

Meeting notes – Regional Plans Review

This document is a record of notes taken from meetings in relation to the review of the regional plans. This is a living document – notes are added to this document as (or soon after) the meetings happen.

Contents

[RMA Northland Forestry Development Group– 16 September 2014](#)
[District councils workshop - 2 October 2014](#)
[Mangere Catchment Group - Tuesday 14 October 2014](#)
[Poueroa Catchment Group - Monday 13 October 2014](#)
[Waitangi Catchment Group - Thursday 9 October 2014](#)
[Whangarei Catchment Group - Tuesday 23 September 2014](#)
[Doubtless Bay Catchment Group - Wednesday 24 September 2014](#)
[Doubtless Bay Catchment Group - Wednesday 22 October 2014](#)
[Dairy Industry Liaison Group – 6 November 2014](#)

RMA Northland Forestry Development Group– 16 September 2014

NRC staff in attendance:

Ben Lee, Ben Tait, Tess Dacre, and Lesley Webb.

Purpose of meeting:

A 3 monthly meeting of forestry interests with NRC to discuss RMA related matters. Ben L and Ben T did a presentation on the regional plan review with a focus on water quality.

Notes:

- NRC proposed idea of setback from dune lakes to manage nutrient inputs into forestry. Participants questioned where the nutrients from forestry were coming from i.e. that it's minimal.
 - Plantation forestry NES still on the radar for government – supposedly about to do the cost/benefit analysis.
 - Question asked re what the baseline was for determining the quality of dune lakes e.g. pre-human? Pre-forestry?
 - Point made that riparian strips have to be managed.
 - Question asked about sediment source tracking and how long does the isotype 'signature' last in the soil e.g. if native forest cut down and now pasture, how long does the native forest signature stay in the soil?
 - Point made that thresholds for earthworks rule doesn't need to be lowered – can just require that council be notified as part of a permitted rule.
 - Check to see if Farm Forestry Association has been invited to work shops – check their website for contact details. Peter Davies-Colley and Les Carr.
 - Group happy for Ursula Buckingham (Hancock) to be the key contact for testing ideas with.
-

District councils workshop - 2 October 2014

Agenda:

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome, housekeeping and introductions
9:15 – 9:30	Overview - brief discussion about the plan review process and the next steps.
9:30 – 10:00	Coastal structures – private and council owned (including stormwater outlet structures)
10:00 – 10:15	Mangrove removal
10:15 – 11:15	Discharges/water quality – wastewater overflows, industrial discharges into municipal networks, earthworks & land disturbance (District Plan relationship), controls on new development, and network consents
11:15– 12:00	Water quantity - implications of highly allocated catchments (in terms of water supply expansion/new development), diversions & drainage, catchment thresholds for design of culverts.
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch (provided)
12:30 – 1:00	Air - closed landfills, burning of material in urban areas (as this relates to waste collection), dust from unsealed roads.
1:00 – 1:30	Natural hazards - potential overlaps with Building Regs/District Plan requirements, earthworks in floodplains, overland flowpaths.
1:30 – 2:00	Significant Natural Heritage Values - integrated management of activities in CMA and landward extent of coastal environment.

In attendance:

NRC - Ben Tait, Robyn Broadhurst, Ben Tait, Michael Payne, Michael Day, Justin Murfitt, James Griffin, Stuart Savill, Susie O,
FNDC - Various by way of video conference
KDC - Stephen Soole
KDC - Henri van Zyl, Brian Armstrong, Shelley Paniora, Vanessa Anich
WDC - Adam Twose, Fiona Pratt, A Hartstone, Jeffrey Devine, Paul Waanders, Robin Rawn, David Coleman,

Notes:

Coastal

Dredging and heavy machinery on foreshore

- Proposal to have storm water outlet structures clearance permitted - DC's agree.
- WDC has consent for clearing stream mouths which have conditions such as limits on when it can occur to mitigate impact on birds and archeological alerts. WDC accept that if this type of activity were to be permitted, that there would be similar standards - accept that there are issues that need control.
- WDC / KDC - would like permitted activity for maintenance activities where heavy machinery used, with standards. If excavation then accept that consent needed.
- Storm water outlet clearance - to include flood gate maintenance (KDC have many).
- DC's - ok with permitted heavy machinery use to be limited to DC's. Question though about legality of rule applying to a particular 'person'. DC's could provide list of existing walls, storm water outlets etc.

- With stream mouth, storm water outlet or floodgate clearance it's often something that needs immediate attention. Often a timing thing - don't want to have to wait for consent

Moorings

- Impact of mooring use a minor issue for WDC. Noise - is bit of an issue
- FNDC - not looking to change parking requirements for marinas.
- Ongoing Issue of mooring owners paying \$ to pay for land based services. WDC encouraged NRC to look at options e.g. financial contribution.

