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# **Message to readers**

In April 2023, the Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ released the [*Our freshwater 2023*](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/our-freshwater-2023/) report, which analysed freshwater data from the period 2016–20. It showed that our lakes, rivers and wetlands were in decline. Only two per cent of lakes in Aotearoa New Zealand were healthy and nearly half of our rivers were unsafe for swimming. The report also showed that 68 per cent of our native freshwater birds were in danger of becoming extinct and nearly half of our rivers were partly inaccessible to migrating fish. Only 10 per cent of our historic wetlands remain.

All species depend on freshwater for life. But human activities, including farming, forestry and urban expansion, are degrading this resource. In 2020, the Government introduced a package of reforms called ‘Essential Freshwater’ to protect and restore lakes, rivers and wetlands. The reforms were designed to make immediate improvements to freshwater quality and reverse past damage by bringing freshwater resources, waterways and ecosystems to a healthy state within a generation. They included new regulatory measures that placed the health of waterways at the centre of decisions about freshwater and set our farming practices on a more sustainable track. The reforms were backed by $407 million in funding.

During 2022, our staff heard about the freshwater actions that government, councils, tangata whenua, land owners, and community groups were undertaking. We found that decision-makers were already embedding the concept of Te Mana o te Wai in their decision-making by considering the health and well-being of freshwater in planning and consenting decisions. We were also encouraged to hear that New Zealanders across the country were putting on gumboots and rolling up their sleeves to get involved in freshwater projects on the ground.

One 2,750-hectare farm next to the Kaipara Harbour won a national water-quality award for fencing its boundaries. In Rotorua, Ngāti Rangiwewehi developed a waterflow framework grounded in science and mātauranga Māori to monitor flows at a sacred spring the council uses as a water source. We have also heard that nitrogen fertiliser use is dropping, winter grazing practices are improving, and farm-related greenhouse gas emissions are coming down.

This *Essential Freshwater progress report* outlines these and other actions. It includes more than 20 case studies about community projects that are already reducing soil erosion and nutrient run-off from farmland, improving freshwater quality, and restoring ecosystems. It also provides updates about the work we are doing at a regulatory level.

These projects involve every sector of the community and represent a collective effort by New Zealanders to protect and restore our freshwater resources. Most of the actions discussed are targeted at stopping further degradation of these resources. While it may be too early to know if we’re reversing the trends identified in the *Our freshwater 2023* report, these actions are first steps toward achieving longer‑term objectives. We encourage you to read the report and take your own steps wherever possible.

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Nadeine Dommisse  
Deputy Secretary, Policy Implementation and Delivery

# Executive summary

We all want healthy waterways, but Aotearoa New Zealand’s lakes, rivers, wetlands and estuaries are degraded, especially in urban and intensively farmed areas. Healthy freshwater is not only about the environment. When nature thrives, so do our families, communities and businesses.

The Essential Freshwater reforms introduced in 2020 aim to stop further degradation, make immediate improvements, and reverse past damage to waterways and freshwater ecosystems. The package consists of six inter-related parts, five of which are new requirements under the Resource Management Act 1991:

1. National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM)
2. National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020 (NES-F)
3. a new freshwater planning process (FPP)
4. a freshwater farm plan (FW-FP) system
5. Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020
6. government funding for freshwater projects.

This *Essential Freshwater progress report* reviews the freshwater management actions and initiatives the Government, councils, tangata whenua, farmers, land owners, and community groups have taken since the reforms were introduced.

## New national direction on freshwater

The NPS-FM sets minimum standards for freshwater and includes Te Mana o te Wai. This requires councils around the country to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, with the first priority being to protect the health of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems. The NPS-FM also sets minimum national bottom lines for key measures of freshwater health.

Regional councils must give effect to the NPS-FM in the regional policy statements and freshwater plans they develop. Councils will seek community feedback on these over the next 18 months, and independent hearing panels will consider submissions to them through the FPP, which aims to speed up the process for landing these policy statements and plans.

Decision-makers are already giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai where they can. For example, a hearings panel in Hawke’s Bay declined an application to take 15 million cubic metres of groundwater from the Ruataniwha Basin, citing NPS-FM provisions and the potential adverse effects as the main reasons for doing so.

The NES-F includes measures to protect wetlands and control high-risk farming practices, such as intensive winter grazing and high levels of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser use on pastoral farmland. There is already evidence that Essential Freshwater reforms are helping to halt further decline of our waterways, through reducing the level of contaminants discharged into waterways.

