



Freshwater farm plans

Freshwater farm plan certification guidance



Ministry for the
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Manatū Mō Te Taiao



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Introduction

Freshwater farm plans are a regulated farm-planning process for farmers and growers that will provide a practical way to identify, manage and reduce the impact of farming on the freshwater environment. The process aims to put the health of the wai (water) and whenua (land) at the centre of decision making on farm, so farming/growing activities are in balance with the freshwater environment.

Farmers and growers will consider their local catchment and on-farm environment, alongside the impacts on freshwater from their farming/growing activities, to identify and assess risks to freshwater and develop practical actions to avoid, remedy or mitigate (manage) those risks.

The key output of the freshwater farm plan process will be a suite of actions and implementation timeframes, selected to manage identified risks to freshwater.

The certifier's role and the certification process are crucial parts of the freshwater farm plan system. The certifier's primary role is to make sure the plan has adequately identified and assessed risks to freshwater and selected appropriate actions and timeframes to manage these risks.

The purpose of this document is to provide freshwater farm plan certifiers with information on:

- the purpose of freshwater farm plan certification
- the role of the certifier
- the certification process
- certification requirements.

1. Background

Freshwater farm plans are a key delivery tool of the 2020 Essential Freshwater Package. The aim of the Essential Freshwater Package is to:

- stop further degradation to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems
- start making immediate improvements
- help deliver healthy freshwater ecosystems within a generation.

Freshwater farm plans are intended to work in combination with the Essential Freshwater package of regulations, which includes the:

- [National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 \(NPS-FM\)](#)
- [Resource Management \(National Environmental Standards for Freshwater\) 2020 \(NES-F\)](#)
- [Resource Management \(Stock Exclusion\) Regulations 2020.](#)

Te Mana o Te Wai (TMoTW) is the central concept in the NPS-FM for all freshwater management. Under TMoTW, protecting the health of freshwater protects the health and wellbeing of the wider environment. TMoTW prioritises the health and wellbeing of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems, then the health and needs of people, followed by the ability of people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

Over time, freshwater farm plans are expected to become a key tool for farmers and growers to manage their freshwater regulatory requirements.

National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020

The NPS-FM provides national direction on freshwater management across Aotearoa New Zealand. Regional councils need to give effect to TMoTW by working alongside tangata whenua and engaging with the local community to maintain or improve the state of freshwater in the region and, if necessary, update their regional policy statements or regional plans. Through the regional planning process, they will need to:

- set long-term visions
- identify values
- set environmental outcomes
- establish baseline and target states for a suite of water quality and ecosystem attributes.

The content of regional plans and other catchment-related information needs to be reflected in freshwater farm plans – a key way for this to happen is catchment context, challenges and values (CCCV). The farm operator/plan developer must have regard to the catchment context information when identifying and assessing risks to freshwater and selecting actions to adequately manage these risks. Undertaking the plans in this way will ensure they reflect regional planning processes, including the local approach to TMoTW.

1.1 Legislation

Part 9A of the [Resource Management Act 1991](#) (RMA) sets out the high-level requirements for the freshwater farm plan system, including:

- which farms must have a plan (that is, the thresholds)
- the duties of the farm operator, which include submitting a plan to a certifier for certification
- the contents of a plan, including the risk assessment
- the duties of the certifier.

The [Resource Management \(Freshwater Farm Plans\) Regulations 2023](#) set out the detailed requirements for the freshwater farm plan system and certification process, including:

- when a farm operator must get a plan certified
- provisions for selecting a certifier
- the process for certifying a plan
- the process for plan disputes and second certification (reviews)
- recertification requirements.

Certifiers must have a detailed understanding of the freshwater farm plan regulations to perform their role.

The following sections of this document further explain the freshwater farm plan certification requirements and the duties of the certifier.

2. The certifier's role

The key function of the certifier in the freshwater farm plan system is to assess whether a plan meets certification requirements.

The most important part of this assessment is establishing whether the plan has appropriately identified and assessed on-farm risks to freshwater, selected actions to manage these risks, and accounted for the catchment context at each step.

The certifier is also responsible for working with the farm operator to administer the certification process, and reporting required information to the relevant regional council.

Successful implementation of freshwater farm plans will be heavily influenced by farmers and growers taking 'ownership' in the process. When farmers and growers understand the 'why', they are more likely to see value in managing their effects, take ownership, and continually improve. Ownership of the plan will come down to the delivery of the process, so it is important certifiers understand and influence this where possible.

The certifier may also be a plan developer – that is, acting as a consultant or advisor, offering plan-development services to farmers. For instance, the certifier may be contracted by a farm operator to help develop their plan, and then certify that the plan meets the certification requirements. This guidance focuses only on the certification process and is not intended to provide information on expectations or best practice of a certifier when operating in a plan-developer role.

See section 3.1 and [appendix 3](#) for more information regarding process and conduct when acting in both the certifier and plan-developer role.

3. Certifier obligations

A certifier must ensure they are meeting the obligations of their role as outlined in the legislation and their certifier appointment agreement. This includes:

- identifying and managing any conflicts of interest
- maintaining the certifier competencies (see [appendix 2](#)).
- adhering to the professional conduct standards (see [appendix 3](#)).

3.1 Conflict of interest

The certifier must complete a conflict of interest declaration before undertaking the certification assessment.

They will first need to identify whether there are any conflicts present, including any:

- financial or business interest in the property (including shareholdings and financial arrangements)
- family connections to the property
- employment relationship with the property
- inconsistencies with the professional conduct standards.

A conflict of interest does not automatically disqualify a certifier from undertaking a certification, as long as the conflict of interest is managed.

When a conflict of interest is identified, the certifier must:

- determine whether they are able to mitigate or manage the risks associated with the conflict of interest sufficiently to carry out the certification
- provide a written declaration stating the identified conflict of interest and the steps they will take to ensure it is managed.

The certifier must supply the farm operator a copy of their conflict of interest declaration to record in the freshwater farm plan. The certifier must also submit this declaration to the regional council with the other information requirements once they have completed their assessment.

Example: A farm operator has engaged a certifier to certify their plan, and the certifier has an immediate family member who is an employee of the farm operator. The certifier will state in their conflict of interest declaration:

- that their family member is an employee of the farm operator
- what their family member's role is
- what interactions they may have with the family member during the certification process
- how any potential conflict of interest is to be managed.

The certifier will set out mitigation measures – for example, through a statement such as:

I will state in the certification report which areas I assessed that my family member worked on, and I will be clear and transparent regarding each interaction through the certification process that involved my family member.

3.2 Compliance with specified instruments

The actions in a freshwater farm plan must comply with any requirements in a specified instrument (for example, any designation, national environmental standard, national planning standard, regulations made under Part 14 of the RMA, resource consent, rule in a regional plan, or water conservation order).

This means that if a requirement in a council rule is more stringent than an action that would otherwise be included in a freshwater farm plan, the more stringent requirement will apply. The reverse is also true: if an action in a plan is more stringent than a rule requirement, the action in the plan will apply.

Example: A farm operator completes a risk assessment for their farm and identifies there is a risk of sediment loss to a wide river on their property, because dairy cattle have direct access to a section of the river.

The farm operator considers it necessary to fence this section of the river with a four-metre setback to manage the risk, given the steepness of the surrounding land. Regulation 8 of the Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020 requires dairy cattle to be excluded from lakes and wide rivers with a three-metre setback.

