



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao



Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Te Manatu Ahuwhenua, Ngāherehere

Reflections: A Summary of Your Views on the Sustainable Water Programme of Action

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Purpose of this Report

This report summarises the feedback received on the discussion document *Freshwater for a sustainable future: issues and options*. This summary is based upon the reports on: the public meetings; the hui; the local government meetings; and the written submissions received. The discussion document was released for comment in December 2004 and constitutes the first round of consultation undertaken on the Sustainable Water Programme of Action.

This report does not include or express opinions about the responses received. These are more appropriately expressed following comprehensive analysis on the policy implications of the feedback.

Background

The Sustainable Water Programme of Action

The Government established the Sustainable Water Programme of Action in 2003 to ensure that the country's freshwater resources are managed to best support New Zealand's future sustainable development. The programme is part of the Government's wider Sustainable Development Programme of Action.

The Sustainable Water Programme of Action established working groups to look at three areas: water allocation and use, water quality, and the identification of potential water bodies of national importance. Three technical papers were produced by the working groups in July 2004: the papers *Water allocation and use*, *The effects of rural land use on water quality*, *Potential water bodies of national importance* and other technical papers on water bodies of national importance can be found at www.mfe.govt.nz or www.maf.govt.nz.

Discussion document

The public discussion document was developed based on the work completed within the three work streams of water allocation, water quality and potential water bodies of national importance. Because the three areas of focus are closely connected, the discussion document treats them in an integrated way. The discussion document:

- outlines the different ways in which New Zealanders value and use freshwater
- describes how water allocation, water quality and water bodies of national importance are managed at present
- describes the pressures and challenges facing our water management system
- identifies eight key issues that need to be addressed in any reform of the country's water management system
- proposes a package of actions to improve the water management system and overcome the challenges it currently faces. The proposed package is not the only way forward, and other possibilities are also described.

The discussion document did not focus on urban water quality issues. The primary issue addressed by the water quality working group was the impact of diffuse discharges from rural land-use.

The discussion document was released for comment on 14 December 2004.

Consultation process

In February of 2005, consultation meetings on the discussion document were jointly run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry for the Environment. Meetings were held with regional councils, Māori, the public, and stakeholder groups in 20 locations across the country.

The purpose of the consultation meetings was to hear what New Zealanders had to say about freshwater management. The priority was to listen to feedback on whether the right issues and options had been identified, what other issues and options might exist, and what people thought of the actions presented. Written submissions were also invited from meeting participants and from all New Zealanders.

In addition to this report, separate reports are available on the meetings held with Māori, local government and the public, and on the written submissions received.

Written submissions were received from 292 individuals and organisations from all regions. The submissions came from a broad range of sectors: agriculture; energy; environmental groups; individuals and community groups; industry; Māori; local government; other organisations; recreation; and research.

Summary of Consultation

This report includes the main themes from the written submissions, and the feedback from the meetings. It also covers the feedback and written submissions received on the discussion document under the headings of the issues and actions, along with additional issues and actions identified through the consultation process.

Issues

General

In general there was agreement across various sectors (agriculture, energy, local government, the research sector, individuals and community groups, and other organisations) that the main issues had been identified within the discussion document.

Māori submitters supported the need to review current freshwater management and some expressed agreement with the issues identified. However, significant concerns were raised by Māori submitters about the lack of discussion about the Treaty of Waitangi and obligations arising from this. Submitters felt there was inadequate recognition of the role of iwi and hapū as Treaty partners and as kaitiaki of freshwater resources in their rohe.

Recreation submitters were less supportive of the issues identified in the document than those from other sectors. Submitters from the recreation sector were particularly concerned about instream values. A key concern for recreation submitters was that there should be no changes to the current management framework that would weaken protection of rivers.

Individual and community group submitters stated the following criticisms about the issues:

- the issues are poorly defined, show poor understanding of what is happening in the regions or lack practical steps
- the document gives undue weight to uses requiring consent
- sustainability is not adequately addressed
- there is no recognition of the findings of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's report *Growing for good*.