Reclamations/airport

- WDC raised the concern about the MM1 rules prohibiting e.g. reclamation for an airport. NRC explained the proposal to remove the MM1 areas and replaced by the value based overlays.

Occupation

- Discussed potential for ongoing occupation for minor structures to be permitted. DC's keen. NRC raised point though about resource consent providing greater security than permitted activity status.

Vehicles on beaches

- DC's would like to be involved in any discussions about proposal to limit vehicle use on beaches.

Mangroves

- DC's - keen for mangrove removal to be permitted but recognise that there differing community views.

Biodiversity offsetting

- Recognition that councils should work together to develop guidelines etc for biodiversity offsetting.

Water quality/discharges

Waste water

- DC's agree to need to continually improve but investment has to be prioritised e.g. sensitivity of receiving environments.
- NRC not envisaging significant changes for waste water discharges. Likely to be linked to BPO.
- Legal issue with overflows - may not be able to make them permitted.

Onsite disposal

- Urban transition zone - lots of consents coming through for large lot subdivisions. Question asked about the cumulative impact of on-site effluent disposal e.g. on ground water. Also a potential problem for coastal and rural villages Monitoring not showing it's a significant issue.
- FNDC do a 5 yearly WOF scheme for on-site waste water. Was increased from 3 years.

Municipal discharge connections to waste water networks

- Any connection will need DC approval.

Earthworks

- KDC - most of their consents are for earthworks - thresholds are 5000m³ in rural and 1000m³ in sensitive areas and even less in residential. FNDC have similar to KDC thresholds but more landscape based. WDC - don't have earthworks rules other than in outstanding landscapes.
- WDC happy with the current NRC 5000m³ limit.
- Challenge is to reduce the double consenting. Community frustration and confusion of having to get consent for same activity from two councils. Councils should explore transfer of functions. When explored in the past there's been some concern about relinquishing 'power' to another council.
- Idea of industry based approaches to rules discussed e.g. accredited contractors having less constraining rules. General agreement that this is worth exploring.
- WDC do receive a bit a community concern about earthworks but not a big issue..
- FNDC bylaw? It relates to setbacks from boundaries and water bodies. Looking to amend and align with regional council.

Riparian management zones

- NRC looking at options to make it easier to define. Would be science based.

Water quantity

Water takes

- NRC indicated that municipal takes likely to have priority.
- KDC has an issue with Dargaville water supply. How do you deal with emergency situations? Noted that this take has consent.
- Trading water takes, what's the story? An option but lots of fish hooks. Water sharing groups looking like a better option.
- What about industry? Existing users - will have to have good grounds to significantly reduce takes. If industry want to increase production then will depend on amount of head room in allocation limit or looking at alternative sources e.g. dams.
- NRC confirmed that there's no link between flood river priority work and priority water management groups.
- NRC described the catchment group process. District council's have reps on each catchment groups.
- Water harvesting - FNDC we're looking at requiring water tanks where limited alternative supplies. May become an issue in highly allocated areas. Possibly an issue in coastal areas re aquifers.

Structures

- Current rules permissive. NRC noted that we don't know where many structures are and what the extent of their impact is. One option is keeping permitted but requiring council notification.
- Considering retrofitting for fish passage. Fish passage - WDC only dealt with one retrofit.
- WDC plea for structures is to not increase bureaucracy. Don't penalise the good operators because of bad apples. WDC happy with current rules.
- Contractors federation - use these groups to improve standards etc. Contractors hungry for knowledge.
- Be careful with retrofitting - need to be justified and not across the board.

Air quality

Dust on roads

- WDC need to prioritise - we can't seal all roads..
- Looking at options e.g. requiring setbacks for new buildings. Also talking to Ministry of Health about health effects. Current rules re dust discharges fine - WDC.
- Stuart - thinks that we need to look at how we can better manage dust on roads.
- WDC - please make sure you talk to us about any proposed rules.
- Speed restrictions? Can't ask driver to reduce to 30km/hr for 20 km.

Waste oil

- No more refined waste freely oil available. WDC - cheaper to seal road than to treat a road over 30 years with waste oil or propriety product.
- WDC used to run a permitted scheme where they let people apply oil in front of there house. Benefit of waste oil is that it's free. DC's unlikely to want to use waste oils because it's not a cost effective option - but it is cost effective for individuals.

Closed landfills

- Pohe island require ongoing consent? Closed landfills need to meet certain conditions.

Air sheds

- If all industrial land developed, how is air shed capacity allocated? First in first served and the air shed is based only particular contaminant e.g. Marsden Point air shed is only for sulphar

Odour

- Pump station odour? Potentially existing rules require consent for odour but grey. Not a big issue though.
- WDC get complaints about curry kitchens!

Burning of garden waste

Question raised about unrestricted burning next to an air shed (Whau Valley example given) - smoke nuisance issue. Could extend air shed. Noted that may be much of the material being burnt is not legally able to be (e.g. plastics) anyway.

