

# Proposed changes to RMA National Direction

## Package 2: Primary Sector Package 3: Freshwater

June 2025





Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

# Webinar format


1. Welcome and introductions
2. Purpose of the webinar
3. RMA National Direction – purpose and process
4. National Direction Work Programme
5. Primary Sector proposals
6. Freshwater proposals
7. Q and A via chat box
8. Next steps:
  - Process for making submissions
  - Recommendations to Ministers


## 2. Webinar purpose

 To inform the public, iwi/Māori, interested groups and stakeholders of the RMA national direction consultation proposals.


 Webinars are part of the consultation process –

Infrastructure and Development – 4 and 10 June
Primary Sector and Freshwater – 5 and 11 June

 Forums with interested groups are also scheduled in June.

 Engagement with iwi authorities and Post Settlement Governance Entities is underway.

 The consultation events will help inform and explain the proposals, in advance of making submissions.

 See MfE website for further information about the consultation and engagement process [Have your say | Ministry for the Environment](#)

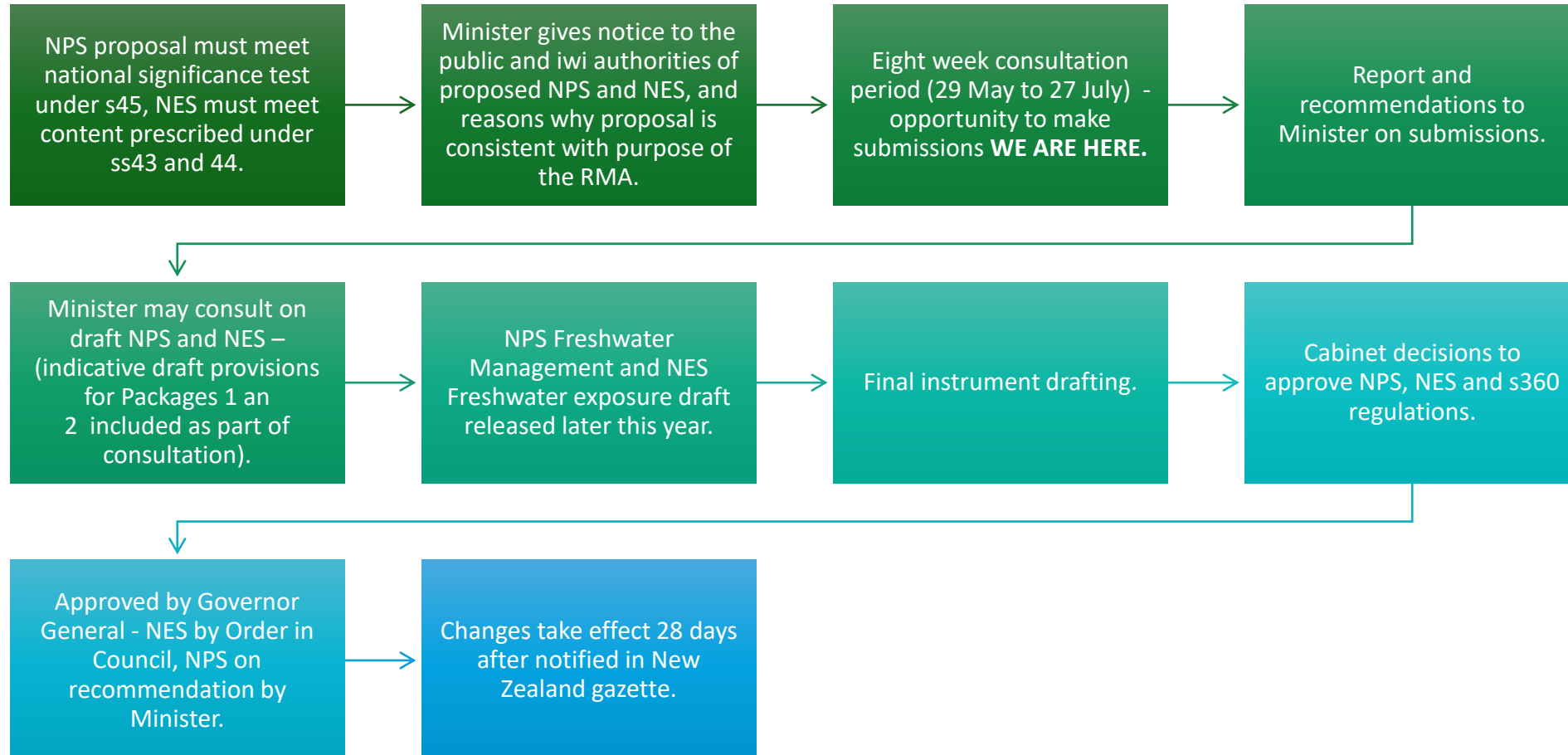
### 3. What is RMA National Direction?