Satellite data and consenting data from regional councils are showing there has been a change in winter grazing practices. Farmers are moving away from grazing their herds on steep slopes, a practice that causes soil erosion and pushes sediment into waterways.

Also, annual greenhouse gas emissions have reduced because of actions to protect freshwater. These emissions fell by 0.7 per cent in the 12 months to December 2021, the second slight reduction in two years. The main reason for this reduction was a 1.5 per cent drop in agricultural emissions, mainly due to the decline in dairy cattle and sheep numbers, and decreased use of synthetic fertiliser. Synthetic nitrogen fertiliser sales fell by 12 per cent and actual use of this fertiliser dropped by 11 per cent over the two years to December 2022 (Fertiliser Association of New Zealand).

The Government also introduced stock exclusion regulations in 2020. Meeting these requirements to keep stock (except sheep) out of lakes, rivers and wetlands by 2025 will require fencing in most places. That is why we are phasing in the regulations over the next two years.

## Farm plans for better freshwater

All farms above a certain size will need a freshwater farm plan (FW-FP). The FW-FP system will help councils implement their freshwater plans, particularly by better managing diffuse pollution (nutrients, sediment and pathogens). The plans will be specific to each farm and bring together all requirements relating to wetlands, fish passage, stock exclusion, stockholding areas, nitrogen limits, and sediment control.

The Ministry consulted widely on the system, testing it with councils and industry, so it is fit for purpose. We are also establishing a workforce of advisors and certifiers to help farmers and growers develop their plans and will introduce these region by region from mid-2023 to 2025. We are making funding available to farmers and land owners to help them introduce changes on their farms, including building fences to keep stock out of waterways and planting trees to reduce soil erosion.

## Funding communities to take action

The Government has invested $407.3 million of Jobs for Nature funding to help the country move to a more sustainable freshwater management system and to clean up our waterways. This investment includes:

* $67 million in the Public Waterways and Ecosystem Restoration Fund (24 projects), which addresses contamination of New Zealand’s waterways, supports sustainable land use, and creates jobs
* $53.6 million in the Freshwater Improvement Fund (29 projects), which supports better management of New Zealand lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater and wetlands (projects for both of the above funds include fencing and planting alongside waterways, as well as wetland restoration)
* $144.7 million in the Essential Freshwater Fund (40 projects) for freshwater management system capability and capacity improvements that will support delivery of the Essential Freshwater package
* $30 million in Te Mana o te Wai Fund (34 projects) to help whānau, hapū, iwi, and Māori land trusts build capacity and capability, so they can be involved in decision-making about freshwater management in their rohe
* $112 million in At Risk Catchments projects (two projects) to identify catchments that have serious issues and develop a research base to show how catchment improvements can be achieved quickly at a national level.

This funding has enabled partners, including regional and district councils, iwi, hapū, land owners, community groups, and environmental trusts to restore hundreds of hectares of freshwater catchments, plant more than 1.6 million shrubs and trees, restore fish passage at nearly 2,000 sites, and build more than 500 kilometres of fences to keep stock out of waterways.

This report includes more than 20 case studies about community projects that are already helping to reduce soil erosion, improve freshwater quality, and restore natural ecosystems. These projects range from large-scale sediment control on farms in Waikato, through to a Christchurch waterway planting project that has created jobs for rangatahi. Other projects involve restoring wetlands in the Wellington region, supporting fish passages in Tasman District, and protecting the habitat of a native fish that is only found in Canterbury.

## Restoring the mauri of our largest harbour

Soil erosion in Kaipara Harbour’s vast 600,000-hectare catchment has degraded water quality in the harbour. We have provided $100 million over six years to the Kaipara Moana Remediation Programme (KMR), which was matched by an additional $100 million from councils, land owners and other contributors. KMR aims to restore the health of this harbour and reduce the flow of sediment into the harbour.

In its 2021/22 Annual Report, KMR reported that 47,000 hectares of the catchment had sediment reduction plans in place. The 278 land owners involved in the project had also built 238 kilometres of waterway fencing and planted (or were planning to plant) along 85 hectares of river and wetland margins.

## Have your say on regional freshwater plans

The freshwater problems we are tackling are many, but the Government has scaled up a response that involves every sector of the community. Together, we have made a lot of progress in a short time. It will take years before we reverse the environmental damage highlighted in the *Our freshwater 202*3 report, but we are on the right track.

It will also take time to bed in the new regulatory measures. For example, regional councils (including unitary authorities) around the country will be consulting on their freshwater plans over the next 18 months; timeframes for each council to notify their plan are set out in [table 16](#table16) of this report. This is a great opportunity to have your say about freshwater planning in your region. For information about these processes, check your regional council’s website.