Natural hazards

Coastal protection

- Soft coastal options over hard structures. NZCPS directs that soft options prioritised over hard structures, this is reflected in new RPS.
- WDC - Whangarei harbours has lots of hard structures. Don't want to have to replace with soft structures.
- NRC confirmed that the direction to not disrupt dune applies to mobile dunes and not stabilised back dunes.

Earthworks in floodplains

- Cumulative effects of earthworks in floodplains. WDC - happy with suggested approach for managing earthworks in floodplains provided it's clear where it applies and it's justified.
- WDC a bit concerned about implications of e.g. raising road platforms. NRC explained that floodwater management is a significant issue and impacts need to be particularly assess because of the potential impacts on people and property.

Coastal hazard erosion lines

- Any intention to build anything into the plans re tsunamis? New RPS floor level requirements will account for some small tsunami, but impractical to have development restrictions for large tsunami.

Land subsidence

- Land subsidence - unlikely that regional plans will go there.

Overland flow paths

- WDC and KDC have many issues with development affecting overland flow paths - rules are not clear. WDC are using easements to provide for overland flow paths.
- In theory a large number of developments have overland flow path issues.
- NRC suggested that overland flow path maintenance is a part of permitted rule.
- Need to think about how to differentiate between regional council and district council management. This is something that needs a good look at.

Significant natural values

- NRC outlined proposed mapping of overlays in CMA.
- Will need to be some discussions between regional councils and district councils about identified areas that span mean high water springs e.g. indigenous bird habitat

Pest management

- Good neighbour rule - will it be enforceable? Yes for particular species. WDC happy with it.
- WDC - want to continue to work on a prioritised basis about where they manage roadside weeds. They like the process of sitting down with NRC and working it out.
- NRC - prioritisation is a principle for future approach.
- WDC list of roadside weeds doesn't match NRC list of weeds.

Action - Ben to circulate list of subject matters to DC's who will then provide a single point of contact for each matter.

Mangere Catchment Group - Tuesday 14 October 2014

Item 3: Regional Plans review: Freshwater quality and quantity

Presentation by Justin Murfitt, Senior Programme Manager – Resource Policy, NRC

Discussion Points:

- **Age of data** – the data presented is dated - we now have more monitoring sites;
- **Climate Change** – the effects of climate change, e.g. Weather events are re-profiling rivers and causing damage.
- **Dairy NZ Water Accord** – currently there is no reason for NRC to differ from the accord.
- **Dissolved Oxygen** – different methodologies produce different attribute states;
- **E. coli** – no adverse effects on the natural environment, however human health objectives are compulsory;

- **Education** – needed. If requirements haven't been met, we can follow through with education;
- **Flat-lining** - does this happen in Northland?
- **Forestry** – the first forestry rotation can cause earth work concerns. The second rotation requires much less infrastructure;
- **Forestry and farming on very steep land** - erosion prone land is a layer in the NRC Water and Soil Plan. There are controls for vegetation clearance and some forestry activities;
- **Horticulture** – should be taking lesser quality water, not water at drinking water standard;
- **Land retirement** - maybe some areas have to be retired and return to native bush. Would there be compensation?
- **Level playing field wanted** – identified at the NRC water quantity workshop. Also, maybe practicality of cost could be added, e.g. fencing steep country;
- **Mangere Catchment** – a highly allocated catchment and a priority catchment, however it may not be highly allocated in practical terms. No allocation limits set, maintenance levels only;
- **Metering** gives better data;
- **Mini plan** written by the catchment group can pop inside the NRC plan. Some solutions will apply to other catchments;
- **Monitoring farm dairy effluent** – dairy farmers are charged under the Local Government Act. They are also charged for water takes. Huge discrepancies between industries?
- **Monitoring of permitted activities** – there are currently no fees for the monitoring of permitted activities;
- **NOFs** - additional NOF values will be introduced in 2016 (MCI – bug counts) and 2019;
- **Non-notified bores** are well-policed now. However, we are not always aware of where or how many historical drilled bores there are. Some areas - not Whatitiri - have been investigated. Some people are reluctant to register their bores. Whatitiri provides 42% of Whangarei's water.
- **Notification** – does requiring notification make for a controlled activity?
- **Nutrient levels** are likely around lakes and for some rivers;
- **Permitted activity rule** – are people letting NRC know if high risk activities are taking place?
- **Problems** - water banking and duration of consent issues;
- **Reasonable** – the word won't be defined, but there will be some guidelines around it, e.g. reasonable needs of individual animals;
- **Re-assessment** will need to occur in some catchments – what is used is not what is allocated, but we have to manage to what is allocated. We need to model effects, e.g. on habitat. This catchment specific work would inform the group, so that it can make informed decisions;
- **Regulations** – all communities want different things. This is a complex issue with lots of conversations needed – not just a few workshops – before determining regulations;
- **Regulatory controls** - NRC will have some form of regulatory control around stock access to water bodies;
- **Reviewing consents** –reviewing consents for the purpose of realistic allocations;
- **Setting limits** – set limits have a direct flow on effect to the catchments below
- **Slips in native bush** – there is a balance between natural and man-made slips;