While many local government and environment group submitters agreed the document included the main water management issues, some felt the issues did not go far enough or lacked sufficient detail on specific problems. Both local government and environmental group submitters noted an emphasis in the discussion document on the availability and allocation of water, rather than water quality.

While many submitters in the local government sector supported the intent of the programme and the issues identified, there were also some reservations expressed about the statement of issues. The main reservations were:

- the issues were insufficiently defined or lacked quantitative details
- the scale of the issues varies between localities and regions (and therefore significance of the issues varies)
- many of the issues are already being addressed by tools currently available, particularly in relation to water allocation.

Industry submitters were concerned about the lack of coverage of a variety of specific matters. Concerns included: cost implications; insufficient consideration of conflicts between competing interests; few incentives exist for improving water management; the linkage between water allocation and water quality is not made; and the document included an artificial distinction between domestic and industrial use of water when these are generally supplied from the same source.

Issue 1: National and regional strategic planning for water management could be improved

Agricultural submitters identified links to strategic planning and funding as a way forward. Industry submitters suggested that priority be given to actions which encourage regional councils to act strategically and in a manner which creates certainty, and enables sound investment decisions.

A need was identified at the hui for central and local government to work together more closely to sustainably manage freshwater. It was suggested that the Ministry for the Environment measure the performance of councils in environmental management.

Local government submitters had concerns that the document does not address how the economic, social and cultural aspects of sustainable development can be interpreted under the 'sustainable management' focus of the Resource Management Act.

Many of the submissions from individuals, community groups and other organisations were supportive of the underpinning principle that local government should retain responsibility for water management and decision-making, but that central government should provide greater support and direction. Central government could usefully set guidelines and provide resources. Submitters from other organisations would like increased coordination between regional and district councils. Submitters from the industrial sector were generally supportive of central government providing high-level direction.

Issue 2: Nationally important values need to be better addressed

The cultural importance of freshwater to Māori, and the need for all water bodies to be of high quality, was consistently emphasised at hui.

Recreation submitters considered the most important actions were to specify nationally important instream values and then to protect those values. Recreation submitters were very clear that existing Water Conservation Orders must remain in place. Recreation submitters preferred that the values underlying water bodies of national importance should be limited to instream values, and not include abstractive values.

Local government had concerns about how the work on water bodies of national importance would be used in relation to sections 5 and 6 of the Resource Management Act.

Issue 3: Setting environmental bottom lines and allocation limits is costly and contentious

The need for standards, indicators and benchmarks was identified by the energy sector and industry and community groups. The need to establish environmental bottom lines for water bodies was raised at all of the public meetings, whether these are established through minimum flows, allocation limits, or national environmental standards. The public considered that regional councils were best placed to set bottom lines; however, in some cases central government guidance and support was needed.

Research submitters were concerned that there has been insufficient recognition of the critical role of information and monitoring (to assemble data underpinning information), and research on which to base management.

Deeply held concerns were raised at the hui about variable council performance on the allocation of water and its efficient use. Participants considered the minimum flows and bottom lines were not achieving sustainable levels of abstraction.

Issue 4: Water is over-allocated in some catchments, is not consistently allocated to its highest value use over time, and can be wasted

Submitters from the energy sector were particularly interested in achieving equitable and efficient water allocations, while recreation submitters were also supportive of mechanisms to ensure that water is only abstracted for efficient and necessary uses. Other submissions were received about the difficulties of measuring 'highest value' uses and the reduction in reliability from the over-allocation of water.

Māori expressed concerns at the hui about the first-in-first-served approach to allocation, that consent applicants applied for more water than they needed, and that councils allocated more water than is available.

Issue 5: Tension between investment certainty and planning flexibility

Concern was raised at all of the public meetings that changing the current allocation system could be risky for existing consent holders. Agriculture submitters and the energy sector were very concerned that the rights of existing users be protected, noting the considerable investment involved and the requirement for certainty. The energy sector noted that there is a large overlap between their interest in security of investment and the national interest.

Protection of essential infrastructure was also considered to be important by industry submitters, while security of existing users and certainty of supply were considered to be important by some individual and community group submitters.