# What this progress report contains

This report has four parts. Clicking on each heading below will take you to that part.

## [Part 1: Why freshwater matters](#_Part_1:_Why)

This part covers what freshwater means to the people of Aotearoa, as well as the purpose, objectives and main interventions of the Essential Freshwater package.

## [Part 2: Translating long-term vision into action](#_Part_2:_Translating)

This part covers regional councils (translating national direction into action), tangata whenua (making decisions and managing freshwater), farmers and growers (applying the rules for freshwater use), and communities (discussing local needs for freshwater).

## Part 3: The journey so far

This part starts with an overview of implementing Essential Freshwater before stating the implementation in action.

## [Part 4: Where to from here?](#_Part_4:_Where)

This final part discusses reporting and collecting data, and local engagement.

# Part 1: Why freshwater matters

Water is essential for life. Freshwater is the non-salty water found in lakes, rivers and streams. We need to ensure the careful management of our country’s freshwater. Essential Freshwater is the term used to describe a package of freshwater reforms. These include new national direction to regional councils outlining steps they need to take to protect and improve the rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Most of the Essential Freshwater policies and regulations are now being put into effect, with only updated requirements for stock exclusion on low slope (less than five degrees) still pending, while freshwater farm plan (FW-FP) rules will be rolled out progressively region by region, over the next three years. Notification of new freshwater plans is required by all councils by 31 December 2024.

## What freshwater means to the people of Aotearoa

New Zealanders care about the state of their country’s water, including freshwater. Aotearoa has many unique ecosystems that are home to plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. Freshwater – lakes, rivers or wetlands – is often at the heart of these ecosystems.

Good water depends on healthy ecosystems. The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) focuses not only on water quality attributes, but other ecosystem aspects such as how we protect wetlands and fish.

#### Water flows through an interconnected system

* Freshwater flows through a system of many parts. For instance, freshwater:
* supports how New Zealanders live and make a living
* is essential for developing food sources, and for the growth of crops, pasture and forestry
* generates much of our electricity
* provides opportunities for recreation.

#### Water provides us with food

* Plants and animals are only safe to eat if the freshwater where they live is healthy.
* Taking water from a freshwater environment should not prevent that environment replenishing for the benefit of each generation.

#### Water must be clean and safe to drink

* Most people have water supplied direct to their homes. Water suppliers monitor water quality to ensure it complies with drinking water standards and they alert health authorities if the risk of illness increases.
* People wash and bathe in freshwater, and use it to clean their clothes and homes.

#### Water helps people make a living

* Water is an essential resource for a range of industries: primary, manufacturing and construction, and commercial operations.
* Water for farming comes from rainfall, but sometimes from rivers, lakes and groundwater to irrigate land.
* More people and intensified land use continue to increase demand for freshwater.

#### Water helps keep the power running

* Almost 60 per cent of our electricity comes from hydroelectricity, a renewable energy source.
* Hydroelectricity powers homes and businesses.
* Hydroelectricity does not rely on taking fossil fuels out of the ground and burning them.
* Hydroelectricity can affect water flow in rivers, putting pressure on freshwater environments.

#### Many New Zealanders enjoy the outdoors

* Lakes and rivers can be popular tourist attractions, especially when they are accessible for people to swim, fish, canoe and kayak in.
* Poorer water quality not only harms aquatic life, but it stops people from enjoying these recreational activities.

#### Freshwater is a taonga for Māori

* Each water body has its own mauri. Mauri is an important Māori concept that describes the health and vitality of living systems.
* Honouring the mana of water requires practices and policies that acknowledge the needs of a water body or waterway.

## Aims of the Essential Freshwater package

The Essential Freshwater package was driven by an urgent need to protect the health and well‑being of freshwater resources, waterways and ecosystems in Aotearoa from pollution and demand for human activities.

The package aims to:

* stop further degradation of freshwater in Aotearoa
* start making immediate improvements so that water quality is materially improving within five years
* reverse past damage to bring freshwater resources, waterways and ecosystems in Aotearoa to a healthy state within a generation.

The package is comprehensive, with inter-related parts and interventions. It includes:

* requirements and incentives for those who use it
* direction for councils to engage with communities and iwi when giving effect to the core concept of Te Mana o te Wai in regional policies and plans.

We are also aiming to address water allocation issues, in a way that takes into account all interests including Māori as well as existing and potential new users. The Government has partly addressed this in legislation that proposes to reform the resource management system.