- **Small river dynamics** - extreme events of very high or very low flows won't be expected to meet the ecosystem health measures;
 - **Water allocation limits** – is the system out of whack? Do we know what take or volume is?
 - **Water efficiency conditions** – There will be a need to demonstrate a need for what has been allocated. This may be a way to get back water resource and achieve economic growth in an over-allocated catchment;
 - **Water restrictions** – what activities take priority? e.g. hydroponics versus drinking water;
 - **Water storage** - security of supply. What is viable? Open dams may not be the answer;
 - **Water takes** can't go below maintenance levels, however this may happen naturally;
 - **Values** - catchment groups are determining values;
-

Pouto Catchment Group - Monday 13 October 2014

Justin Murfitt gave a presentation on the Regional Plan review process.

Discussion points:

- Discussion drafts are available on NRC's website.
- NRC are now holding workshops with communities and stakeholders with a view to putting all the community's feedback together by December. They will then start redrafting the Regional Plans.
- It was asked how those who were not attending the workshops could give feedback. Justin confirmed that NRC will accept feedback in any form including by e-mail.

Draft Regional Plans will be available for public comment by around mid-2016 and then be publicly notified around mid-2017.

It was asked how does phosphorus gets into the lakes. Answerer; phosphorus is commonly transported with sediment in surface runoff. Furthermore it can enter lakes if fertilizer is accidentally applied on or too close to the water.

Questions were also asked about lake hydrology. Justin noted that studies are being done to address these questions.

It was asked if sediment is covered under the National Policy Statement on Freshwater. Justin confirmed that it is not, however NRC will cover it in Northland's Regional Plans even if there is no statutory requirement to do so.

A member noted that sediment is the biggest issue for the Kaipara Harbour.

It was asked if the Pouto Catchment Group could have input into the Regional Plan reviews. Justin confirmed that the Group can.

Justin reminded the Group that it is important not to set unachievable goals.

A member asked about how contamination from natural sources would be addressed. Justin said this would be addressed through prioritisation.

A member said that rules applied to rural areas should also be applied in urban areas. Setting a double standard between the town and the country would not be fair. They suggested that inorganic compounds be added to the framework. He also said that the same rules should apply for urban wastewater plants as for farmers with stock effluent systems. At present farmers must have 100% compliance every day of the year or they get a fine whereas urban wastewater schemes can have an occasional overflow without penalty.

It was asked what Auckland Council is doing regarding the review of its Regional Plans. Justin said NRC are working with Auckland Council on this.

A member said it was sad that wetlands do not have a rating under the National Policy Statement on Freshwater. He said that their value should be acknowledged with regard to their value to minimise sediment.

There was discussion over 'Outstanding water bodies' and what qualifies them as 'Outstanding'. It was asked what restrictions will apply to them.

Justin identified the difference between targets and limits. A target is what one tries to achieve. A limit is what one cannot breach without getting an abatement notice or a fine.

Questions were raised over water storage at times of high and low flows, especially regarding times of high flow when the proposed rules do not allow the taking of more than a set amount.

Concern was raised that allowing water permit holders to transfer their water allocations could create an issue with people getting large water consents and then selling water rights for commercial gain to other users.

Waitangi Catchment Group - Thursday 9 October 2014

Item 2 Regional plan review presentation from Justin Murfitt:

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Timeline for proposed regional plan becoming operative?
- Which has more weight in consent applications – operative or proposed plans?
Freshwater elements may have early date of effect in proposed plans.
- Would changes to RMA have an effect on the group's workplan? Focus likely to be S6 of the Act, since NPS Freshwater Management was produced by the current National government.
- Will collaborative approach be strengthened under RMA reform? Yes this is likely.
- Will group prepare report? Yes.

- Have heavy metals been considered? Yes and we are well below any trigger guidelines.
- What happens when sediment is shown to have 1 or 2 metres gain? Comes back to what is the source of the sediment and is it manageable.
- Core samples – do the samples show pre farming activity?
- In addition to scientific research, council should interview people to get a perspective of historic sediment deposition.
- Why is there no control over inappropriate fertiliser application? Council can't control that unless it gets in the water. Runoff is not controlled yet. It's a science and policy issue.
- Has council considered the economic impact of the bureaucracy? Yes we have to (by law) do a cost benefit analysis and test provisions.
- How are recommendations from the catchment group addressed? Same way – cost benefit analysis.

Action 1 NRC staff to scan and circulate article to catchment group: "Scheme has streams mending their ways" NZ Farmer, September 16, 2014, p16.