National direction supports local decision-making under the RMA

Provided by national policy statements, national environmental standards, national planning standards and s360 regulations

National direction can direct plan changes, provide policy guidance for resource consent decisions, and can introduce nationally consistent rules and environmental standards

# RMA process for making National Direction





## 4. National Direction Work Programme

The Government's national direction objectives:

- unlocking development capacity for housing and business growth
- enabling delivery of high-quality infrastructure for the future, including doubling renewable energy
- enabling primary sector growth and development, including aquaculture, forestry, pastoral, horticulture, and mining

Targeted amendments to 12 existing and introduction of 4 new national direction instruments to improve the operation of the resource management system under the RMA 1991

# National Direction Work Programme continued...

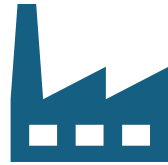
Re-scoped programme in March 2025 to:

- progress targeted changes aligned with the resource management reforms
- reduce implementation requirements on local government and communities
- have immediate and meaningful impact in the current system and influence development of the new system.

# Four packages



1. Infrastructure  
and development



**2. Primary Sector**



**3. Freshwater**



4. Going for  
Housing Growth



# Packages 2 and 3: Primary Sector and Freshwater

- Amendments to National Environmental Standards for Marine Aquaculture 2020
- Amendments to National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry 2023
- Amendments to New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010
- Amendments to National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022
- Amendments to Stock Exclusion Regulations 2020
- Amendments to mining and quarrying provisions in:
  - National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023
  - National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2024
  - National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020
  - National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020
- Amendments to National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020
- Amendments to National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020

## 5. Primary Sector proposals (Package 2)

- A key part of the Government's plan to promote economic development is changing national direction settings it sees as restricting the primary sector.
- The proposals include new and amended rules to enable activities, and clarify where consents are required in district, unitary or regional plans.
- They include targeted national policy direction to support resource consent and plan-making processes, with a focus on enabling the primary sector.

# NES for Marine Aquaculture

The proposed changes will:

- Make it easier to conduct research and trials in the coastal marine area
  - Provide simpler consenting pathways for research and trials on existing marine farms and in new space
  - Make the placement of small-scale structures with no livestock in the coastal marine area a permitted activity
- Streamline changes to consent conditions for aquaculture activities by making them 'controlled activities'
- Remove unnecessary restrictions in the reconsenting process

# NES for Commercial Forestry

The proposed changes will:

- amend regulation 6(1)(a) to be more specific about the criteria for how councils can impose stricter rules than the NES-CF
- repeal regulation 6(4A) which enables councils' broad discretion to have more stringent rules to control aspects of afforestation
- amend regulation 69 to require a Slash Mobilisation Risk Assessment (SMRA) for all forest harvests as part of the existing harvest management plan, and/or amending regulation 69(5) to require all slash above an identified size be removed from the forest cutover
- repeal regulations 10A and 77A which require afforestation and replanting plans respectively, and Schedule 3 which sets out the requirements for these plans
- remove from Schedules 3(4)(2), 4(4)(2), 5(4)(2) and 6(4)(2) the undefined term “woody debris” from all forest planning requirements
- amend wilding tree risk and control regulations 11(4)(b) and 79(5)(b) to simplify wording and link the required activity to the notice requirement
- amend regulation 71A(b) to say that low-intensity harvesting is permitted if “any relevant forest planning requirement is complied with”.

