

Healthy Rivers
Your rivers, your plan
Wai Ora
O awa, to mahere



**PROPOSED WAIKATO REGIONAL
PLAN CHANGE 1**



Healthy Rivers
PLAN FOR CHANGE

Wai Ora
HE RAUTAKI WHAKAPAIPAI

Waikato

REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato

Fresh water is our most important resource for the future and water quality is our region's number one priority. A healthy environment is essential to creating vibrant communities and a strong economy for our region.

Despite urban, industrial and rural communities spending millions each year to clean up our rivers, water quality is still deteriorating. Nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and bacteria levels are rising in our waterways and it's a result of the way we are using our land.

Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora: Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1, makes sure we are all part of the solution.

The proposed plan gives effect to the Government's National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management (2014) and delivers on legislative requirements outlined through the primary direction setting document for our rivers, *Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato, the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River*. The *Vision and Strategy* requires our rivers to be swimmable and safe for food collecting along their entire length. This is the first step of an 80-year journey for our region to achieve the *Vision and Strategy*.

The proposed plan was developed in conjunction with our five river iwi partners. The collaborative stakeholder group process used, meant those most affected by the changes have had leaders from their sectors at the table developing the policy and providing input and feedback from their sectors.

While the proposed plan is subject to change through the submission process, decisions on the plan are expected to be made just five months before landowners will need to have completed registration and provided a Nitrogen Reference Point (NRP) to council. We want landowners to get ready now by keeping their records.

If you're thinking of buying or selling land in the Waikato or Waipā river catchments, make sure you understand what is proposed.

The proposed plan has three key components.

For landowners the proposed plan means unless you are a small block or have very low stocking rates, most farms will require a resource consent.

1. Registration

2. Nitrogen Reference Points

3. Farm Environment Plans

We all want healthy rivers, profitable, sustainable farms and strong communities.

1. REGISTRATION

All rural properties with an area greater than 2 hectares will need to register with Waikato Regional Council between 1 September 2018 and 31 March 2019. Council is currently preparing an IT portal to be ready to accept these registrations.

Along with providing the key information about your property, the registration process will also allow council to gain a better picture of land use across the catchments for more effective future planning. It will also assist you with information and updates to make the ongoing process easier for you.

YOU WILL NEED

- Landowner name
- Address and contact details
- Legal description, total area, and address of the property
- Description of the landuse activities
- Stocking rate
- Property map with boundaries, water bodies, fences adjacent to waterbodies, livestock crossing points and crossing structures. The IT portal will enable you to upload your own map, or create a new one.



2. NITROGEN REFERENCE POINT

Most properties greater than 20 hectares and commercial vegetable growers will need to provide a Nitrogen Reference Point (NRP) to council by 31 March 2019.

A NRP is an estimate of the highest annual amount of nitrogen leaching from the property during the reference period 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial years, or the average annual amount between 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2016 (if you are a commercial vegetable grower). The NRP is usually estimated using the model OVERSEER®, which uses management and physical information about the property to estimate the its nitrogen leaching loss. Your NRP will need to be approved by a Certified Farm Nutrient Advisor (CFNA), an expert in understanding and modelling nitrogen leaching losses. Waikato Regional Council expects to start accepting applications for certification ►

from farm nutrient advisors in the third quarter of 2017. A list will be added to the council website. If a property owner doesn't have the records to verify the information needed to model their nitrogen loss, default values will be used, but default values will typically give a conservative estimate of nitrogen leaching loss.

Providing a nitrogen reference point will allow council to evaluate the top 25 per cent of dischargers. Those top 25 per cent will have to reduce their discharges. All others will have to hold their levels. This first 10 years of change will allow us evaluate and prepare for the development of a property scale contaminant loss allocation model in the future.

The cost of providing a NRP will depend on the complexity of your farm system. This cost could be reduced if you have kept good records. Landowners should store their 2014/15 or 2015/16 records now so they are easy to find when they are needed in 2018/19. If you're considering buying a property, make sure you obtain the OVERSEER® files for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 years and any supporting documentation as part of your sale and purchase agreement. It's ok to black out financial information if you want to keep it private.