This issue was not discussed in any depth at the hui, although participants at the Christchurch hui expressed concern that consents are granted for 35 years, without applicants needing to justify their need for the water. The public meeting in Timaru, however, wanted consents to be granted for longer than 35 years.

Issue 6: Māori participation in water management could be improved

Māori submitters were concerned that the role of the Treaty of Waitangi in the Crown's management of freshwater resources has been minimised, and considered that Māori interests have been relegated from that of a Treaty partner to merely being another stakeholder.

Māori submitters recommended that a substantive dialogue be undertaken between Crown and tangata whenua on rights and responsibilities of Treaty partners in respect of water.

At most hui, it was stated that simply enhancing Māori participation is not enough – Māori want a role in decision-making. In particular, the capacity and capability of iwi and hapū to engage with councils was raised because many organisations lack the structures and resources to engage as they would wish.

Issue 7: A lack of effective action in the management of diffuse discharges of contaminants on water quality, in some catchments

Submitters from research organisations were very concerned about the impacts of diffuse discharges on water quality. Submitters noted that there is no clear direction on how to address diffuse discharges, and there is little public understanding of issues. Some submitters cautioned that action on this issue could significantly impact on property rights and land-use opportunities.

Submitters from the forestry sector sought recognition of the benefits of forestry for water quality and a greater focus on a whole catchment approach with integrated land and water management. The need to give attention to overall catchment run-off was identified by various submitters, with concerns about stormwater discharges from roads and from urban areas being frequently mentioned.

There was strong concern at the hui about the pollution of water bodies and the issue of water quality, whether due to diffuse or non-diffuse (point-source) discharges. This was linked to support for stronger use of the 'polluter pays' principle. There was much discussion of links with farming practices and that greater action in riparian management was required. Some gains were noted in fencing of wetland areas to protect them from stock intrusion.

Issue 8: Development of water infrastructure is not keeping pace with demand

Increased investment in infrastructure and, in particular, storage facilities was regarded as important at all of the public meetings. Many agricultural submitters considered the development of water harvesting and storage would help resolve water allocation issues in their region. Central government was regarded as having a role in investigating storage options and in some cases providing funding for developing water storage facilities.

Support was expressed at the hui for this issue where there is a growing population and inadequate infrastructure for drinking water and management of sewage. Participants also repeatedly commented on the need for efficient use of grey water, water recycling and use of tanks for rainwater storage.

Additional issues

Several additional issues were identified in the consultation process which were not sufficiently emphasised in the discussion document. For example, urban water issues and water use efficiency (including research) was suggested by a range of submitters.

Local government outlined additional issues including: integrated catchment management; greater attention on water quality issues; urban water use and supply; greater emphasis on demand management; climate change; biosecurity; and sustainable development (many of these were also raised at the hui).

Some submitters from environmental groups sought the consideration of additional issues including: biodiversity and ecosystem health (including greater attention to wetlands); the need for integrated land and water management; a broader focus on the decline in water quality and the effects of land-use on this; protection of water bodies with significant natural values; the impacts of increasing water abstraction; riparian management; biosecurity issues for weeds and pests; and public access to waterways.

Some submitters from the industry sector were concerned about local government performance. Recreation submitters identified the implementation of the Resource Management Act by regional councils as an issue needing to be addressed.

Recreation submitters identified the impacts of agriculture and hydro-electricity generation as key concerns, and considered significant changes were required to make agriculture sustainable.

Additional issues suggested by individual and community group submitters included: a broader catchment management focus on water quality, to include point-source pollution; the need for corrective action to reverse current trends; and the need for the programme to be compatible with New Zealand's biodiversity strategy and proactively address loss of biodiversity.

Actions

General

Agricultural submitters requested a water management framework that is flexible and fair; supports efficient water use; sets reasonable environmental limits; is able to facilitate sound choices between competing needs and values; limits the ability of speculators to tie up the resource; and identifies the risk (in terms of reliability) for new applicants.

Matters of particular importance to the energy sector include: ensuring decision-making power is allocated to those with the most relevant knowledge or skills; ensuring decision-makers have incentives to exercise their power appropriately and decisions are not subject to influence by parties with vested interests; recognising the importance of minimising costs associated with decision processes; providing confidence to existing and prospective rights holders that their investments will not be eroded; and clarity and duration of the entitlement, security and exclusivity of tenure, transferability and flexibility in how the right can be exercised.