In this case, a three-metre setback is not sufficient to manage the risk to freshwater, so the larger four-metre setback is included as an action in the plan.¹

The freshwater farm plan must contain any current resource consents held in respect of the farm that are relevant to the preparation of the plan, such as a consent to discharge effluent.

The plan must reference regulatory requirements that contain a freshwater farm plan pathway (for example, intensive winter grazing requirements under [subpart 3 of Part 2](#) of the NES-F), if a certified plan is intended to be used to comply with those requirements.

During their assessment, the certifier may consider additional matters as required in a specified instrument, if the farm operator intends to use the certified plan to meet other regulatory requirements.

After their assessment, the certifier must notify the regional council whether the farm operator intends to use the certified plan to meet other regulatory requirements (see [section 5.6](#) of these guidelines).

3.2.1 Compliance, monitoring and enforcement in the freshwater farm plan system

A certifier is not an enforcement officer and does not hold the functions and powers of an enforcement officer under the RMA. Regional councils will continue to exercise their compliance, monitoring and enforcement functions in the freshwater farm plan system.

¹ Note that a certifier would need to be conscious of the Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020 when assessing the suitability of the implementation timeframe for this action.

This includes the ability to issue infringement notices for non-compliance with the freshwater farm plan regulations (such as for failure to arrange an audit of the farm within 12 months of having the plan recertified). See Schedule 1B of the Resource Management (Infringement Offences) Regulations 1999 for the full list of infringement offences.

If a certifier becomes aware of a significant and urgent pollution event while on farm, we suggest that they alert the regional council of this as soon as possible.

4. The assessment approach

The certifier's key role is to assess whether a plan meets the certification requirements. To do this effectively, the certifier will need to understand and have confidence in the process the farm operator and/or plan developer has gone through to identify and assess the risks and actions, including:

- how they have gone about understanding their catchment context, inherent vulnerabilities and farming/growing activities
- how they have worked through identifying and assessing their risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems
- their approach to selecting actions and related timeframes to manage the identified risks, and why they have selected those actions and timeframes
- whether they have used the best available information and drawn accurate conclusions.

An in-depth analysis of every risk and action may not be necessary for a certifier to be confident in their assessment of the plan, particularly for farms that have a large area and/or many risks and actions. See [section 4.4](#) of these guidelines for more information.

4.1 Objective evidence

The certifier must collect and assess objective evidence to inform their certification assessment. Objective evidence includes (but is not limited to):

- documented evidence such as photographs, records, reports, invoices and contracts for planned work/upgrade
- analytical evidence from the analysis of farm data or records
- visual-based (demonstrated) evidence, such as on-farm observations
- inquiry-based (testimonial) evidence, such as conversations with the farm operator and/or plan developer, employees or third parties.

The certifier must document the objective evidence sighted during the certification process and the conclusions drawn from this.

The following approach can help certifiers gather objective evidence to support their assessment.

1. Establish the basics

Gain an understanding of:

- the catchment context as it relates to the farm
- the biophysical features of the farm (that is, soils, slopes, freshwater bodies, sites of significance)
- the farming or growing operation (that is, activities and their management, procedures and processes, controls including training and responsibilities).

2. Identify the processes for each farming/ growing activity

- How is the activity currently managed?
- What are the inputs, outputs, resource requirements and controls?
- What are the steps in managing the process?
- What happens at each step?

Do not look for evidence until you understand the process. Use an example to gain understanding (for example, ask for an explanation on how the effluent system works, including in emergency situations).

3. Search for objective evidence

Gather evidence that is observable and can be verified. Concentrate on key points, and select an appropriate sample size if you are checking records.

4. Check back

- Check interfaces between processes (for example, effluent applications and effluent storage records).
- Follow up on previous findings.
- Ensure all planned certification points are covered.

To gather quality evidence, part of the certifier's role is to work with the farmer to build a clear picture of the plan-development process and how the farmer reached the set of risks and actions set out in the action plan. This will require the certifier to:

- build rapport with the farm operator and/or plan developer by developing a good understanding of them and their business
- ask good questions to determine the reasoning behind decisions that were made as part of the plan-development process.

4.2 Best available information

When conducting the certification assessment, the certifier should be confident that the approach to identifying and assessing risks, and selecting actions, has been based on the best available information.

Best available information means information that is:

- from a credible source (that is, proven information that is free from errors or bias)
- current (that is, information that is up to date and is being applied)
- applicable to the situation (that is, information that is relevant to the farming system or environment).

4.3 Fair and reasonable

Actions and the timeframes set to implement or achieve actions must be fair and reasonable. As part of the certification assessment, the certifier must consider whether the actions and timeframes identified by the farm operator and/or plan developer are fair and reasonable.

When assessing whether a selected action or action timeframe is fair and reasonable, a certifier should consider if the action:

- is feasible (that is, achievable for the farming system/business)
- is possible within the assigned timeframe (that is, physically achievable when considering the process or steps for implementation)
- at least meets accepted minimum industry practices or standards
- is based on best available information (all sources of credible information should be considered).

Further information on selecting appropriate action and action timeframes is set out in [Appendix 4](#).

4.4 Sampling

Sampling involves selecting a sample of the available information and evidence to assess, to determine the overall sufficiency and accuracy of the information and evidence provided.

The certifier can use a sampling approach while undertaking their certification assessment in situations where it is not practical for them to examine all available information or visit every feature. Sampling will be particularly useful for completing certification assessments on larger farms, such as high country or hill country stations.

When using a sampling approach, the certifier will still need to understand and have confidence in the process the farm operator and/or plan developer has gone through to identify and assess the risks and actions (that is, they will still apply the assessment approach set out in section 4 of these guidelines).

However, the certifier can be more targeted in how they conduct their assessment. The certifier can select a sample of risks and actions from the plan to assess in depth, to determine whether the process of risk identification and assessment, and action selection, has been adequately undertaken.

To ensure the sampling approach is effective, the certifier should select a sample proportionate to the size of the farm, and to the number and significance of risks and actions.

The certifier should prioritise the following when selecting their sample:

- risks and actions that:
 - are related to farming/growing activities that pose a significant risk to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems
 - are related to other regulatory requirements (for example, actions that relate to a requirement under another regulation, rule or consent condition)
 - are related to the catchment context (for example, actions that help address risks directly related to the catchment context)
- sampling a range of risk and action types (such as risk of contaminant runoff, risk of gully erosion, actions related to farm practices, physical mitigations)
- land units with significant inherent vulnerabilities
- sampling across a range of land units to check they have been classified appropriately
- the number of samples required to provide sufficient confidence in the plan.

If a certifier cannot make an assessment with confidence, they should request more information from the farm operator.