### Essential Freshwater has six inter-related parts and key interventions

The first five parts of the Essential Freshwater package have been authorised through the Resource Management Act 1991, and the sixth through government budget processes. The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020, National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020, and stock exclusion regulations all came into force on 3 September 2000.

**National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM)** – The [National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020](https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/national-policy-statements/national-policy-statement-freshwater-management/) is national direction that requires regional councils around the country to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, with the first priority being to protect the health of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems. The NPS-FM also sets minimum, national bottom lines for key measures of freshwater health.

Regional councils use their regional policy statements and regional plans to set out their actions and give effect to national direction. These plans then guide city and district councils when developing and using their district plans.

The NPS-FM is national direction from government to regional councils about the contents of their next plans relating to freshwater, which will be translated into action on the ground. Public notification of these freshwater plans must happen by 31 December 2024.

**Freshwater planning process (FPP)** – This new process will speed up the consideration of regional freshwater plans to give effect to the NPS-FM, and make the plans more effective and consistent.

The Government has established a new planning process that includes setting up the office of the Chief Freshwater Commissioner and appointing the Chief Freshwater Commissioner and other freshwater commissioners. The Chief Freshwater Commissioner convenes the panels that will consider the regional freshwater plans and make recommendations to the councils on them.

**National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020 (NES-F)** – The new [Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2020/0174/latest/LMS364099.html) include measures to protect wetlands and control high-risk practices, including intensive winter grazing and high levels of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser use. NES-F rules are mainly aimed at preventing further degradation of our freshwater. If a rule is more restrictive than a rule in an existing council plan, it takes priority over that rule.

The NES-F has been updated, most recently in late 2022.

**Stock exclusion regulations** – The new [Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2020/0175/latest/LMS379869.html) require stock (except sheep) to generally be kept at least three metres away from lakes, rivers with a bed wider than one metre, and specified wetlands.

The exclusions usually require fencing, so the regulations are being phased in progressively by mid-2025.

**Freshwater farm plans (FW-FPs) system** – All farms above a certain size will need a freshwater farm plan. The FW-FP system will help councils implement their 2024 freshwater plans through better management of diffuse pollution (nutrients, sediment and pathogens).

**Government funding package** – The Government has invested $407.3 million of Jobs for Nature funding to help the country move to a more sustainable freshwater management system and to clean up our waterways. This investment includes:

* $67 million in the Public Waterways and Ecosystem Restoration Fund (24 projects), which addresses contamination of New Zealand’s waterways, supports sustainable land use, and creates jobs
* $53.6 million in the Freshwater Improvement Fund (29 projects), which supports better management of New Zealand lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater and wetlands (projects for both of the above funds include fencing and planting alongside waterways, as well as wetland restoration)
* $144.7 million in the Essential Freshwater Fund (40 projects) for freshwater management system capability and capacity improvements that will support delivery of the Essential Freshwater package
* $30 million in Te Mana o te Wai Fund (34 projects) to help whānau, hapū, iwi, and Māori land trusts build capacity and capability, so they can be involved in decision-making about freshwater management in their rohe
* $112 million in At Risk Catchments projects (two projects) to identify catchments that have serious issues and develop a research base to show how catchment improvements can be achieved quickly at a national level.

These programmes have been delivered in conjunction with a range of partners, including regional and district councils, iwi, hapū, community groups, and environmental trusts.

## National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020

### The 15 policies of the NPS-FM set the baseline

The NPS-FM sets out 15 policies, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: The 15 policies of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020

|  | Policy |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Freshwater is managed in a way that gives effect to Te Mana o te Wai. |
| 2 | Tangata whenua are actively involved in freshwater management (including decision-making processes), and Māori freshwater values are identified and provided for. |
| 3 | Freshwater is managed in an integrated way that considers the effects of the use and development of land on a whole-of-catchment basis, including the effects on receiving environments. |
| 4 | Freshwater is managed as part of New Zealand’s integrated response to climate change. |
| 5 | Freshwater is managed (including through a National Objectives Framework) to ensure that the health and well-being of degraded water bodies and freshwater ecosystems is improved, and the health and well-being of all other water bodies and freshwater ecosystems is maintained and (if communities choose) improved. |
| 6 | There is no further loss of extent of natural inland wetlands, their values are protected, and their restoration is promoted. |
| 7 | The loss of river extent and values is avoided to the extent practicable. |
| 8 | The significant values of outstanding water bodies are protected. |
| 9 | The habitats of indigenous freshwater species are protected. |
| 10 | The habitat of trout and salmon is protected, in so far as this is consistent with Policy 9. |
| 11 | Freshwater is allocated and used efficiently, all existing over-allocation is phased out, and future over-allocation is avoided. |
| 12 | The national target (as set out in Appendix 3) for water quality improvement is achieved. |
| 13 | The condition of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems is systematically monitored over time, and action is taken where freshwater is degraded, and to reverse deteriorating trends. |
| 14 | Information (including monitoring data) about the state of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems, and the challenges to their health and well-being, is regularly reported on and published. |
| 15 | Communities are enabled to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being in a way that is consistent with this National Policy Statement. |