There was some concern by environmental groups that the focus might be more on economic development than sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems. Several submitters called for clear time frames for action. Environmental group submitters were critical of a lack of clear goals, objectives, targets and timetables in the discussion document. Many individuals and community groups were frustrated at the lack of practical immediate action and were concerned about over-allocation of water and declining water quality. The level of support by local government for each of the 13 actions was dependent on the future shape and form of the actions.

The industrial sector submitters consider that the final package of actions should retain a range of tools for managing water quality and allocation. While industry submitters considered a number of the proposed actions to have merit, they were concerned about over-regulating water management.

Action 1: Develop national policy statements

National policy statements were considered to be the most desirable action by environmental group submitters. Best practice, guidelines, incentives and voluntary agreements were considered to be a useful complement to more directive actions. Research submitters also considered development of national policy statements to be a priority.

Expression of the national interest (possibly through a national policy statement) was considered to be appropriate by agricultural submitters, if it was essentially guidance to be incorporated into regional plans. Similarly, national policy statements were generally supported by local government submitters where the documents are setting high-level direction and not imposing quantitative blanket values. The importance on maintaining local decision-making was highlighted.

Māori submitters were also concerned that the development of any national policy statements must incorporate a Māori world view, and properly include Māori interests.

There was support at the hui for clear national direction to be developed on water management which could be in the form of a national policy statement, which was seen as necessary to promote consistency between regional councils in freshwater management. The hui participants did not want a national policy statement to remove decision-making at a local level and wanted the national policy statements to reflect the values of local people.

Action 2: Develop national environmental standards

Development of national environmental standards was considered to be the most desirable Action by environmental group submitters. Best practice, guidelines, incentives and voluntary agreements were considered to be a useful complement to more directive actions. Some individual and community group submitters were supportive of central government developing standards, and providing leadership and direction.

Agricultural sector submitters considered that the expression of the national interest (possibly through a national environmental standard) was appropriate if it was essentially guidance about methodology to be incorporated into regional plans. National environmental standards were generally supported by local government submitters where they are setting high-level direction and did not include quantitative blanket values.

Māori submitters were also concerned that the development of any national environmental standard must incorporate a Māori world view, and properly consider Māori interests. At the hui, national environmental standards were more widely supported than national policy statements, largely because they were seen as more enforceable. Hui participants wanted a role in determining these standards. Participants did not want national environmental standards to remove decision-making at a local level, but want the standards to reflect what local people want.

Local government supported national environmental standards outlining methods for setting minimum flows, allocation limits and water quality standards at the regional level and few councils supported national-level numeric standards.

Action 3: Address nationally important values

Māori submitters considered that the development of any national values must incorporate a Māori world view, and properly consider Māori interests. Many hui participants opposed the identification of water bodies of national importance, as the approach does not reflect the localised iwi/hapū-specific nature of Māori interest in freshwater. However, support was shown for addressing nationally important values where important local values would be protected.

Recreation submitters considered that identifying nationally important values would be useful. Research submitters also considered provision of guidance to regional councils on national values was a priority.

There was a split of opinion amongst local government regarding this action. The identification of nationally important values for water bodies could be useful to guide regional planning. However, local government was clear that decisions should be made locally, and there is potential for national values to conflict with local values.

Action 4: Increase central government participation in regional planning

While environmental group submitters were generally supportive of decision-making being retained at the local level, there was a call for greater central government direction. Submitters from other organisations wanted clarity around the role of central government in water management. Individual and community group submitters suggested that the central government role be limited (for example, basic principles, science, education and raising awareness) and that central government would only be involved in specific water management problems where they are of national significance.

The importance of maintaining local decision-making was expressed at all of the public meetings. Concerns were raised that increased central government direction could result in less local involvement in decision-making. The public considered that regional and district/city councils have the knowledge necessary for managing water resources although support from central government could be useful.

