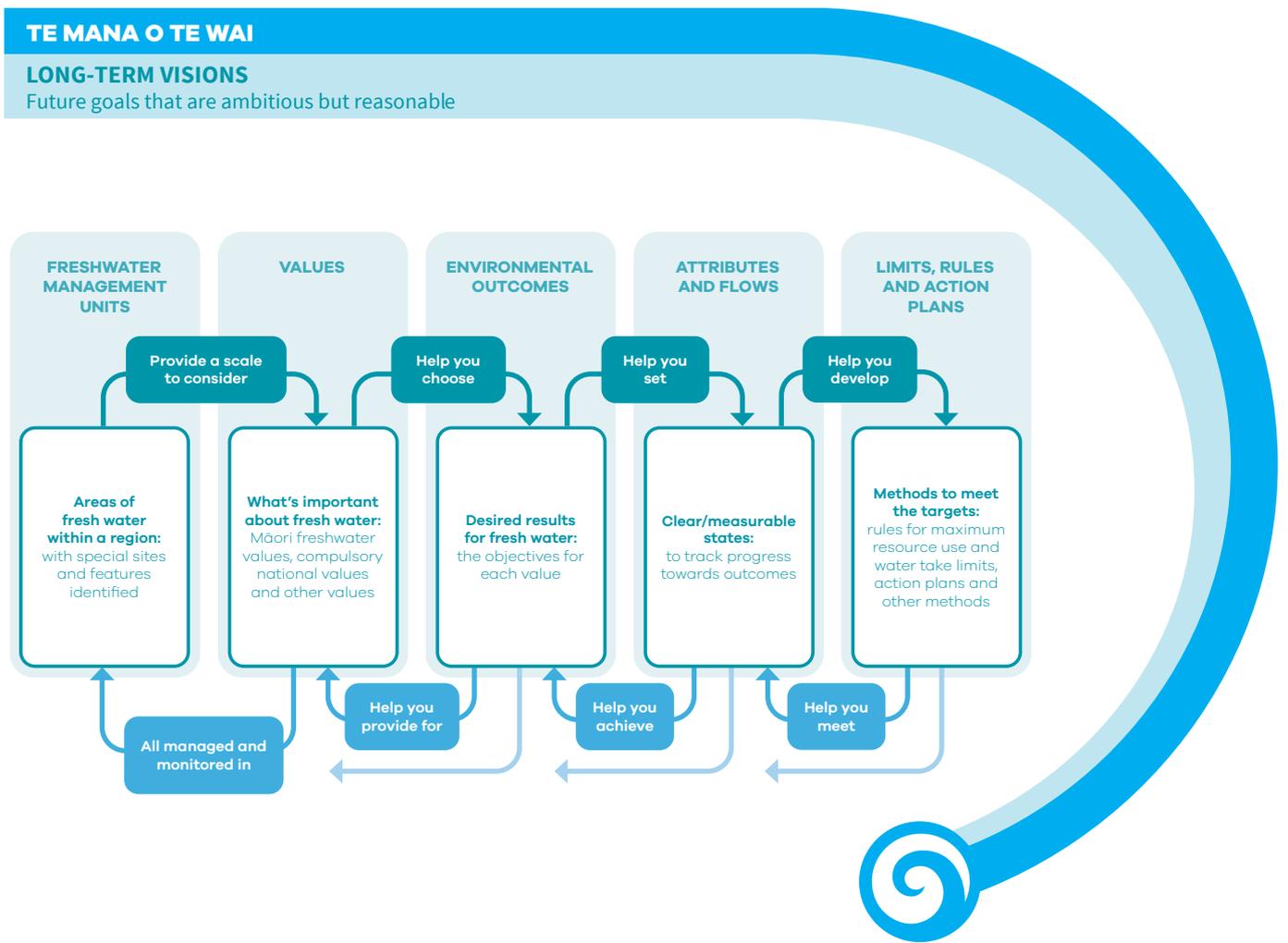
- land use controls (e.g. where or to what extent a particular activity may take place)
- input controls (e.g. maximum livestock numbers or amount of fertiliser applied)
- output controls (e.g. maximum volume of discharge).

