

Outstanding waterbodies

Ngā momo puna wai

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 freshwater and improving its quality and ecosystem health.

A key component of the Freshwater Policy Review is to identify outstanding freshwater waterbodies to ensure the values

tangata whenua and communities have for these waterbodies are protected. To do this, we want your input to help identify outstanding waterbodies in your area and to test whether the criteria for identifying them are appropriate. Your input will be used to inform revisions to our *Waikato Regional Policy Statement* and development of a new *Waikato Regional Plan*.

What is an outstanding waterbody?

Mō ngā momo puna wai

The *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020* (NPS-FM) describes outstanding waterbodies as:

A waterbody, or part of a waterbody, identified in a regional policy statement, a regional plan or a water conservation order as having one or more outstanding values.

Other councils have also considered what an outstanding waterbody is and the values that contribute to a waterbody being classified as 'outstanding'. Generally, it is understood that:

- the term 'outstanding' distinguishes something from others based on its exceptional qualities and is typically used to describe the 'best of the best'
- criteria to identify outstanding freshwater bodies should be similar to that of a Water Conservation Order, but in a regional context
- a waterbody can only be reviewed in the context of its present condition; it cannot be identified as an outstanding waterbody based on its past condition or potential.

What about freshwater values?

Mō ngā mātāpono waimāori

A value is what you consider important about fresh water. It can include ecological, landscape or natural character, spiritual, cultural and recreational values. For the Freshwater Policy Review, we want your input to help identify and understand these values so we can establish ways to ensure they are enjoyed for generations to come.

What are the criteria for identifying an outstanding waterbody?

Mō ngā paearu puna wai

We currently have methods to identify and manage outstanding waterbodies and significant values of wetlands through a values setting process set out in the *Waikato Regional Policy Statement*. To ensure these methods can continue to meet the requirements of the NPS-FM, we want to test this approach and, if we need to, establish different criteria for identifying an outstanding waterbody and the significant values associated with it.

Once outstanding waterbodies and significant values of wetlands have been established, we will be committed to managing the effects of activities to ensure that significant freshwater values are protected, maintained or improved.

The below table provides examples of waterbodies in our rohe that have been identified as significant.

Water body	Criteria	Information source
Kopuatai Peat Dome	Wetlands identified as being of international importance.	<i>Waikato Regional Policy Statement</i> Map 8B: Map of freshwater bodies and wetlands.
Lake Rotoaira	Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly volcanic landscape, highly memorable and natural. Ecological/scientific/recreational/heritage values; significance to tangata whenua and to population in general.	<i>Waikato Regional Policy Statement</i> Table 12-1: Outstanding natural features and landscapes (ONFL) of regional significance. Map 8B: Map of freshwater bodies and wetlands.
Lake Taupō	Expansive area of water, memorable and vivid, natural character. Forms the foreground to Tongariro National Park viewed from the north. Significance to tangata whenua. Recreational values including trout fishing, water skiing and boating.	<i>Waikato Regional Policy Statement</i> Table 12-1: Outstanding natural features and landscapes (ONFL) of regional significance. Map 8B: Map of freshwater bodies and wetlands.
Whangamarino Wetland	Habitat for threatened species and sensitive raised bog ecosystems.	<i>Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1: Waikato and Waipā River Catchments.</i>

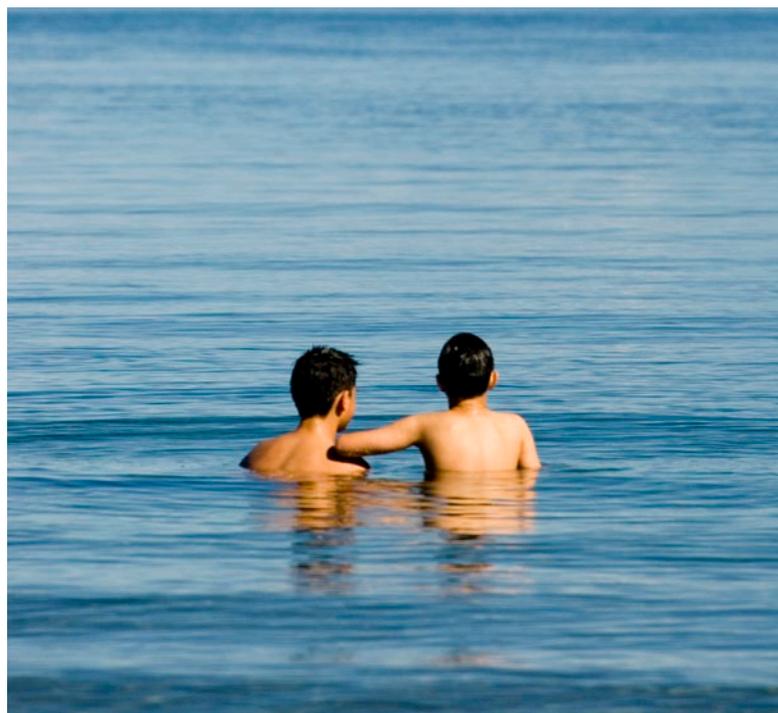
Where to from here?

Mō te ara whakamua

The NPS-FM does not provide guidance on how to identify outstanding waterbodies, so we'll be looking at the criteria and principles we've established via other council processes. We'll also look at the work being undertaken by central government and other regional councils for this exercise, including:

- guidance from the NPS-FM on the meaning of a 'value'
- criteria for Water Conservation Orders (s199 of the RMA)
- other council projects, including Hawke's Bay Regional Council's Outstanding Freshwater Bodies Project and the *Otago Regional Policy Statement*.

The National Objectives Framework's banded structure (e.g. poor, fair, good, excellent) could also assist in identifying waterbodies and wetlands that fall into the outstanding category, while using a guideline that is nationally consistent.



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

Check out [waikatoregion.govt.nz/freshwater-policy-review](https://www.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.