# New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement Policies 6 and 8

The proposed changes will:

- amend Policy 6 (Activities in the coastal environment) to better enable development of the Government's priority activities (renewable electricity generation, electricity transmission, resource extraction and aquaculture) by:
  - strengthening the language: and
  - recognising that these activities may have a functional or operational need to locate in the coastal marine area; and
  - recognising the potential of renewable resources in the coastal environment to meet the needs of current and future generations.
- amend Policy 8 (Aquaculture) to direct decision makers to:
  - provide for aquaculture activities within gazetted aquaculture settlement areas; and
  - take account of the cultural and environmental benefits of aquaculture.

# NPS for Highly Productive Land

The proposed changes involve:

- removal of Land Use Capability (LUC) 3 land from restrictions in the NPS-HPL
- testing inclusion of Special Agricultural Areas
- either:
  - extending timeframes for mapping of HPL to be completed within two or three years (2027 or 2028); or
  - suspending requirements for mapping HPL until further direction is provided in the replacement resource management system.
- see also changes to quarrying and mining provisions (slide 15)

# Quarrying and Mining Provisions

Proposed amendments to existing quarrying and mining provisions will make them more enabling and more consistent across the following National Direction instruments:

- NPS for Freshwater Management - cl 3.22(1)(e)(iii)
- NES for Freshwater (wetlands) - s45A(6)(b) and s45D(6)(b)
- NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity - cl 3.11(1)(a)(ii) and (iii)
- NPS for Highly Productive Land – cl 3.9(2)(j)(iii) and (iv)



# Stock Exclusion Regulations

The proposed changes will:

- remove the requirement to exclude non-intensively grazed beef cattle and deer from wetlands in low intensity farm systems.

## 6. Freshwater proposals (Package 3)

The Government is committed to safeguarding freshwater for the benefit of all New Zealanders, but freshwater management has become too complex and expensive to implement.

The Government is replacing freshwater national direction, and is seeking feedback on options to amend the:

- NPS for Freshwater Management, and
- NES for Freshwater.

A two-stage process is being followed.

- This consultation on options is the first stage and submissions will inform advice to the Government on proposed changes to progress.
- The second stage will involve the release of an exposure draft with provisions for testing under section 46A of the Resource Management Act.

Feedback is also sought on whether to make changes under the RMA or under the upcoming replacement Resource Management legislation.

# Options to amend freshwater instruments

## Rebalancing the NPS for Freshwater Management:

- make it clear that freshwater management requires the balancing of multiple objectives, and that councils need to consider the cost impacts of meeting freshwater targets, and that long timeframes may be appropriate
- rebalance Te Mana o te Wai to reflect the importance of freshwater to all New Zealanders, and
- provide flexibility for how councils manage and monitor freshwater under the National Objectives Framework.

Providing for domestic supply of commercial vegetable growing and water security.

## Amending activity-based controls in the NES for Freshwater:

- make changes to the requirements (including information requirements) under the synthetic nitrogen fertiliser regulations, and
- simplify the definition and restrictions in relation to wetlands (cross refer to the NPS for Freshwater Management), and requirements for fish passage and culverts.

Improving the protection of drinking water sources through mapping requirements.

## 7. Q and A check in

- Post questions in the Chat
- Topics raised at Webinar 2 (5 June):
  - The rationale for including quarries as infrastructure supporting activities
  - Possible changes to the effects management hierarchy in a range of NPSs
  - Identification of Special Agriculture Areas as part of the NPS Highly Productive Land
  - Maintaining the stock of wetlands and indigenous biodiversity
  - Requests for further information
  - Timeframes for implementation

## 8. Next steps

Information about the consultation and engagement process can be found on the MfE website:

[Have your say | Ministry for the Environment](#)

### Making a submission:

Packages 1 and 2:

<https://consult.environment.govt.nz/resource-management/infrastructure-development-primary-sector-nd>

Package 3:

<https://consult.environment.govt.nz/resource-management/freshwater-national-direction>

- Discussion documents/RIS
- Online portal for lodging submissions
- Postal address for written submissions
- Email address for questions

Submissions will inform recommendations to Ministers on the national direction proposals.





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# Thank you for your time

<https://environment.govt.nz/news/consultation-on-updating-rma-national-direction/>