¹Refer to Information sheet 8 of 11 – Attributes.

²Refer to Information sheet 9 of 11 – Environmental flows, levels and limits.

³Refer to Information sheet 7 of 11 – Environmental outcomes.

Figure 1



What do we mean by action plans?

Mō ngā mahere whakatutuki

Actions plans describe how we can work together with tangata whenua and our communities to achieve target attribute states.

Action plans can describe both:

- regulatory measures (setting rules and limits on resource use in regional plans) and
- non-regulatory measures (other practical actions to be taken by council or in collaboration with others).

An action plan pulls both the statutory and practical methods together to help deliver freshwater outcomes in a coordinated way. Action plans can be one of the mechanisms to take action in response to the detection of degraded or degrading sites.

Under the NPS-FM, action plans are required to achieve certain target attribute states such as:

- submerged plants – native and invasive – in lakes
- fish in wadeable rivers
- macroinvertebrates in wadeable rivers

- deposited fine sediment in wadeable rivers
- dissolved oxygen in rivers and lakes
- dissolved reactive phosphorus in rivers
- ecosystem metabolism in rivers
- *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) at primary contact sites in lakes and rivers.

We can also choose to create action plans to achieve other target attribute states or support the achievement of environmental outcomes.

What are regulatory measures?

Mō ngā tikanga ā-ture

Simply put, regulatory measures are set in a regulatory document, like rules in a regional plan, prepared under the Resource Management Act (RMA). Examples of regulatory measures could be in the form of caps and limits, setting a standard such as design specifications or setting restrictions on activities. The rules in a regional plan will identify whether or not you need a resource consent.

What are non-regulatory measures?

Mō ngā tikanga arataki

Non-regulatory measures are those not captured by legislation, and may include work plans, partnership arrangements, environmental education and projects run by community groups.

We already have several examples of non-regulatory measures, including zone plans to guide work programmes, and lake, wetland, catchment and harbour management plans. The freshwater aspects of these non-regulatory measures could be included in action plans, or form the basis of action plans under the NPS-FM.

Our existing management plans typically include:

- an introduction to the catchment
- key issues or matters that need to be managed/improved/restored in the catchment
- time-bound goals for the catchment related to the key matters
- specific strategies for each goal, best practices and key actions to be undertaken by various stakeholders, including landowners, to achieve the goals
- funding opportunities.

Here are some examples

Lake Waikare and Whangamarino Wetland Catchment Management Plan

The *Lake Waikare and Whangamarino Wetland Catchment Management Plan* is intended to address issues identified in the catchment and provides a framework to guide future work programmes for those involved in catchment management. The plan is noted as being a tool to assist the council in delivering its strategic direction.

Waipā Catchment Plan

The *Waipā Catchment Plan* sets 20-year goals for the catchment regarding protection and restoration of its health and wellbeing, with strategies to implement those goals as well as funding options.

Harbour and Catchment Management Plan – Whangapoua 2015

This harbour and catchment management plan is a non-statutory document that provides the overall strategy for addressing issues within the Whangapoua harbour and catchment. It includes actions that will make a difference to the environment in the next 10-50 years.

Waikato Region Shallow Lakes Management Plan

The *Waikato Region Shallow Lakes Management Plan* is divided into three areas: policy and planning, information and monitoring, and lake restoration and rehabilitation. The plan identifies specific methods for protecting the region's shallow lakes and associated wetlands.

Coromandel Zone Management Plan

The *Coromandel Zone Management Plan* provides the broad direction for the implementation of Waikato Regional Council's Integrated Catchment Management directorate activities within the Coromandel Zone. The zone plan includes a high level programme of implementation actions, grouped in focus areas that respond directly to the 30 goals identified in the plan.

Where can I find more information? | Mō te puna kōrero

Check out waikatoregion.govt.nz/freshwater-policy-review to find:

- information sheets breaking down the Freshwater Policy Review
- how to share your views
- a summary of key milestones
- update on our progress.

You can also email us at policy@waikatoregion.govt.nz or call 0800 800 401 to speak to a member of our Freshwater Policy Review team.