**Source:** National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (updated February 2023, clause 2.2, pp 10–11)

### Te Mana o te Wai

|  |
| --- |
| Te Mana o te Wai:   * is the central concept for freshwater management * is fundamental to all freshwater management * recognises the vital importance of water. |

[Te Mana o te Wai](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/essential-freshwater-te-mana-o-te-wai-factsheet/) expresses the primacy of natural water ecosystems and provides a hierarchy for prioritising water use. Te Mana o te Wai informs all parts of the Essential Freshwater package. The concept has been part of the NPS-FM since 2014 but was expanded in 2020.

Te Mana o te Wai is a concept for all New Zealanders. It speaks to the essential value of freshwater and the importance of first sustaining its integrity and health, before providing for essential human health needs and then for other consumption.

Deciding how to apply Te Mana o te Wai locally in freshwater management involves extensive engagement and discussions with a range of people. These include regional councils, tangata whenua, farmers and growers, and communities.

Decision-makers are already using Te Mana o te Wai in current plans where they can. For example, a hearings panel in the Hawke’s Bay declined an application to take 15 million cubic metres of groundwater from the Ruataniwha Basin, citing NPS-FM provisions and the potential adverse effects as the main reasons for doing so.

#### Te Mana o te Wai establishes a hierarchy of obligations

All discussions about freshwater management should consider three obligations in this order of priority:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Health and well-being of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems. | | |
|  | 2 | Health needs of people (such as drinking water). | |
|  | | 3 | Ability of people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being, now and in the future. |

The NPS-FM strengthens and clarifies Te Mana o te Wai by offering six principles as stronger direction on how to apply Te Mana o te Wai when managing freshwater. The six principles are:

* mana whakahaere
* kaitiakitanga
* manaakitanga
* governance
* stewardship
* care and respect.

For descriptions of each principle, see the [National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/National-Policy-Statement-for-Freshwater-Management-2020.pdf) (last updated in February 2023).

## Freshwater planning process

The Resource Management Amendment Act 2020 introduced a new freshwater planning process (FPP). This enables regional councils to make changes to their freshwater plans in a robust but more efficient way than the current planning process set out in schedule 1 of the Resource Management Act.

The FPP streamlines decisions on freshwater plans by:

* requiring regional councils to notify freshwater plans that give effect to the NPS-FM by 31 December 2024 and make final decisions within two years of notification
* establishing independent freshwater hearings panels with enhanced hearings powers, made up of expert freshwater commissioners, and nominees from councils and tangata whenua.

Regional councils and unitary authorities must use the FPP for proposed freshwater planning instruments in regional policy statements and plans.

The Chief Freshwater Commissioner oversees the FPP. The Minister for the Environment appoints a current or retired Environment Court Judge to this role. The Minister also appoints freshwater commissioners to create a group of highly skilled commissioners. The Chief Freshwater Commissioner appoints and convenes freshwater hearings panels to hear and make recommendations on the regional councils’ freshwater planning instruments.

The [Chief Freshwater Commissioner](https://www.freshwaterplanning.govt.nz/our-people/chief-freshwater-commissioner/) is Judge L J Newhook. Alongside the Chief are 22 other [freshwater commissioners](https://www.freshwaterplanning.govt.nz/our-people/). For more information, visit the website of the [Office of the Chief Freshwater Commissioner](https://www.freshwaterplanning.govt.nz/).

Figure 1 shows the freshwater planning process. The process starts with regional councils preparing their freshwater plan. The process ends with two avenues for appeal depending on whether the regional council accepts or rejects the recommendations of the freshwater hearings panel.

Figure 1: The freshwater planning process

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**Source:** Ministry for the Environment

For more information, see our fact sheet: [A new freshwater planning process](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Files/a-new-freshwater-planning-process-factsheet.pdf).

## National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020

The [Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2020/0174/latest/LMS364099.html) (NES-F) include measures to stop the decline in freshwater quality.

The NES-F sets national rules for the ways particular activities or resource uses are to be carried out to deliver on shorter-term freshwater objectives.