Local government submitters were generally concerned about increased central government involvement in water management, and a potential decrease in local government autonomy. Local government submitters were particularly concerned about some of the more prescriptive actions proposed in the discussion document, and potential implementation costs. However, local government was generally supportive of actions that better express the national interest and which complement or support regional councils, which could benefit the second-generation regional water plans that some councils are starting to prepare. Local government submitters identified actions that increased central government participation through whole of government submissions on plans and collate and develop examples of best practice.

The participants at the hui considered that central government should provide funds for development of iwi management plans and that these plans be included more in regional planning.

Action 5: Increase central government support for local government

Agricultural sector submitters considered that the role of central government could be characterised as being limited to supporting local government, and providing information, guidance, and funding. Whole of government submissions on regional plans were considered by agricultural sector submitters to be an approach that might be useful, whereas approval of plans was not supported. Support was given at the hui for central government to provide more training to councillors to understand environmental issues and issues of importance to Māori. The public considered that central government specifying methods for setting minimum flows and allocation limits would be useful.

Local government submitters were supportive of local government retaining responsibility for water management, because the variation in issues across the country means local authorities are best placed to design local solutions. Local government submitters generally supported increased support for local government, which could include central government guidance and other non-statutory approaches. Local government considered that managing the impacts of land-use on water quality was an issue where central government support would be particularly useful.

Local government supported central government involvement in the following areas: funding for implementation; funding for science and research; developing and disseminating best practice; funding community projects; and funding for storage.

Recreation submitters consider that providing support to local government would be useful and industry submitters suggested the provision of increased resources to the Environment Court could result in hearings being completed as soon as possible. Research submitters also considered developing good practice in water planning was a priority.

Action 6: Develop special mechanisms for local government

Local government submitters generally supported special mechanisms for regional councils. Few comments were made by local government about the use of a tool to progressively constrain consents for over-allocated resources ('clawback'); however, many other submitters were opposed to clawback.

Participants at the hui had many concerns around the possible introduction of the auctioning or tendering of water rights. Almost all of those who discussed the use of market mechanisms were opposed to the creation of stronger property rights in water. The reasons for opposition included that these tools could favour the rich through the 'stockpiling' of water for profit. As well, doubt was expressed as to whether tradable rights lead to better water management. However, there was recognition at the hui that there needs to be greater valuing of the water resource, and that encouraging trading and charging for water use could lead to this. It was also recognised that creating alternative tools could provide for a more integrated approach to catchment management.

Action 7: Enhance the transfer of allocated water between users

Energy submitters noted the allocation regime must address the following issues: how to specify the amount of allocable water; the nature of the use entitlement; who should receive initial allocations; and how water should be reallocated over time. Energy submitters were supportive of making decisions on the amount of water available for allocation through an administrative process, and reallocation through administrative or market-based approaches. Agricultural submitters indicated central government could usefully develop new tools for water users.

Responses on the potential for market mechanisms were mixed and environmental group submitters raised concerns about the privatisation of water. Industry submitters were generally supportive of exploring market-based mechanisms for water management. Recreation submitters were also supportive of mechanisms to ensure that water is only abstracted for efficient and necessary uses. Research submitters also considered exploring market mechanisms was a priority. Some individual and community group submitters were very concerned about the potential for privatisation of water, and cautioned against the use of market mechanisms. Other individual and community group submitters were supportive of exploring the enhanced transfer of water permits.

The suggestion of market-based instruments raised concerns about the privatisation of water at many of the public meetings. A strong theme was that water should remain in public ownership. A common theme raised in discussions at the public meetings about using market tools for allocating water was that water rights could end up in the hands of an elite few. There was a strong call for central government to prevent this from happening. Equitable access to water was regarded as highly important in any system.

Local government submitters generally supported enhanced transfer of consents and that transfer could increase efficiency of use if environmental, social and cultural values are provided for. Existing investments must be protected in a transfer system.

Many Māori submitters raised the issues of ownership and customary use of water. For example, Māori submitters were particularly concerned about proposals to establish market mechanisms for the allocation of freshwater. Submitters were clear that customary rights in water must be addressed prior to establishing market-based systems for freshwater.

Action 8: Develop market mechanisms to manage diffuse discharges

Recreation submitters considered that efforts to manage diffuse discharges were also a priority. Industry and research submitters were generally supportive of exploring market-based mechanisms for water management as a priority.