Example: 300 ha Marlborough vineyard

A certifier completed a desktop assessment of the freshwater farm plan and supporting material and identified several areas to investigate further on the property:

- **three freshwater bodies** – in particular an unformed crossing and areas with eel habitat
- **four surface drains** connected to freshwater bodies
- **20 ha block** with undulating land (8–11° slope) and a higher risk of erosion (the catchment context identifies sediment as a problem contaminant for the area)
- **30 ha block** with heavy soils and subsurface drainage to freshwater bodies
- **40 ha block** where stock have access to a freshwater body during winter grazing
- **30 ha block** being redeveloped in two years (assess the proposed erosion and sediment control measures against the features of the site – for example, location of freshwater bodies, slope, soil characteristics)
- **the fertiliser and agrichemical storage and disposal areas**
- **the irrigation abstraction point** (the farm operator has a 20-year-old resource consent for this activity)
- **discuss the irrigation, fertiliser and agrichemical practices and procedures** with relevant staff, including:
 - maintaining, calibrating and monitoring equipment and infrastructure
 - managing a leak or failure in the irrigation system
 - managing a chemical spill
 - disposing excess chemical
 - how irrigation/fertiliser/agrichemical application rates and schedules are developed (for example, using soil moisture readings, plant requirements, crop growth stage)
- **sampling another half-dozen 10 ha blocks** on the property, across the three land units, to check that:
 - land units have been classified appropriately
 - inherent vulnerabilities have been identified
 - whether there are additional risks or features that have been missed (such as freshwater bodies, drains, soil erosion, point sources).

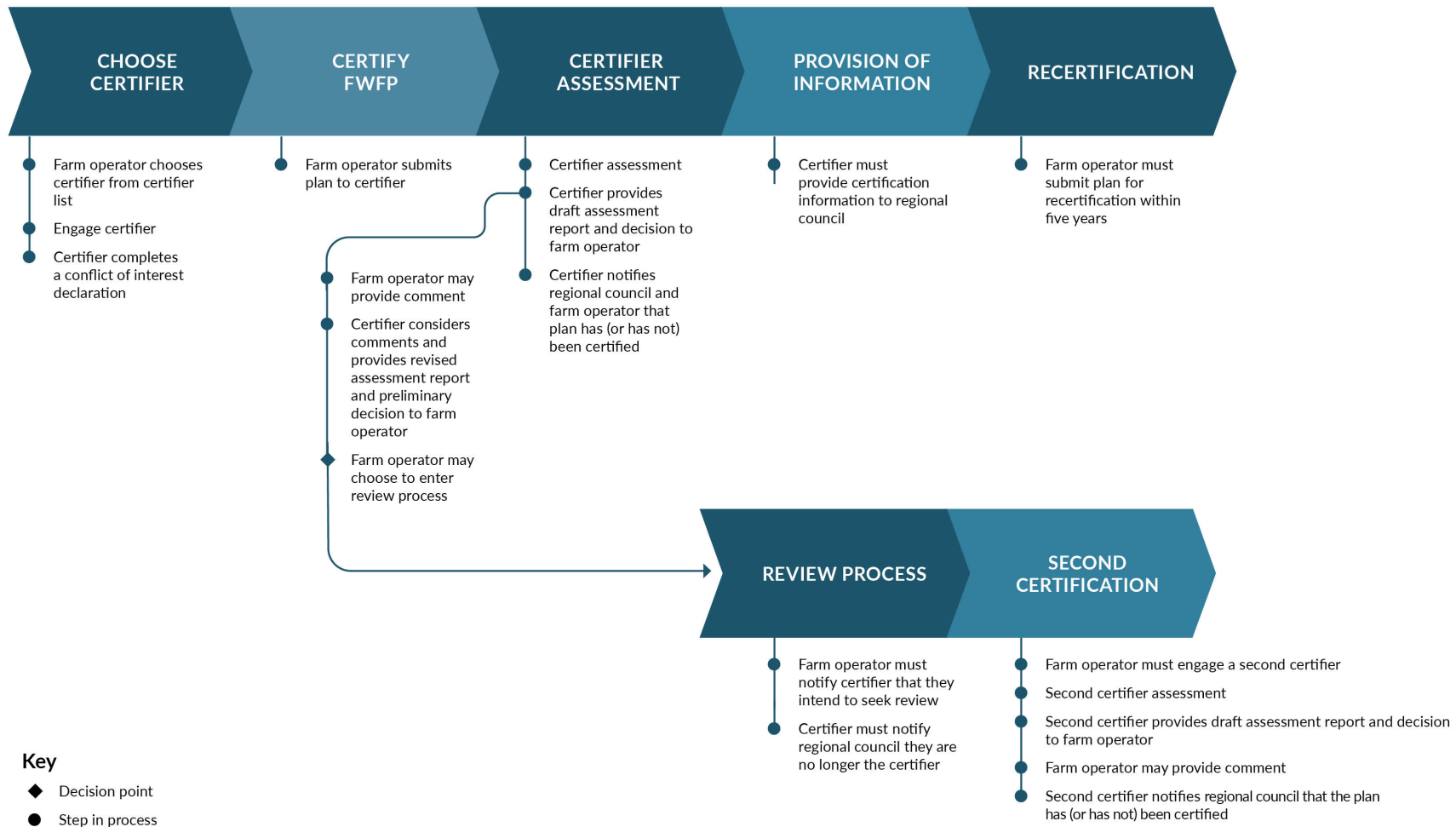
5. Certification process

The certification process follows defined timeframes with submission and reporting requirements for the farm operator and certifier at each stage. A certifier must follow the certification process, which includes the following stages.

1. Submission
2. The certification assessment
3. The decision and assessment report
4. Finalising the decision and assessment report
5. Second certification (if triggered by the farm operator)
6. Certification reporting requirements

The certifier is expected to document each stage of the process thoroughly in case they are required to demonstrate the process they followed – for example, in the instance of a certifier performance review or complaints process.

Figure 1: Certification process



5.1 Submission

A farm operator must submit their plan to a certifier within **18 months** of:

- regulations commencing in the region or part (for example, catchment area) of that region, or
- the date when the farm meets the land-use thresholds for a plan (see [section 217D](#) of the RMA).

To have their freshwater farm plan certified, a farm operator will engage a certifier appointed by their regional council.

The certifier must supply the farm operator a copy of their conflict of interest declaration to record in their plan. See [section 3.1](#) of these guidelines for more information. Once they have completed this and signed an agreement, the farm operator will submit their plan, along with any supporting material, to the certifier for certification.²

Regional councils may require certifiers to notify them of the date they received the plan from the farm operator for certification.

Once the certifier has received the plan, they have **30 working days**³ to:

- undertake an on-farm visit (where required)
- complete a draft decision and assessment report
- provide the draft decision and assessment report to the farm operator.

The certifier must ensure they plan out the next steps in advance to meet this deadline.

5.2 The certification assessment

The certifier must conduct a certification assessment to determine whether a freshwater farm plan meets the certification requirements. The certification requirements are set out in [section 217F](#) of the RMA, and they include the content requirements in [Part 2](#) of the Resource Management (Freshwater Farm Plans) Regulations 2023 (see [appendix 5](#) of these guidelines for a list of certification requirements).

The certifier should plan their assessment process with the assessment approach (set out in [section 4](#) of these guidelines) in mind. They must ensure the assessment they undertake is robust and credible.

The adequacy of the plan content can be assessed using the certification requirements checklist in [appendix 5](#) and the assessment criteria in [appendix 4](#) of these guidelines.

The assessment process will have two parts:

² Note: The certifier may also be the plan preparer, in which case the engagement process will have happened prior to this.

³ Note: The certifier may seek an extension from the regional council for the date of submission for their draft decision and assessment report. An extension will be granted at the regional council's discretion.

- a desktop assessment
- an on-farm assessment (where applicable).