- Discharges of farm dairy effluent and other primary producers – regulatory vs good management practices depending of sensitivity of catchment? E.g. dune lakes.
- Freshwater Management Unit monitoring approach? Council would group these units, e.g. lakes and have same rule approach for the group. E.g. fence the margins and plant.
- Differentiating between earthworks and cultivation maybe fraught. May end up with controls around that to differentiate.
- Rules: what planning on landuse to preserve productive land? Council can control landuse change on soils of class 1, 2 and 3. District Councils currently control subdivisions.
- Land use requirements: do we consult with AgResearch? Who do we seek advice from for landuse fertilisers, cropping, what farmers should or should not be able to do? There is good practice available now on farmer best practice for fertiliser application. Gap with soil science and not many in Northland. Need to know which soils need to be protected. Farmers are looking for a balance in council advice.
- Walkways along rivers are on the increase – non farm animals e.g. dogs and other domesticated animals are also impacting catchments, including pipi beds.
- Exclusion of stock from waterways. Land and water forum did not come up with hard rule, but councils and communities can have that debate.
- Does regional council monitor forestry industry? Yes, earthworks. Significant scale forestry operations need earthworks consents and are monitored. Seasonal effects are managed by harvest plan, including leaving buffers around water bodies. Very stringent resource consent controls on forestry, compared with farmers for example. Should forestry guidelines be shared with farmers for them to develop good management practices around? An accredited industry guideline may become the council rule.
- Environment fund: How large is it? \$7K for sheep and beef and \$5K for dairy. Aimed at productive units. Farm Water Quality Improvement Plan is required as prerequisite

to funding application. Sections of the Waitangi catchment are changing to lifestyle block. \$600K allocated this year for Environment Fund.

- Farmers have undertaken major environmental improvement work in recent years, e.g. effluent ponds.
- Do we have water take picture for Waitangi? Yes, modelled permitted takes.
- No credit given for taking high flow water. Council will need to understand actual use. One consent with take at bottom of the catchment may not be affecting the allocation of the whole catchment detrimentally.
- Are we including groundwater? Yes. And some groundwater directly affects availability of surface water.
- Will stock water be affected, or just the major irrigation schemes? We'll be looking at the whole catchment, but we are unlikely to take away existing stock water.
- Is council going to make farmers meter their stock water? This seems unfair when farmers have already fenced off streams that previously provided stock water, and installed expensive stock water reticulation systems. Most farmers are destocking when water levels are low. Council is trying to get an accurate picture of water use in order to avoid over regulating. Currently using figure of 70 litres per dairy head per day. Is that accurate? We don't yet know. Different farms have different farming systems and therefore different water use.
- Can Council turn the water off? E.g. for dairy shed wash down. Human health and animal health are priority for water allocation. Common sense and innovation with result, e.g. trading.
- Promoting efficiency of use is what we are really after. Government's idea is that putting limits in place will drive efficiencies.
- Will streams that naturally dry up over summer be topped up?
- Could Lake Omapere act as a water bank? The Trust's aim is to get the lake deeper. Trust believes it may help to recharge both Utakura and Waitangi rivers
- Could I apply for a water take consent, and then trade? Could a neighbour's consent prevent another from taking during a dry spell? All consents across the catchment would be considered collectively. One person taking all the water through consent to water bank is unlikely. Council may make dam building a bit easier in terms of reducing resource management regulations.
- Cumulative hydrological impact of dams – minimum flows, wildlife, flood control.

Action 2: Council staff to distribute dam hydrological modelling info for Waitangi to catchment group when available.

- Will permitted activity rules be reviewed up or down? Case by case basis.
- Cost of getting consent plus monitoring and meter cost seems unfair process, when farmers are doing the right thing by fencing off their streams voluntarily.
- Why do farmers need consent if covered by water shortage direction?
- Competition for water should be considered, including changing methods of production.
- Value of the water is then debated.
- Council is trying to get an accurate picture of what is used.

- Water is an asset owned by us all. When the tax payer contributes to a scheme, eg. to a town water supply, only then should the user of the water pay.
 - As long as no monetary value on the water then can have a minimum flow.
 - Disagree – water is a valuable asset and should have a monetary value in order to properly cost the value of the land use. What we are doing at the moment may not be the best land use in perpetuity for the catchment.
 - Compliance cost of dams – regional council rules are only part of it. District Council building consents also apply.
-

Whangarei Catchment Group - Tuesday 23 September 2014

1. Presentation: Regional Plan Review – Key finds water quality

This presentation was given by Ben Tait, Policy Specialist (Water), NRC.