The NES-F includes measures to:

* prevent further loss of natural wetlands and rivers
* preserve connectivity of fish habitat
* introduce controls on intensive winter grazing (IWG)
* control feedlots and other stockholding areas
* restrict agricultural intensification
* reduce excessive applications of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser.

### Intensive winter grazing

IWG is a high-risk environmental activity, because soil losses from steep slopes end up as sediment that pollutes waterways.

#### Making it easier for people to comply with the conditions in the regulations

In 2021, and in response to feedback about implementation issues, the Government deferred the commencement date of the IWG regulations and publicly consulted on changes to make them more practical to comply with, while still managing the effects of IWG.

The amended IWG regulations came into effect on 1 November 2022. This provided farmers with appropriate time to adjust their farming practices, cultivation, paddock selection, and planting choices, in preparation for the 2023 winter grazing season.

Winter grazing practices are improving. Satellite data and consenting data from regional councils are showing there has been a move away from high-risk practices.

#### Implementation of intensive winter grazing regulations

Councils have been working with farmers and primary industry groups with a focus on supporting farmers to understand the requirements and what they need to do. Several councils have indicated they will be taking a risk-based compliance approach, to ensure high-risk activities with the greatest potential for adverse environmental outcomes are prioritised.

Te Uru Kahika, the Regional and Unitary Councils Aotearoa, has developed a frequently asked questions sheet to help farmers understand how the rules on IWG may apply to them. We have also worked with the Ministry for Primary Industries – with input from industry and councils – to update an IWG module, a farm management tool for farmers, to reflect the amended regulations. This tool provides a ‘plan, do, check, review’ framework to support farmers to implement good IWG practices.

Further guidance, published in March 2023, provides more comprehensive information and recommendations for IWG practices, covering the topics of [pugging](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/pugging-guidance-for-intensive-winter-grazing/), [groundcovers](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/groundcovers-guidance-for-intensive-winter-grazing/) and [critical source areas](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/critical-source-areas-guidance-for-intensive-winter-grazing/).

#### Intensive winter grazing resource consents: Expectation versus reality

The IWG season officially began on 1 May 2023. We expect that farmers who require a consent will have filed one with their regional council before this date. We have been working closely with councils to monitor consent application numbers since November 2022. The number of IWG consent applications councils have received as of May 2023 is low, compared with what was estimated. Councils have provided comment on why this may be the case. Reasons include:

* farmers are improving their practices to meet the permitted activity pathway, which removes the need to apply for a consent
* some farmers are submitting their consents late – officials consistently check consent numbers to avoid a late application backlog
* some farmers may have decided not to comply. We will be looking to councils to take appropriate action in the 2023 winter season where this is the case.

### Feedlots and stockholding areas

Effective management of feedlots and intensive stockholding areas can help reduce environmental risk to freshwater.

Water quality degradation caused by these areas results from animal dung and urine (effluent) accumulating from holding cattle in a confined space. This effluent can leach into, and pollute, water bodies. It can also increase erosion. To help prevent these negative impacts, feedlots and stockholding areas must be adequately designed, managed and sited.

The NES-F set stronger controls (ie, regulations). The relationship between these new regulations and existing consents or existing lawful activities is set out in [section 43B of the Resource Management Act 1991](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1991/0069/latest/DLM233317.html).

Table 2 notes when the regulations came into effect and the limits on their application.

Table 2: Feedlots and stockholding areas

| Type | When regulations came into effect | Regulations only apply to |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feedlots | 3 September 2020 | Farms that have:   * five hectares or more of horticulture * 20 hectares or more of pasture or arable crops * 20 hectares or more of a combination of the first two points. |
| Stockholding areas | 1 July 2021 |

Note: Regional rules or resource consent conditions can be more stringent than the rules for feedlots and other stockholding areas in the regulations. If this is the case, the more stringent regional rule or resource consent condition prevails over the regulations.

See our [Stockholding and feedlots fact sheet](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/Files/essential-freshwater-stockholding-and-feedlots-factsheet-final.pdf) for more information. The fact sheet has a flowchart that shows permitted, discretionary and non-complying activities. The flowchart describes what a stockholding does and does not include.

### Nitrogen cap

The nitrogen cap is one of several measures aimed at limiting the impacts of nitrogen on waterways. This is the first national regulation to address the use and reporting of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser on pastoral farms.