It is recommended that the certifier follows the process below when completing their certification assessment.

5.2.1 Desktop assessment – document review

Once the certifier has received the plan and supporting material from the farm operator, they should complete a desktop assessment. The aim of the desktop assessment is to:

- build an understanding of the farm’s catchment context, biophysical features, inherent vulnerabilities and farming/growing activities
- assess whether the plan contains the information required by the certification requirements
- consider additional matters as required in a specified instrument, if the farm operator intends to use the certified plan to meet other regulatory requirements.

The certifier should attempt to understand the process the farmer and/or plan developer went through when developing their plan, how that process influenced the identification and assessment of their risks to freshwater, and the actions they selected to manage these risks.

The certifier could arrange an informal conversation with the farm operator during the desktop assessment to gain a better understanding of their farm operation, and to identify key areas for the on-farm assessment (where applicable).

When completing a desktop assessment of a freshwater farm plan, the certifier should:

- check that the plan includes all the information set out in the certification requirements (see appendix 5)
- assess whether the information set out in the plan meets the certification requirements, using the assessment criteria (see appendix 4)
- consider (based on their assessment of the above) where further assessment or information may be required, including:
 - whether there are any gaps in the plan – for example, risks that have not been identified or assessed sufficiently, or actions selected that are not appropriate to manage the identified risk(s)
 - where they may need to seek further information or evidence during an on-farm assessment – for example, where they have assessed the plan may not be fit for purpose, sites of significance, areas where high-risk activities are occurring, areas where activities related to regulatory requirements are occurring (see section 4.4 of these guidelines).

5.2.2 On-farm assessment

The certifier must undertake an on-farm assessment unless the plan is being recertified and, through its amended action plan, does not propose to implement any new regulated action.

Once the desktop assessment is complete the certifier will contact the farm operator to arrange the on-farm assessment (where applicable). Having a conversation with the farm operator prior to the on-farm assessment will help the certifier understand what they can expect, and how to better structure their visit.

The aim of the on-farm assessment is for the certifier to collect sufficient evidence (for example, visual- and inquiry-based evidence) to determine whether the plan meets the certification requirements.

While on farm, the certifier will assess the adequacy of the plan presented for certification, using the assessment criteria in [appendix 4](#) of these guidelines.

An on-farm assessment may be time constrained, depending on the size of the farm and the number of risks and actions. It is important the certifier prioritises key areas they need to visit to gather the necessary evidence to make their assessment. See [section 4.4](#) of these guidelines for more information.

The certifier could prepare for the on-farm assessment by:

- listing the information and evidence they need to gather during the on-farm assessment
- planning how to best gather that information and evidence (for example, by identifying which areas of the farm they need to visit, and documenting any questions they have for the farm operator and other staff)
- identifying any matters where additional expertise may be required.

The certifier could follow the process below when conducting their on-farm assessment.

1. Conduct an opening meeting to set expectations for the on-farm assessment and answer any questions from the farm operator.
2. Conduct the on-farm assessment based on the plan set out above.
3. Conduct a closing meeting to confirm the next steps of the certification process and answer any questions from the farm operator.

A certifier may request further information from the farm operator (such as previous audit or certification assessment reports) to determine whether the certification requirements have been met.

The certifier may consider additional matters as required in a specified instrument, if the farm operator intends to rely on the certified plan to meet other regulatory requirements.

Once the certifier has gathered enough information to assess if the plan meets the certification requirements, they will write a draft decision and assessment report.

5.3 The decision and assessment report

The certifier will set out their findings in a draft decision and assessment report. The decision will outline whether the plan meets the certification requirements, and the assessment report will detail the reasons why the plan does or does not meet the certification requirements. A sample assessment report is provided in [appendix 6](#) of these guidelines.

The certifier will provide the draft decision and assessment report to the farm operator, to give them an opportunity to comment. The certifier must provide their draft decision and assessment report to the farm operator within **30 working days** of receiving the plan from the farm operator.

The certifier may seek an extension from the regional council for the date of submission for their draft decision and assessment report. An extension will be granted at the council's discretion.

If the farm operator disagrees with any aspect of the draft decision and assessment report, they can provide comments in writing to the certifier within **10 working days** of receiving the draft decision and assessment report.

The certifier must consider the farm operator's comments and provide a preliminary decision and assessment report back to the farm operator within **5 working days**.

The preliminary decision and assessment report must consider whether the farm operator's comments provide new information that alters the findings of the draft decision and assessment report. The certifier's report must show they have fairly considered the farm operator's comments, and must clearly detail the assessment they have made on whether the plan meets the certification requirements.

Once the farm operator has received the preliminary decision and assessment report, they have **10 working days** to notify the certifier if they disagree with any aspect of the certifier's preliminary decision or assessment report, and if they are engaging a second certifier (that is, seeking a review). See [section 5.5](#) of these guidelines for more information.

If the certifier is notified that a second certifier has been engaged, they have **5 working days** to notify the regional council they are no longer the certifier of the plan.

5.4 Finalising the decision and assessment report

The certifier's decision and assessment report become final after the following:

- the farm operator does not comment on the draft decision and assessment report – the draft decision and assessment report becomes the final decision and assessment report
- the farm operator does not engage a second certifier (that is, seek a review) after receiving the preliminary decision and assessment report – the preliminary decision and assessment report becomes the final decision and assessment report.

The certifier is required to notify the farm operator and regional council, **as soon as practicable**, of their final decision that:

- the certification requirements have been met and the plan is certified, or
- the certification requirements have not been met, and the plan needs to be amended to achieve certification.

The certifier must indicate in their decision that it was made by the first certifier.

5.5 Second certification

If the farm operator disagrees with any aspect of the certifier’s preliminary decision or assessment report, they have **10 working days** from receiving the preliminary decision and assessment report to engage a second certifier to carry out the second certification (that is, seek a review).

The farm operator must provide the second certifier with:

- all the information they provided the first certifier
- the draft and preliminary decisions and assessment reports from the first certifier
- the farm operator’s written comments on the aspects of the decisions and reports they disagreed with.

Once engaged to carry out the certification, the second certifier will:

- complete the certification assessment as outlined in [section 5](#) of these guidelines
- provide a draft decision and assessment report (see [section 5.3](#)) to the farm operator within **30 working days** of being engaged.⁴

Regional councils may require the second certifier to notify them of the date they were engaged to certify the plan.

The second certifier may choose to adopt any, all, or none of the first certifier’s decisions and assessment reports.

If the farm operator disagrees with any aspect of the draft decision and assessment report, they can provide comments in writing to the second certifier within **10 working days** of receiving the draft decision and assessment report.

The second certifier must provide a final decision and assessment report to the farm operator within **15 working days** of providing their draft decision and assessment report to the operator.

If the farm operator commented on the draft decision and assessment report, the final decision and assessment report must show the second certifier has fairly considered these comments.

If the operator did not provide comments, the draft decision and assessment report become the final decision and assessment report.

⁴ Note: The second certifier may seek an extension from the regional council for the date of submission for their draft decision and assessment report. An extension will be granted at the regional council’s discretion.

The second certifier must notify the farm operator and regional council, **as soon as practicable**, of their final decision that:

- the minimum certification requirements have been met and the plan is certified, or
- the minimum certification requirements have not been met, and the plan needs to be amended to achieve certification.

The second certifier must indicate in their decision that it was made by the second certifier.