Questions/comments arising from the Presentation:

- The big three contaminants are nutrients, sediment and fecal matter.
 - The current plan focused on point discharges because these were not previously managed well. (slide 12)
 - Why is there a need to have more than one suspended sediment attribute? What is the relationship between visual clarity and turbidity? (slide 16)
 - Are the coastal water quality classifications still applicable? (slide 20)
 - What does the 2040 target set for the Whāngārei wastewater treatment plan mean in terms of suitability for swimming? (slide 25)
 - How affordable will the various wastewater discharge options be for different communities in Northland? (slide 26)
 - Is there a parallel between unconsented stormwater network and the sources of sedimentation identified by the NIWA work? (slide 28)
 - Discussion around the effectiveness of various mitigation options, e.g. sandtraps, etc.(slide 29)
-
- Does the group need to be aware of NRC resource limitations when making recommendations about actions that could be undertaken? Cllr Dimery suggested that the group should not be limited by resources.

Presentation: Regional Plan Review – Key finds water quality

- This presentation was given by Robyn Broadhurst, Policy Analyst, NRC

Questions/comments arising from the Presentation:

- Ensuring security of supply for stock drinking water purposes is critical. Fear views of sheep and beef sector are not being taken into account with all the focus on dairying. (slide 14)
 - Some members agreed that managing water quantity for ecological health would be adequate. (slide 15).
 - Water needs to be used efficiently. Some suggested that metering is a good thing – easier to manage what you measure. Others suggested that more training is needed. Others commented that increasing the price of water works every time.
 - Trial work is underway to better understand current water use on dairy farms including stock drinking.
-

Doubtless Bay Catchment Group - Wednesday 24 September 2014

REGIONAL PLANS REVIEW WORKSHOP

Ben Tait gave presentation on water quality and quantity provision review in regional plans.

- Lakes, how to avoid jumping to conclusions about landuse and fertiliser application, vs natural occurrence?
 - Provide for natural exemptions below national bottom lines? Have to demonstrate not reasonably practical to improve them.
 - Natural cycles of lakes are not well understood.
 - Numerical vs narrative limits
 - Circulate BOI oceans 20/20 report to DB website
 - Discussion over composition of sediment
 - Group supports further attributes for DB
 - MCI
 - Need best result for the catchment. Heavy metals naturally occurring in this catchment. Algae have been identified as native.
 - Biosecurity presentation scheduled for November
 - Get presentations brought north
 - Schedule extra presentation for water quantity for 22 October
 - Is marine farming possible in doubtless bay?
-

Doubtless Bay Catchment Group - Wednesday 22 October 2014

Water quality discussion points:

- Faecal source tracking
- What is the trend and how far do we have to go to achieve standards
- Can anthropogenic change be reversed to much of an extent?
- What are we targeting?

- Understanding what is happening in our catchment up to 90 years ago. Eg sediment has affected fishing in lower saline reaches of rivers
- How much of what is happening now is a legacy of landuse changes 100 years ago?
- We have very special harbours and estuaries here in doubtless bay
- Need to improve our knowledge on the link between the health of the land and the people.
- Kaimoana harvest is key issue for the people
- Scallops largely disappeared from doubtless bay, this situation has been turned around in other areas such as raglan
- Need hydrographic picture of doubtless bay
- Seagrass - swans decimate the seagrass in doubtless bay.
- An underwater survey identified different habitats in North, South, East and west aspect.
- Climate change peaks are more frequent and may be causing river reprofiling, no resources to investigate this in terms of what intervention may be possible.
- Retaining wall of Taipa river to stabilise the river bank: council is not resourced to retain entire coastline.
- If we accept we can't return to 1mm per year, we should also accept we can't reverse natural coastal processes.
- Where should hard engineering stop?
- Sediment issue: is this issue easier to deal with than nutrients? Both together. A member had data for Mangonui harbour and provided this to Ben Tait. Ben to follow up.
- Heavy metals: Andreas believes natural copper is higher than that generated from the Marina.
- Timber chemical treatment for in harbour use needs to be increased as you move further north.
- Severity of weather events is the main issue, from slips in virgin bush areas.
- Retiring slopes as part of FWQIP may be the best measure to address sedimentation. Group maybe should focus on proliferation of farm plans.
- Understand deposition rate of river flats over last 100 years. This would impact productive farm land.
- Elsewhere in Warawara, slips from native forest areas have impacted for many weeks on community drinking water.

Action 1: NRC to develop a sediment budget for the catchment.

- What is the validity of everyone's efforts as a working group, as compared with the subcommittee status of the other priority catchment groups? Joe says that dbwg would only influence overall regional plan. Not the DB catchment. (???)
- What about regulation and monitoring of non conventional contaminants? Screen groundwater, but not regularly. EPA approve under Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. Some sites around orchards, petrol stations etc have groundwater screened if a problem identified.
- Plastics burning is an increasing issue in the catchment, which must impact on water quality.

4. Water quantity discussion points

- How are water storage directions handled during drought in terms of the regional plan?