As an ‘input control’, the cap seeks to restrict very high synthetic nitrogen use on grazed pastoral land. It sets a yearly limit on the amount of synthetic nitrogen that farmers may apply to grazed land on any contiguous landholding. A contiguous landholding is adjoined paddocks or parcels of land that are part of the same farming operation.

Synthetic nitrogen fertiliser is defined as fertiliser that is not of plant or animal origin and is at least five per cent nitrogen.

#### Nitrogen cap on grazed land since July 2021

Farms have been required to have a nitrogen cap for their grazed pastoral land since 1 July 2021, as set out in the NES-F.

Farms of 20 hectares or larger with grazed land can apply no more than 190 kilograms of synthetic nitrogen to any hectare of that grazed land in any year. This rule includes:

* any individual hectare of pasture
* the pastoral use of land as a whole when averaged across that area (‘land as a whole’ is the combined area of pasture, annual forage crops, and other pastoral use land).

The cap covers any synthetic nitrogen used to grow pasture or other grazed vegetation, irrespective of the:

* type of vegetation grazed – whether pasture or crops
* type of grazing animal – whether cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, deer, poultry or other animals
* duration of the grazing – whether it is for a few days or the whole year.

Farming operations may be able to exceed the cap through a non-complying activity resource consent, provided they meet certain requirements. In the first year, few farmers applied for this consent.

Dairy farmers must collect records for synthetic fertiliser purchased and report these to councils each year. Councils will have monitoring and compliance processes in place.

Table 3 sets out the expected actions of a dairy farm holding when providing a nitrogen report. Table 4 sets out the expected actions of a council when receiving that report.

Table 3: Expectations of dairy farm holdings when providing a nitrogen report

| Expected actions of dairy farm holdings |
| --- |
| Provide details of synthetic nitrogen use on each contiguous landholding that has a dairy platform. |
| Include fertiliser purchases. |
| Include the dates on which the nitrogen was spread. |
| Say how much synthetic nitrogen fertiliser was applied during the year to all land in the contiguous block, not only the dairy platform, and the nitrogen component of the fertiliser by weight. |
| Include how much was applied to the annual forage crops, pastoral use land, and other land. |
| Include the yearly application rates per hectare for each of forage crops, pastoral use land, and other land. |
| **Reporting is not required:** |
| * for contiguous landholdings that have no dairy platform, although the nitrogen cap still applies to any grazed areas on these contiguous landholdings |
| * from other farms with grazing livestock, including those grazing non-milking cows. |
| Note: The cap still applies to the grazed land on these farms, and councils may request evidence of fertiliser use and purchase as part of their usual permitted activity monitoring. |

Table 4: Expectations of councils when they receive a nitrogen report from a dairy farm

| Expected actions of councils |
| --- |
| Follow up with farms that fail to send in a report. |
| Follow up with farms that report nitrogen use over the cap. |
| Help farmers understand and interpret the regulations. |
| Help farmers understand what they need to do to comply with the nitrogen cap regulations. |
| Monitor and enforce the cap through routine permitted activity monitoring and analysis of the annual nitrogen use reports from dairy farms. |
| Develop a good understanding of the information requirements. |
| Provide, on request from the Minister for the Environment, the results of their synthetic nitrogen monitoring and dairy farm reporting. |
| Work together with other councils to develop a common approach to nitrogen cap reporting, analysis and data storage. This will help maximise efficiency, interoperability and national consistency. |
| Be responsible for implementing the nitrogen cap as part of their broader Resource Management Act role in implementing the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater. |

##### Regional councils receiving their first nitrogen reports

The reports from dairy farms were legally due by 31 July 2022. As of 30 January 2023, around 40 per cent of dairy farms had reported their annual use of synthetic nitrogen under the NES-F. Reporting rates varied from under 30 per cent in some regions to over 60 per cent in others.

Councils are working with farmers now to improve reporting for this year. The reporting rate may have been affected by:

* the newness of the regulation, which many farmers were not adequately prepared for
* the regulation’s complexity, in both calculations and information requirements (eg, receipts)
* the non-alignment between the nitrogen cap reporting year and the dairy reporting year
* delays in guidance on the requirements becoming available
* technical delays in launching the national portal for nitrogen-cap reporting, which pushed the reporting period into the busy calving and milking seasons.

According to industry data from the Fertiliser Association of New Zealand, synthetic nitrogen fertiliser sales fell by 12 per cent and actual use of such fertiliser by 11 per cent over the two years to December 2022.

## Stock exclusion regulations

The new [Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2020/0175/latest/LMS379869.html) were made under section 360 of the Resource Management Act. They require stock to be kept at least three metres away (with some exceptions) from lakes, rivers with a bed wider than one metre, and specified wetlands.