A farm operator may only seek a second certification once for each preliminary decision and assessment report.

If the second certifier assesses that the plan does not meet certification requirements and cannot be certified, the farm operator needs to amend the plan and begin the certification process again. The regional council may bring enforcement action if the farm does not have a certified plan within the required timeframe.

5.6 Certification reporting requirements

Once the plan has been certified, the certifier (or second certifier) must provide the following information to the regional council within **5 working days** of notifying the farm operator and regional council of the final decision:

- the administrative information in the plan (see [appendix 5](#) of these guidelines)
- the action plan (see [appendix 5](#))
- a conflict of interest declaration (see [appendix 7](#))
- a statement as to whether the farm operator intends to use the plan to meet other regulatory requirements (see [section 3.2](#))
- a map of the spatial extent of the farm at the time of certification.

The certifier must also provide the farm operator and/or plan developer with the relevant certification details to record in their plan (see [appendix 8](#)).

5.6.1 Record keeping

A certifier must keep information received and prepared in relation to the certification of a freshwater farm plan for seven years, including:

- draft, preliminary, and final assessment reports and decisions
- any comments received from the farm operator on the draft decision or assessment report
- the administrative information in the plan (see [appendix 5](#) of these guidelines).

How these records should be kept is not specified; this is to allow organisations to continue using their existing record-keeping methods.

These records are to be kept by certifiers to ensure that there is clear evidence available in the instance of a:

- dispute about a certification decision or assessment report

- performance review of a certifier
- complaint against a certifier.

It is recommended that, alongside any documents, the following details are kept:

- communications relating to the documents
- dates the documents were produced, shared or amended
- dates of any communications related to the documents.

A freshwater farm plan data reporting system is under development, to support the recording of this data.

6. Recertification process

The farm operator must amend their freshwater farm plan and submit it to a certifier for recertification within **five years** of the previous certification.

The farm operator must also amend and submit their plan, or part of their plan, for recertification within **12 months** of the following events (recertification triggers):

- the farm has new significant inherent vulnerabilities
- the farm acquires additional land to which different CCCV apply
- the farm operator undertakes significant changes in farming/growing activities
- the farm operator takes over a farm and does not adopt the existing plan.

The farm operator is responsible for understanding the recertification requirements, and for engaging a certifier to recertify their plan within the required timeframes. The operator can seek clarification from the regional council on when recertification is required.

Examples:

The farm has a new significant inherent vulnerability

The farm operator has observed that the drainage profile of their land has changed over time and now poses a significant risk to a stream. There is potential for runoff containing contaminants to enter the stream during prolonged rainfall events. This risk is not addressed in the current plan.

The farm acquires additional land to which different CCCV apply

The farm operator purchases a block of land which drains into a site that is a known habitat for species significant to local tangata whenua. The farm operator needs to amend their plan to demonstrate how they will manage the impacts on the site.

The farm operator undertakes significant changes in farming/growing activities

The farm operator begins winter grazing cattle on a steeper land unit of the farm that cattle were previously restricted from in winter. The farm operator needs to amend their plan to demonstrate how the risk to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems will be managed in this land unit.

If recertification is required, the farm operator must engage a certifier to carry out the recertification following the steps outlined in [section 5](#) of these guidelines.

6.1 Part recertification

A part recertification pathway is available when a recertification trigger (see section 6) and subsequent changes to the plan only relate to:

- a part of the farm area, or
- a part of a farming/growing activity.

If this is the case only the part of the plan that has been amended must be submitted to the certifier for recertification. This will ensure that changes to a plan can be made in a robust and cost-effective manner.

The process outlined in section 5 of these guidelines must be followed by the certifier when undertaking a part recertification.

A part recertification does not change the five-yearly recertification timeframe – that is, the farm operator must still submit their plan for recertification within five years of the entire plan last being certified/recertified.

Appendix 1: Glossary and definitions

The following definitions are those included in the RMA Freshwater Farm Plans Regulations 2023.

Act means the Resource Management Act 1991.

Action, in relation to an action plan,—

- (a) means the way in which a farm operator avoids, remedies, or mitigates 1 or more adverse effects on freshwater and freshwater ecosystems; and
- (b) includes (without limitation)—
 - i. a physical work (for example, fencing or planting):
 - ii. a practice (for example, how an activity is undertaken):
 - iii. a process or procedure (for example, training staff in how to undertake an activity).

Action plan means the plan set out in a certified freshwater farm plan under regulation 10 (see Appendix 3).

Catchment actions –

- (a) means actions that address risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems that directly relate to the catchment context, challenges, and values; but
- (b) excludes regulated actions.

Catchment context, challenges, and values includes (without limitation) the following:

- (a) existing local area information on landforms, soil data, climate data, freshwater data, freshwater bodies, contaminants, sites that are significant to the community, significant species or ecosystems:
- (b) identified cultural matters of importance to tangata whenua, including:
 - i. the cultural significance of the local area
 - ii. the traditional name(s) of freshwater bodies
 - iii. significant sites and species to tangata whenua.
- (c) any objectives, policies, rules in relevant to the management of freshwater or freshwater ecosystems in policy statements or the regional plan
- (d) any relevant freshwater matters in planning documents that are recognised by iwi authorities and lodged with the regional council
- (e) the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management and any action plans made by the regional council
- (f) any secondary legislation made under the Act that is relevant to the management of freshwater or freshwater ecosystems (other than secondary legislation made under Part 9A of the Act).

Certification requirements means the requirements in section 217F of the Act.

Critical source area has the meaning given in regulation 3 of the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020.

Inherent vulnerabilities means risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems from the biophysical features of the land including from irrigation or drainage.

Intensive winter grazing has the meaning given in regulation 3 of the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020.

Land unit means an area of contiguous or non-contiguous land with similar biophysical features.

National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management means the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management whose approval under section 52 of the Act was notified in August 2020 (as amended or replaced from time to time).

Regulated actions means actions that—

- (a) address risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems; and
- (b) relate to a relevant requirement under a specified instrument.

Supplementary actions—

- (a) means actions that address risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems; but
- (b) excludes catchment actions and regulated actions.

Stockholding area has the meaning given in regulation 3 of the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020.

Te Mana o Te Wai has the meaning set out in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management.

Appendix 2: Certifier competencies

Certifiers must have an understanding of the following.

- (a) The freshwater farm plan regulations and certification requirements
- (b) Any objectives, policies and rules relevant to the management of freshwater or freshwater ecosystems in policy statements or regional plans⁵
- (c) Any relevant freshwater matters in planning documents that are recognised by iwi authorities and lodged with regional councils
- (d) The [National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020](#) and any action plans made by regional councils
- (e) Other secondary legislation made under the [Resource Management Act 1991](#) that is relevant to the management of freshwater or freshwater ecosystems
- (f) The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi)
- (g) Te ao Māori
- (h) Te Mana o Te Wai
- (i) Sites or species of cultural significance as defined by tangata whenua
- (j) Contaminants and their impacts on freshwater and freshwater ecosystems
- (k) Impacts of farming on freshwater and freshwater ecosystems
- (l) Actions to manage the impacts of farming on freshwater and freshwater ecosystems

To be appointed, certifiers must also have an understanding of catchment context, challenges and values information for the local area(s) in which they operate, including:

- existing information on landforms, soil data, climate data, freshwater data, freshwater bodies, contaminants, sites that are significant to the community, and significant species or ecosystems
- identified cultural matters of importance to tangata whenua, including:
 - the cultural significance of the local area
 - the traditional names of freshwater bodies
 - sites and species that are significant to tangata whenua.