- Needs to be equality between stock and municipal water requirements.
- What drives the setting of the minimum flow?
- Changing climate means we all have to adapt with various technologies.
- Consent to store peak water. Attenuating the peak events with a dam. Minimum bank disturbance.
- Do rules need to be laid, or should we be more flexible. Rules would encourage people to be more environmentally sustainable.
- Good examples of farms with dams. Yes but also failures due to bad water quality, e.g. Kaitaia kauri dam which is to be decommissioned due to bad water quality. Stock losses in Hokianga due to algal blooms. Compliance costs can be prohibitive
- Attenuation linked to sediment control
- DO levels and other quality indicators linked to water quantity in many streams
- Feedback direct to Ben Tait bent@nrc.govt.nz
- Challenge is to look for water use efficiency, analyse cost of use, e.g. Cost of pumping, reticulation.
- Water is precious and is everyone's responsibility to look after.
- Consistency overall for discharges and water allocation, including type, time frames. This will achieve buy-in.
- Pathogens not affecting instream life.
- Catchment update to be reported at next meeting.
- Points that are coming out from feedback?
- Incentives for good management practice
- Frustration with existing wetland rules
- MPI may have a precedent where landowner can prove they have planted a native species.
- Digging up kauri logs from wetlands. MPI seminar tomorrow
- Could document wetlands in farm plans.
- Monitoring is problematic
- Incentivising should be with finance.
- Lifestylers are also having unmitigated effects
- More people planting will bring the cost down.
- Bare rooted native cuttings are being used elsewhere.
- Red needle cast affecting forests due to warm wet winter.
- Fertiliser application. No issues perceived by many attending regional plan review workshops

Dairy Industry Liaison Group – 6 November 2014

Attendees

Shayne O'Shea
Penny Smart
Terence Brocx,
Karl Rossiter
Charlotte Rutherford
George Kruger
Richard Gardner
Oliver Parsons

Helen Moodie
Denis Anderson

NRC Staff

Bill Shepherd
Robyn Broadhurst
Ben Tait
Justin Murfitt
Ben Lee
Stuart Savill
Tess Dacre
Susie Osbaldiston

Purpose of meeting:

Discuss the plan review process with the DILG and gather their feedback.

Notes

Water quantity

Robyn Broadhurst gave a brief presentation.

Current permitted takes 10m³ - what's it based on? It's an amount per take. It's not clear that it's per farm, legal title or take. Suggestion that rule should be based on area e.g. 1000 ha block can take 1000x more than 1 ha. NRC - depends on adverse effects.

S14b RMA takes - 'as of right' takes, incorrect to call them permitted. It sits outside power of councils to regulate unless there are adverse effects. In an over allocated catchment, suggestion that you can't conclude that these takes are having an adverse effect, need to look at consented takes first. There is some uncertainty around what is an individual a FF believes it relates to the person looking after the stock.

In flow sensitive areas the timing and rate of take will be very important.

Water accounting benefits everyone. Attendees seemed to agree that meters are a good thing - it can make a huge difference.

What other feedback did NRC have from workshops? Dams, wetlands and getting information right. How are you going to get information right? Need to look closely at the catchment and assess existing takes and flows to ensure no information gaps.

Highly allocated doesn't necessarily mean the catchment is over allocated. Point made that in some catchments that 1 or 2 big takes can make it highly allocated. Also that some of these big takes are not actually happening as per their consented amount. Actual takes likely to be a lot different to that on paper. What's the time frame to do get this information? NRC - we're already doing it. We're hoping to get most of the information ready for when we notify mid 2017. If we don't have the detailed info may need to introduce defaults e.g. Moratorium on new takes.

There was concern about having stock water in dry conditions and meters potentially jeopardising this as water use can be more closely monitored by NRC. NRC needs to make it clear that this won't be at risk. Also concern about charging for water. NRC - no plans at this stage. If charging happens it would be driven by central govt.

Dairy NZ - estimates of water takes for stock drinking should be easy to determine. NRC - do you have anything for stock drinking at the moment other than 70lt/cow/day? No, not yet but we are getting the information.

Fonterra - will require metering for total takes, then broken into use over time. Driven by audited self management perspective, not compliance. Shed water - good scope for innovation and increased efficiencies, I.e. Move away from the 70lt per cow per day, become more efficient. Stock drinking whole different ball game. Farmers - aware of Fonterra's requirement for water monitoring but farmers unsure about the requirements etc for installing meters - should be done between NRC and Fonterra. Need to encourage certified installers - only two in Northland at the moment. Irrigation NZ blue tick system is an option. Fonterra cannot require blue tick. NRC - under regs need to certify installation. Need to increase installation capability for blue tick. NRC should take a leadership role.

Action - NRC (Susie) to talk with Irrigation NZ about details regarding blue tick, and then see what we can do to encourage installers. Helen, Karl, Susie and Stu to liaise over this.