Submitters noted the difficulties associated with determining the quality and quantity, and therefore the value, of discharges from individual properties. Establishing the existing use rights would be complex in catchments with diverse land use, particularly with other sources of diffuse discharges (for example, roading and urbanisation).

Many submitters expected the management of diffuse discharges to be given a higher priority in the Sustainable Water Programme of Action, and were disappointed that there were not more specific actions to address the issue. Submitters noted the importance of a comprehensive approach to managing diffuse discharges and that while economic instruments might form one component, concentrating on economic instruments alone was problematic.

Local government submitters identified significant barriers with developing market mechanisms for diffuse discharges. Local government submitters proposed that a wider range of tools be investigated and developed (in conjunction with local government) to assist in the management of diffuse discharges.

Reservations were expressed by Māori at the hui that use of a 'cap' on discharges may encourage people to pollute up to the cap rather than strive to reduce discharges.

Action 9: Set requirements for regional freshwater plans to address key issues and challenges

Few comments were made by local government regarding this action; however, improved strategic planning was supported.

Hui participants considered the incorporation of the management of mixing water and maintaining the mauri of water as a key challenge for future planning. Associated with this is a desire to see wider recognition of traditional mātauranga Māori (knowledge), its complementary relationship with Pākehā monitoring principles, and increased recognition of the value of environmental indicators used by Māori.

Action 10: Enhance Māori participation

Māori submitters recommended that a substantive dialogue be undertaken between the Crown and tangata whenua on the rights and responsibilities of Treaty partners in respect of water. While Māori submitters generally supported the provision of more support and resources for local government, they were also concerned that central government should better resource iwi, hapū and marae to participate in water management.

Local government considered that the Resource Management Act and the Local Government Act were regarded as already providing opportunities for Māori to participate in freshwater management. However, there is a need for clearly defined roles for central government, local government, and Māori.

Key suggestions for enhancing Māori participation raised at the hui included: facilitating a better relationship between central government, local government and iwi; providing assistance and education for Māori to manage resources; resourcing iwi/hapū to participate in policy, planning and consent processes; sharing roles with local authorities at various levels including governance, management, and in regulation and compliance; making greater use of Māori commissioners; and building capacity for Māori in freshwater science.

Action 11: Enable regional councils to allocate water to priority uses

Industry submitters suggested that priority be given to actions which allow regional councils to act strategically and in a way which creates an environment of certainty, and enables sound investment decisions.

There were concerns about the nature of a property right created by market mechanisms, including security of tenure, reliability of supply, clear specification of consent parameters and compensation for any loss of use rights. Some submitters supported councils identifying priority uses for water. For some submitters, support was limited to uses such as domestic, fire fighting and stock drinking water, while others suggested that projects benefiting the community (for example, tourism) and irrigation projects should be priority uses.

A broad range of submitters had strong reservations about the prospect of comparative assessment. Submitters expressed concerns about the lack of certainty for existing consent holders and the impacts on future applications. Councils did not support having to 'pick winners' amongst uses and values.

Local government submitters identified significant barriers with developing market mechanisms for allocation of water to priority uses. However, market tools could provide greater flexibility for allocating water, although environmental, social and cultural values must also be considered. The equitable access to water for all interests is important.

In general, comments at the hui reflected the need for allocation models to be more strongly enforced and allocation limits imposed, and that any allocation model should first ensure the survival of aquatic species in their natural environment.

Action 12: Raise awareness of freshwater problems and pressures, and promote solutions

Agricultural submitters were supportive of approaches involving education. Recreation submitters consider that raising awareness of water issues would be useful. Environmental group submitters supported actions with strong links to education and were very supportive of enhancing consultation and community engagement. Research submitters also considered that community education and awareness-raising was a priority. Submitters from other organisations were generally supportive of comprehensive awareness-raising campaigns.

Participants at the public meetings considered that dissemination of scientific, educational and best practice information was a key problem. The extent of information already available was acknowledged, but problems with sharing this information and best practice were identified. Participants considered that raising awareness of how to use water efficiently and reducing adverse impacts on water quality from land-use activities were priority areas.