⁵ In some instances, certain district rules may be applicable. The local regional/unitary council will inform certifiers when this is the case.

Appendix 3: Professional conduct standards

1. **Integrity:** being honest and avoiding bias and the influence of others
2. **Professional competence:** maintaining professional knowledge and skills through continuing professional development
3. **Confidentiality:** keeping personal details and information secure, private, and confidential
4. **Appropriate behaviour:** complying with the law and behaving in a professional manner
5. **Management of conflict of interest:** identifying and managing any matters that compromise the exercise of professional judgment

Appendix 4: Certification assessment criteria

When conducting the certification assessment, the certifier will be checking that:

- the plan contains all of the information set out in the certification requirements
- the information meets the standard prescribed by the certification requirements.

The certifier can refer to the certification requirements checklist set out in [appendix 5](#) to ensure that all required information is included in a freshwater farm plan.

The certifier can refer to the assessment criteria set out below when assessing the adequacy of the information contained in the plan.

Table 1: Certification assessment criteria

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Explanation
Administrative requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The plan includes all administrative information. ✓ Administrative information is correct. 	<p>The certifier should be confident that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The plan includes all required administrative as set out in the certification requirements checklist (see appendix 5). 2. The information is accurate at the time of certification.
Land units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Land units have been adequately identified, mapped and described. 	<p>Land units are an area of contiguous or non-contiguous land with similar biophysical features.</p> <p>The certifier should be confident of the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The land units have been adequately identified based on the biophysical features of the farm. To determine this, the certifier should consider the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Has the farmer/plan developer got the right number of land units based on the biophysical features of the farm (for example, have they included two drastically different soil types in one land unit)? – Have they accounted for soil type, slope, climate, land drainage and irrigation when classifying land units? – If they have used another method to block their farm (such as land-use capability), and used these blocks as land units, is the method credible, and are the resulting land units fit for purpose for the plan?

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Explanation
		<p>2. The land units are shown clearly and correctly in any map(s). To determine this, the certifier should consider the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Does the map(s) clearly show the extent of each land unit? – Do the land units identified on the map(s) accurately match the provided descriptions? <p>3. The land units are described accurately and in sufficient detail. To determine this, the certifier should consider the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do the land unit descriptions demonstrate, in sufficient detail, how biophysical features were used to classify the land units (for example, soil type, slope, climate, land drainage and irrigation)? – Do the land unit descriptions include detail on other relevant biophysical features (for example, connectivity to water, critical sources areas, sites, species, or ecosystems of cultural and/or community significance)? – Are the land unit descriptions accurate, based on what the certifier can see on farm? – Are the land unit descriptions accurate, based on the regional plan or other local information sources (such as the CCCV document) – for example, are there any further fresh waterbodies that have not been included? – Are the land unit descriptions accurate to the land unit map(s)? – For farms that span across multiple catchments and/or regions, does the description indicate which catchment/region the land unit is in? <p>For more information, see section 3.3 ‘Land units’ in the guidance document Developing a freshwater farm plan.</p>
Inherent vulnerabilities	✓ Inherent vulnerabilities for each land unit have been adequately identified and assessed.	<p>Inherent vulnerabilities are risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems from the biophysical features of the land, including from irrigation and/or drainage.</p> <p>The certifier should be confident of the following.</p> <p>1. The plan has adequately identified all inherent vulnerabilities for each land unit. To determine this, the certifier should consider the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are there any biophysical features that may give rise to inherent vulnerabilities that the plan has not identified? – Does the plan show which inherent vulnerabilities are present on which land units? – Are the required features related to the inherent vulnerabilities shown clearly in any map(s)?

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Explanation
		<p>2. The inherent vulnerabilities have been adequately assessed. To determine this, the certifier should consider the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is it clear what biophysical feature(s) each inherent vulnerability relates to? – Is it clear how the nature of those feature(s) gives rise to the inherent vulnerability? – Is it clear what the resulting vulnerability (risk) to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems is? – Have the inherent vulnerabilities been accurately identified (that is, has the full extent of the risk been considered)? <p>For more information, see section 3.4 ‘Inherent vulnerabilities’ and section 2.1. ‘Features related to inherent vulnerabilities’ in the guidance document Developing a freshwater farm plan.</p>
Farming/growing activities	✓ Farming/growing activities have been adequately identified and mapped.	<p>Farming/growing activities are activities undertaken in the management or operation of the farm.</p> <p>The certifier should be confident of the following.</p> <p>1. The farming/growing activities occurring on each land unit have been adequately identified. To determine this, the certifier should consider the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have all the farming/growing activities occurring on each land unit been identified in the plan? – Do the regional plan or other local information sources (such as the CCCV document) identify any further activities the farm may carry out, which are not documented in the freshwater farm plan? – Make a list of the activities carried out on farm. Are there any key activities missing that you would expect to see for this farm system, catchment or region? – Do the descriptions of the farming/growing activities accurately represent the extent of the activities occurring? <p>2. The features related to farming/growing activities are shown clearly in any map(s).</p> <p>For more information see section 3.5 ‘Farming/growing activities’ and section 2.2 ‘Features related to farming/growing activities’ in the guidance document Developing a freshwater farm plan.</p> <p>Note: the farming/growing activity groups and sub-groups set out in Developing a freshwater farm plan provide a guide for describing farming/growing activities but are not mandatory.</p>

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Explanation
<p>Catchment context, challenges and values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Catchment context information relevant to the farm has been considered and mapped. ✓ The farm operator has had regard to relevant catchment context factors when identifying and assessing risk. ✓ The farm operator has regard to relevant catchment context factors when selecting actions and action timeframes. 	<p>The farm operator and/or plan developer must have regard to the relevant catchment context information (where available from the regional council) in the risk identification and assessment process, and during the selection of actions and action implementation timeframes.</p> <p>The certifier should be confident of the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Catchment context features, relevant to the farm, have been mapped where appropriate (for example, sites, species or ecosystems of cultural and/or community significance). 2. The farm operator and/or plan developer has had regard to relevant catchment context factors in the risk identification and assessment process. To determine this, the certifier should consider the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have all the catchment context factors relevant to the farm been identified in the plan? – Have the catchment context factors that relate to individual risks been considered in the identification and assessment of those risks (for example, a written description of catchment context factors considered when identifying each risk, and/or a written summary of any identified risks that relate to catchment context factors)? 3. The farm operator and/or plan developer has had regard to relevant catchment context factors in the selection of actions and action implementation timeframes. To determine this, the certifier should consider the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are the actions selected to manage the identified risks appropriate to manage each risk (inclusive of the catchment context factors identified)? – Are the timeframes selected to implement the identified actions appropriate based on the assessed significance of the corresponding risks (considering the impact of catchment context factors on the significance of the risks)? <p>For further information see the following sections in guidance document <i>Developing a freshwater farm plan</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – section 3.2 'Catchment context challenges and values' – section 3.1 'Risk' – section 3.6 'Identifying and assessing risk' – section 4 'Managing risks to freshwater'.