Providing for ecosystem health - will it provide for other values? NRC - we're thinking at this stage that ecological flows will probably be an appropriate default. Fair to say that the majority of the catchment groups have got to ecosystems as being the key value, along with swimming (water quality).

What determines a stream? Allocation has been estimated at the bottom of the catchment. But this doesn't necessarily represent what's happening in particular parts on the catchment. Taking limits to a smaller scale is very difficult. Could unfairly impact on upstream farmers if they have a local surplus if there's an allocation issue at the bottom of the catchment. I.e. If you are at the top of the catchment and someone below you is taking then you might not get your share even if you have ample water on site.

Discussion about what constitutes avoiding adverse effects.

Waikato have massive suite of options for clawback. Need flexibility when considering resolving over allocation as opposed to avoiding.

Definition of ecosystem health? No clear guideline. Debate is wide open. Auckland use MCI. NRC - could use sensitivity species as indicators / measures. Average people can understand it if it's based on what's in the streams. Can do some modelling of the impact of changing flow regimes on the fish. Good tool for showing impacts - looked at long fin eel, kokopu and common bully.

We currently don't have allocation limits in Northland. If someone comes along with application for big take, how do you treat them vs existing users? NRC - case by case. Those other users would be affected parties. Existing authorised users have priority. But we currently don't have a good database of existing permitted users.

Priority use? We can't get away from first in first served. Can promote water sharing groups etc.

Discussion that we have got good direction from interests and that NRC should now start to think about preparing some draft provisions to bring to the group to test. Don't wait until releasing the draft in 2016/17. NRC - we will continue to liaise with groups like the DILG.

Don't want to get to the point we are at now, i.e. a rule that has not been monitored, enforced etc.

Water quality

Ben Tait gave a brief presentation.

Tess - adverse effects from permitted activities (PA) way greater than consented. PA discharge more 'raw' than something coming out the back of a consented five pond system. Consenting allows you to be more prescriptive - more input and control than PA. Risk is a lot higher with PA. What gains are there from consent? Getting farmers to the point where they comply all the time - can do this through consent conditions. Plan of where they will apply effluent, setbacks, etc council doesn't have as much say over PA so when it goes wrong it can go really wrong. Fed farmers will push for the lowest level of consent or PA through the upcoming RMA process. No regional difference in Northland compared to rest of country in terms of monitoring results - be careful that you are not comparing apples and oranges. Stuart - certificate of compliance is a good test of a PA - if you can't issue one then it shouldn't be a PA.

Where you take your samples determines the outcomes of your results. Critical bit is flow adjustment - non compliance issue or flow issue?

NIWA peer reviewed our monitoring sites, Kerikeri Stone Store site is above the wastewater network, so skew your results to look good when slightly further down they might not be so good. Waste water networks are all monitored under their consents anyway.

Mangere catchment is a good example of industry working with council. Beef and lifestyle should both fence from water ways as well, not just dairy.

Non-compliance issue in Northland is still high regardless of comparison nationally. Up to one in five farmers still having an adverse effect.

For plan review we have signalled controlled activity in some instances, can we look at other options? Less consenting the better.

Best code of practice is used for application of fertiliser as there is not much in the plan. Potentially more control is needed in areas where there is aquifer recharge.

Controls on nutrient inputs so stop the trending down in dune lakes. Not just as simple as fencing them off but this is a good first step.

Controlled activity for land application wouldn't just effect the 20% non compilers it would effect all. Not have an impact on the farms that are consented and working hard to maintain high standards. Work backwards for what is the best solution to get us an outcome.

Monitoring in Auckland - first thing to do is work with the farmers and notify (24-48hrs) when you are coming to monitor first. This alone was a game changer for the best.

Shayne O'Shae - pride themselves on having unannounced site inspections because it shows they are complying regardless.

As the DILG we want to explore future options and want the ability to talk along the process.

Managing dune lakes as a single unit - common objectives but specific quality limits? Different load reductions. Nutrient load limits? Possibly numerical water quality limits as objectives.

Fonterra - there doesn't seem to be an appetite from NRC to partner with industry. Recognise what the industry is doing and work with them. Industry define best practice and encourage this. Farmer needs to be empowered, regional council role to do this. Work industry programmes in to policy etc. Eg Horizons is a disaster where they have tried to put in allocations - they are now relying entirely on industry good practice.

Limited relevance to Northland - the matrix of best practice in Canterbury.

Council needs to include sheep and beef farmers. Fencing could be related to stock units, i.e. certain number of stock requires a fence but how do you monitor this?

There are bottom lines but there are also top lines as well (Supreme Court determined this) - you only fence where there is a problem.

Big take home message is to work closely with industry and keep them part of the development and don't double up on work that industry has already spend time and effort developing. Suggested that NRC make a formal approach to the farmers council to include sheep and beef. Roger Ludbrook, Alison Whiteford potential names to include sheep and beef.

NRC first needs to get a handle on what problem it is we are trying to resolve.