THE TYPE OF RECORDS YOU SHOULD SAVE TO VERIFY OVERSEER® FILES INCLUDE

- Documentation to verify stock numbers ie sale and purchase, grazing invoices, or transport records
- Dairy production data
- Records of fertiliser use
- Evidence of feed supplements sold or purchased and used on farm
- Water use records for irrigation (to be averaged over 3 years or longer)
- Horticulture crop diaries and NZGAP records for vegetable growers.
- A map of land used for effluent irrigation
- Records of crops grown and grazed, including cultivation and sowing invoices where available
- Soil test data – including anion storage capacity
- A map detailing the property boundaries, areas including block (management) areas and retired areas, and the total area of non-productive areas.
- Certificate of title and legal description

LAND USE CHANGE

The land use change rule is in effect now. If you are a landowner or considering purchasing property and want to change the way you use that land to a more intensive activity, you will need a resource consent. This applies to:

CURRENT LAND USE

Woody vegetation



NEW LAND USE

Farming activities

Livestock grazing other than dairy farming



Dairy farming

Arable cropping



Dairy farming

Any land use



Commercial vegetable production

People can still apply to council for consent to change land use but it will generally only be approved if you can show an overall reduction in contaminant loss.



The first 10-years of Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora takes a hold-the-line approach. If we continue to allow conversions, reductions in contaminants achieved through Farm Environment Plans could be undone.

3. FARM ENVIRONMENT PLANS

Under the proposed plan, farms over 20 hectares, which are not part of an industry scheme, will generally require a resource consent. This is achieved through the submission and formalisation of your approved Farm Environment Plan (FEP).

A Farm Environment Plan is designed to identify and manage contaminants from land which impact on our waterways.

FEPs will identify the risk areas on your property for losing the four key contaminants, nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and bacteria, and state how you will manage and reduce these contaminants within a specified timeframe. If you start your mitigations now you will get recognition in your FEP. Start thinking about mitigations by using the Farm Menus farmmenus.org.nz.

The FEP process could cost anywhere from \$2000 and up to \$10,000 depending on property size and the complexity of the operation. It will also depend on whether a landowner prepares most of the

information themselves and has a certified planner approve it, or whether a certified planner prepares and completes the entire plan.

There will also be costs associated with the actions required in your FEP to manage the four contaminants on your farm. Those who have already completed work to manage risks associated with the four contaminants will have less to do.

Sub-catchments have been ordered in priority for cleaning up our waterways. Prioritisation was based on the size of the gap between current water quality and where water quality needs to be in 80 years time. The provision of FEPs has been staggered accordingly.

Council is working with industry and sectors on both certification for Farm Environment Planners and industry schemes.



Industry schemes are included in the rules as a way for sector groups to assist farmers in complying with the rules. For example, there could be a scheme which is directly responsible for working with farmers to produce farm plans and to monitor completion of required actions. Once industry schemes are established these will be advertised on the council website.

PROPOSED FEP DATES

Priority 1 sub-catchments by 1 July 2020

Priority 2 sub-catchments by 1 July 2023

Priority 3 sub-catchments by 1 July 2026

Anyone buying property in the Waikato and Waipā catchments should also familiarise themselves with what's in an FEP, including the sub-catchment the property is in and its deadline priority. Use the Find my Farm tool waikatoregion.govt.nz/healthyivers.

FARM ENVIRONMENT PLANS WILL INCLUDE

- Where and how you will exclude stock from waterways including structures and alternative mitigation where fencing is impractical
- Description of set-backs from waterways and riparian management
- Identification of waterways on your property and critical source areas where nitrogen, sediment, phosphorus or bacteria are lost
- Illustration of how you match your land use to land capability, identifying unsuitable grazing areas, and stocking to maintain pasture cover
- Description of appropriate cultivation management practices and how you will reduce the risk of losing the four contaminants
- Description of effluent management and how you will reduce the risk of losing the four contaminants
- Description of nutrient management practices including nutrient budget calculated using OVERSEER® or another approved model
- Description of any freshwater irrigation and how you will reduce the risk of losing the four contaminants as a result of irrigation

WE CAN HELP

Talk to your industry or sector representatives or contact us.

 HEALTHYRIVERS@WAIKATOREGION.GOV.T.NZ

 FACEBOOK.COM/HEALTHYRIVERS

 WAIKATOREGION.GOV.T.NZ/HEALTHYRIVERS

 0800 800 402 (8AM - 5PM, MON - FRI)



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