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Explanation
Risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems on each land unit have been identified. ✓ Risks are described accurately. ✓ The significance of the risk posed to freshwater has been assessed adequately. 	<p>The freshwater farm plan must identify the inherent vulnerabilities and farming/growing activities occurring on each land unit.</p> <p>The certifier should be confident that, when identify the risks occurring on each land unit, the farm operator and/or plan developer has considered how the inherent vulnerabilities and farming/growing activities interact to create individual risks.</p> <p>The plan must include an assessment of the significance of each identified risk.</p> <p>The certifier should also be confident that the farm operator and/or plan developer has had regard to relevant catchment context factors when identifying and assessing risk.</p> <p>The certifier should be confident of the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The plan identifies all risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems occurring on each land unit. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Has the plan met the criteria for accurately identifying inherent vulnerabilities, farming/growing activities, and relevant catchment context factors? – Has the plan accurately identified all the risks that could arise from the identified farming/growing activities? – Do the identified risks consider the interactions between the farming/growing activity, the inherent vulnerabilities, and the relevant catchment context factors for the land unit in question? 2. The risks are described accurately. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Does the description of the risk reflect the interactions between the farming/growing activity, the inherent vulnerabilities and the relevant catchment context factors for the land unit? 3. The significance of the risks has been assessed adequately. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Has the farm operator and/or plan developer used a credible method to determine the significance of the risk (such as a credible risk matrix)? – Has the method been correctly applied? <p>See section 3 ‘Risks to freshwater’ in the guidance document Developing a freshwater farm plan.</p>

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Explanation
Action selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Actions to avoid, remedy or mitigate (manage) the risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems have been selected. ✓ Actions have been selected considering the significance of the identified risk. ✓ Actions address any other regulatory requirements relating to freshwater or freshwater ecosystems. ✓ Actions are clear and measurable. 	<p>The plan must identify existing and new actions to avoid, remedy or mitigate (manage) the risks identified. When identifying actions and setting timeframes, the farm operator and/or plan developer should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the significance of the risk to freshwater or freshwater ecosystems • whether there is a regulated timeframe (for example, a deadline required under other rules or regulations). <p>The certifier should be confident of the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The actions selected are appropriate to manage the identified risks. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Will the selected action effectively avoid, remedy or mitigate the identified risk? – Has the action been selected based on best available information (that is, from a credible source, based on current information, and applicable to the situation)? – Is the selected action fair and reasonable (that is, is it feasible for the business, possible within the assigned timeframe, of at least accepted minimum practice or standard, and based on best available information)? 2. The actions have been selected considering the assessed significance of the identified risk. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is the extent of the action proportionate to the significance of the risk? – Is the action tailored to the identified risk, and to the specific needs of the farm and catchment? 3. The actions will meet any other relevant regulatory requirements. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have the farm operator and/or plan developer accounted for other rules and regulations (specified instruments) relating to freshwater in their action selection process? 4. The actions are clear and measurable. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is the action written clearly – that is, is the action defined as specifically as possible, setting out exactly what will be implemented or achieved? – Is the action measurable – that is, will the farm operator be able to practically demonstrate (show evidence) that the action has been or is being implemented or achieved? <p>For further information see section 4 ‘Managing risks to freshwater’ in the guidance document Developing a freshwater farm plan.</p>

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Explanation
Action timeframes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appropriate timeframes have been selected for the actions, with consideration for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the significance of the risk(s) – any regulated timeframes. ✓ Timeframes are clear and measurable. 	<p>The plan must select appropriate timeframes for actions to be implemented or achieved. When selecting timeframes for new actions to be implemented, the farm operator and/or plan developer should consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The significance of the risk(s) to freshwater or freshwater ecosystems 2. whether there is a regulated timeframe. <p>The certifier should be confident of the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The timeframes selected for new actions are appropriate, considering the significance of the risk(s). The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are the implementation timeframes for actions that address significant risks to freshwater proportionate to the level of risk identified? – Is the selected timeframe practical (that is, do the timeframes account for the order in which physical works and/or process or procedural changes can practically occur)? – Is the selected timeframe fair and reasonable (that is, is it feasible for the business, possible within the assigned timeframe, of at least accepted minimum practice or standard, and based on best available information)? 2. The timeframes selected account for any other relevant regulated timeframes. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – If the action has an associated regulated requirement (other than freshwater farm plans), will the selected timeframe meet that other requirement? 3. The timeframes are written in a clear and measurable way. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do each of the new actions have a set date by which they are to be implemented (the date by which an action will be put into practice or become required procedure) or completed (the date by which the action will be fully complete)? – Do each of the existing actions or actions that could be considered ongoing (that is, actions that become an ongoing practice or procedure from the date of implementation, or that have a requirement for ongoing maintenance from the date of completion) have a start-from date? – Will the farm operator be able to practically demonstrate (show evidence) that the actions have been implemented or achieved by that set date? – Will the farm operator be able to practically demonstrate (show evidence) that existing actions are being implemented on an ongoing basis?

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Explanation
Action categorisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Each action is categorised based on the following criteria. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Regulated actions – Catchment actions – Supplementary actions 	<p>The plan must categorise each action in the action plan based on the following criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulated actions are actions that address a risk to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems and also relate to another relevant regulatory requirement. • Catchment actions are actions that address risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems that directly relate to catchment context, challenges and values, but excludes regulated actions. • Supplementary actions are actions that address risks to freshwater or freshwater ecosystems, but excludes catchment and regulated actions. <p>The certifier should be confident of the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each action in the action plan has been accurately categorised based on the above criteria. The certifier could determine this by considering the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Does the action meet the definition for the category it has been assigned to? – Does the action better fit the definition for another category, rather than the category it has been assigned to?
Action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The action plan includes all required information. 	<p>The action plan must include all the selected actions to be undertaken to manage the identified risks, including the following information.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe each action that will be taken over the next five years. 2. Identify whether each action is an existing action (that is, an action already being carried out on farm), or a new action. 3. Describe the land unit(s) in which each action is to occur. 4. Describe how each action relates to the farming activity and the identified risk that it is intended to avoid, remedy or mitigate (address). 5. Identify the category of each action (see Action categorisation above). 6. Identify the timeframe by which each action must be implemented or achieved. <p>For farms that span across multiple catchments and/or regions, the action plan needs to identify which catchment/region each action is located in.</p> <p>The freshwater farm plan must also include a map or maps of any new physical works that are included in the action plan.</p>

Freshwater farm plan requirements

Assessment criteria

Explanation

- The certifier should be confident of the following.
1. The action plan includes all the information set out in the action plan section in [appendix 5](#) of these guidelines.
 2. The map(s) included clearly show all of the new physical works to be undertaken, as set out in the action plan.

Appendix 5: Certification requirements checklist

All content listed below is mandatory, as required by the certification requirements set out in the [Resource Management \(Freshwater Farm Plans\) Regulations 2023](#).

You can use this checklist when completing a certification assessment.

For a full list of certification requirements as they appear in the regulations, see Appendix 2 ‘Certification requirements’ in the guidance document [Developing a freshwater farm plan](#).

See [appendix 4](#) of these guidelines for the full assessment criteria.