There was agreement by local government that raising awareness of freshwater issues should be a key part of the programme. In conjunction, central and local government have a role in developing national programmes and disseminating existing information on freshwater issues. Local government submitters were supportive of increasing awareness of issues (particularly the effects of diffuse discharges) through education programmes.

Action 13: Collaboration between central government and local government, scientists and key stakeholders, on pilot projects to demonstrate and test new water management initiatives

Pilot projects were considered to be a sensible way forward by many submitters, including recreation groups, the agricultural sector, individual submitters and community groups. Research submitters were very supportive of collaboration between central and local government and scientists, but were very clear that increased central government funding for research was required.

A lack of information for effectively managing water bodies was raised as an issue at all of the public meetings. Councils were regarded as not having sufficient funds to carry out the necessary research and monitoring of water bodies. Central government funding of research through the Crown research institutes was acknowledged; however, comments were made that research should be aligned with government programmes such as the Sustainable Water Programme of Action.

Local government submitters generally supported pilot programmes. Greater coordination and partnership between central government, local government, the science community and community groups was supported at all of the local government meetings. Pilot projects were widely supported, especially in the area of addressing land-use impacts on water quality.

Māori at the hui supported increased collaboration between central and local government, scientists and key stakeholders on pilot projects. The value of this action was seen as demonstrating and testing new water management initiatives where those initiatives are responding to specific regional issues. Participants saw working together as particularly useful in terms of joint management, co-management, and integrated catchment management of freshwater.

Additional actions

Environmental group submitters noted that the discussion document places too little emphasis on fixing serious environmental problems relating to freshwater (for example, pest management, biodiversity, international obligations, fish passage, wetlands).

An integrated catchment management approach was suggested at most of the public meetings and many of the hui. Developing whole of catchment plans which involve all relevant agencies, community groups and iwi was regarded as an effective approach for managing freshwater. Achieving integrated management of land-use activities and freshwater was also regarded as essential to improve water quality.

Research submitters also considered involving science advisory panels in the next phase of the programme to be a priority.

A range of submitters also considered that implementing recommendations from the recent Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment *Growing for good* report was a priority.

Submitters from other organisations noted a very strong focus on regional councils in the discussion document, and that actions involving other groups (for example, industry and community groups) should be explored further.

Conclusions

The consultation on the discussion document raised a number of issues around central and local government roles. The overall view was that decisions should be made at local level and any central government role should reinforce this, not override it. The role for central government could be to provide guidance and support for local government and the provision of national funding where impacts of implementing national priorities have local costs. In achieving consistency between councils, via national directives or guidance (potentially through stating nationally important values), there is a need to recognise differences between regions, communities and catchments.

Greater involvement by communities in finding solutions to water management issues was a common theme. This could be achieved by working together to seek solutions and to increase awareness and education, particularly amongst urban populations about water management issues. Further investigation of the possibilities of water storage emerged as a theme through the consultation.

Māori raised concerns about the Treaty of Waitangi relationship, and sought greater involvement in management and decision-making. They also raised ownership issues and noted the link between this and the use of market-based instruments. Increased recognition of traditional Māori values for water and a holistic approach was also raised, with concern about the restoration of life-supporting capacity of waters.

There were comments around the general theme of ‘don’t reinvent the wheel when it comes to water management’. There was a desire to see the Resource Management Act being used to best effect, rather than replacing or duplicating it; and to provide a greater emphasis and focus on consistency of implementation, enforcement and performance. Recognition was sought for the planning already undertaken; while others suggested further examination of international examples to see what approaches could be used in New Zealand.

There were questions about the use of market instruments, and concerns about the potential for monopolies; the impact on property rights; the privatisation of a public good; the impact on the environment and community; and the framework within which a market would operate. It was also recognised that enhanced transfer of consents could increase efficiency of water use if environmental, social and cultural values are provided for.

A number of issues were raised regarding the need for integrated catchment management. This included greater recognition of the linkages between urban and rural water issues; land and water; precipitation, groundwater and surface water; water quality and water quantity; and whole catchment (from mountains to the sea) management.