Table 2: Certification requirements checklist

Certification requirements	Details	Covered Y/N/Partial	Comments
Freshwater farm plan must identify risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems	When identifying and assessing risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems, the farm operator has:		
	identified, mapped and described each land unit of the farm		
	identified the inherent vulnerabilities for each land unit		
	identified and assessed the risks from farming/growing activities that are being carried out within each land unit		
	identified existing and new actions to avoid, remedy or mitigate the identified risks		
	identified actions that are clear and measurable		
	set a timeframe within which each action must be implemented		
	When identifying actions and setting timeframes, the farm operator has considered:		
	the significance of the risk to freshwater or freshwater ecosystems		
	whether a timeframe for a particular action is required under a specified instrument		
Farm operator must have regard to catchment context, challenges and values	When identifying and assessing the risks and actions, the farm operator has given regard to:		
	the catchment context, challenges and values for the local area in which the farm is situated		
	the impacts that farming/growing activities have on the receiving environment		

Certification requirements	Details	Covered Y/N/Partial	Comments
Action plan	The action plan:		
	states whether each action is an existing action that is already being carried out on the farm, or a new action that the operator intends to take during the next five years		
	describes how each action relates to the risk that the action is intended to address		
	describes the land units in which each action is to occur		
	categorises each action as belonging to one of the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • catchment actions • regulated actions • supplementary actions 		
	states the timeframe within which each action must be implemented		
Maps to be provided in freshwater farm plan	To support the risk assessment and the identification of actions, the freshwater farm plan contains maps that show:		
	Features related to inherent vulnerabilities:		
	farm boundaries, noting on the map any land that is leased or licensed		
	areas of land use, if the farm is split into distinctly different land uses		
	location of land units		
	surface freshwater bodies		
	artificial freshwater bodies		
	soils		
	landforms including slope		
	potential areas of intensive winter grazing and critical source areas within areas of intensive winter grazing		
	critical source areas that are not within areas of intensive winter grazing		
	drainage systems and areas		
	irrigation and frost protection		
	Features related to farming:		
	fencing to exclude stock from freshwater bodies		
	planted riparian area		
soil erosion control plantings or works			
effluent systems and application areas			

Certification requirements	Details	Covered Y/N/Partial	Comments
	water-take bores and surface water abstraction points or intakes, including fish screens		
	freshwater crossings, including formed crossings, such as bridges, culverts, and fords, and unformed crossings		
	stock-holding areas, including feed pads, winter pads, stand-off pads, and loafing pads		
	other livestock-related infrastructure including milking sheds, wintering barns and shelters, and stock yards		
	farm accessways (for example, formed roads, tracks, races, and underpasses)		
	Point source discharges, including rubbish dumps; offal pits; silage pits; feed storage bunkers or sheds; agrichemical, fertiliser, and fuel storage sites; and agrichemical washdown areas		
	private drinking water supply points		
	Features related to catchment context, challenges and values (if available from regional council and relevant to the farm):		
	sites that are significant to the community		
	species or ecosystems that are significant to the community		
	sites and species in the local area that are significant to tangata whenua		
	New physical works:		
	new physical works (if any) to be undertaken on the farm, as set out in the action plan		
Administrative information in freshwater farm plan	The freshwater farm plan contains the following administrative information:		
	the name, contact details, and New Zealand Business Number (if any) of the farm operator		
	the names and contact details of any other persons who are the owners, leaseholders, or licence-holders of land on the farm		
	the name of the individual who has prepared the plan		
	the physical address of the farm		
	legal land titles and parcels of the farm		
	the total farm area in hectares		
	the leased or licensed area (if any) in hectares		

Certification requirements	Details	Covered Y/N/Partial	Comments
	any current resource consents held in respect of the farm that are relevant to the preparation of the freshwater farm plan		
	land use		
Reliance on certified freshwater farm plan to meet other regulatory requirements	The plan references regulatory requirements that contain a freshwater farm plan pathway if the certified plan is intended to be used to comply with those requirements.		
Certification and audit details in freshwater farm plan	The plan must contain the following information as received from the certifier or auditor:		
	each date of certification and audit		
	the name of the certifier or auditor on each occasion the plan is certified or the farm is audited		
	the identification number of each certifier and auditor		
	a conflict of interest declaration of each certifier and auditor		
	the date by which the farm operator must arrange the next audit of the farm		
	the date by which the plan must be submitted for recertification		
Further audit information in certified freshwater farm plan	The certified plan must contain the following information as received from the auditor:		
	individual actions in the action plan that have been implemented within the timeframes required under the action plan		
	Individual actions in the action plan that have not been implemented within the required timeframes, and the reason for not implementing them		
	the audit grade		

Note: When developing the plan, the farm operator and/or plan developer does not need to consider the risks of adverse effects of the following on freshwater and freshwater ecosystems:

- areas of exotic or indigenous forestry
- processing facilities or packhouses
- residential or commercial premises
- visitor accommodation.

Appendix 6: Certification assessment report

Table 3: Certification assessment report

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Included Y/N/Partial	Comments
Certification requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan contains all mandatory information requirements. Administrative information is correct. 		
Land units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land units have been adequately identified, mapped and described. 		
Inherent vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherent vulnerabilities for each land unit have been adequately identified and assessed. 		
Farming/growing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farming/growing activities have been adequately identified and mapped. 		
Catchment context, challenges and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catchment context information relevant to the farm has been considered and mapped. The farm operator has had regard to relevant catchment context factors when identifying and assessing risk. The farm operator has had regard to relevant catchment context factors when selecting actions and action timeframes. 		
Risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems on each land unit have been identified. Risks are described accurately. The significance of the risk posed to freshwater has been assessed adequately. 		
Action selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions to avoid, remedy or mitigate (manage) the risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems have been selected. Actions have been selected considering the significance of the identified risk. Actions address any other regulatory requirements relating to freshwater or freshwater ecosystems. Actions are clear and measurable. 		
Action timeframes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate timeframes have been selected for the actions, with consideration for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the significance of the risk(s) any regulated timeframes. Timeframes are clear and measurable. 		

Freshwater farm plan requirements	Assessment criteria	Included Y/N/Partial	Comments
Action categorisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each action is categorised based on the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – regulated actions – catchment actions – supplementary actions. 		
Action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The action plan includes all required information. 		

Appendix 7: Conflict of interest declaration

Table 4: Conflict of interest declaration

Certifier and Auditor Conflict of Interest Declaration				
<i>By signing this declaration, the certifier and auditor declare that there is no actual conflict of interest, or that the potential or perceived conflict of interest risks have been assessed and managed adequately.</i>				
Certifier	Name:	ID#:	Signature:	Date:
List of actual or perceived conflicts				
Description of how any conflicts will be managed				
Auditor	Name:	ID#:	Signature:	Date:
List of actual or perceived conflicts				
Description of how any conflicts will be managed				

Appendix 8: Certification details in the plan

Table 5: Certification and audit details in the plan

Certification information	
Date the freshwater farm plan was supplied to the certifier	
Certifier name	
Certifier ID#	
Type of certification (certification, second certification, recertification, part recertification)	
If part recertification – what part of the plan was subject to recertification	
Certification decision (certified, not certified – second certification started, not certified)	
Date of final certification decision	
Date by which the plan must be submitted for recertification	
Audit information	
Date the auditor was engaged	
Auditor name	
Auditor ID#	
Date of final audit decision	
Date by which the farm operator must arrange the next audit of the farm	