Stock covered by the exclusion are beef and dairy cattle, dairy support cattle, deer, and pigs, with variations in the nature of the exclusion depending on stock type, intensity of grazing, and whether the land is of low slope (less than five degrees). Sheep are not included because they are less damaging and polluting to waterways than other stock.

Achieving the exclusions usually requires fencing, so the regulations are being phased in progressively by mid-2025. Meanwhile, updated low-slope requirements are pending.

Table 5 sets out the exclusion limits and triggers for enforcement.

Table 5: Stock exclusion limits and triggers for enforcement

| Stock included | Waterways from which stock must be excluded | Triggers |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Beef and dairy cattle  Dairy support cattle  Deer  Pigs | No stock within three metres of any lake or river more than one metre wide  No stock grazing within a natural wetland | When requirements apply depends on:   * type of stock * location * activity.   Specific requirements vary depending on:   * type of stock * location * activity.   Some requirements in the regulations now apply regardless of some of these triggers. For example, beef cattle and deer that are intensively grazed (as defined in the regulations) are excluded no matter the location or timing. |

## Freshwater farm plans

Freshwater farm plans (FW-FPs) are a regulatory farm planning tool that will help farmers and growers mitigate the adverse effects of farming on freshwater and freshwater ecosystems.

The freshwater farm plan system will be implemented at a regional level with regions being ‘switched on’ progressively, starting in mid-2023 through to 2025.

Figure 2: Freshwater farm plans at a glance

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

**Source:** Ministry for the Environment

### Actions that freshwater farm plans will require of farmers and growers

About 34,500 farmers and growers (including horticulture, arable, livestock and dairy producers) will need to develop FW-FPs. The FW-FP process will require farmers and growers to:

* understand their catchment context, challenges and values
* conduct a risk assessment
* identify actions to improve freshwater quality.

Each farmer or grower must tailor their actions to their:

* circumstances
* physical environment
* challenges and values within their local catchment.

### Freshwater farm plans will tie into council plans

In the delivery phase, regional councils will be responsible for:

* providing information about the relevant catchment context, values and challenges
* appointing certifiers and auditors
* maintaining existing compliance, monitoring and enforcement functions of regional authorities
* holding and managing data relevant for certifying and auditing FW-FPs.

Over time, FW-FPs may provide an alternative pathway to some national or regional regulations, such as national environment standards or consents.

### Farm plans will tie into cultural aspirations for freshwater health

As iwi and hapū, and as land owners, tangata whenua have opportunities to be involved across the FW-FP system. This will include potential roles within the FW-FP system as well as having interests in, and being users of, the system.

Table 6 shows how tangata whenua may be involved and benefit the FW-FP system at different levels.

Table 6: Involvement of tangata whenua across the freshwater farm plan system

| At the national level | At implementation | At the regional council level |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Involved in supporting the oversight function of the freshwater farm plan (FW‑FP) system.  *Benefit:* involvement provides national leadership and coordination of the FW‑FP system, alongside regional councils. | Involved through existing processes between regional councils and local iwi and hapū and Māori land owners.  *Examples:* regional planning processes, National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM), iwi management plans.  *Benefit:* these processes will enable iwi and hapū and Māori land owners to be involved and determine how best to reflect their perspectives in the operation of the FW-FP system. | Involved in the processes of regional councils to appoint certifiers and auditors through existing relationships.  *Examples:* local planning rules, relevant Treaty of Waitangi settlement requirements, catchment challenges, values and context  *Benefit:* helps to build confidence that the various parts of the process are understood and applied effectively.  Involved (with regional councils) in developing the relevant catchment context, values and challenges.  *Examples*: regional planning processes, NPS‑FM, iwi management plans, relevant Treaty of Waitangi settlement requirements, interpretation of this information.  *Benefit:* will enable the perspectives of iwi and hapū and Māori land owners to be reflected in individual FW-FPs and in the considerations and training required for certifiers and auditors. |

### The rural sector has helped to develop and deliver the FW-FP system

The rural sector will play a supporting role in developing and delivering FW-FPs. The rural sector includes, for instance, industry bodies, rural professionals, and farmer-led groups such as community catchment groups.

### The Ministry is investing in a workforce of certifiers and auditors

We recognise the increased demand for support and expertise that FW-FPs will place on certifiers and auditors. We are investing in and developing this workforce. The goal is to incentivise people into the roles and ensure ongoing training and development.

This investment is strongly connected and aligned to the Primary Industry Advisory Workforce Strategy the Ministry for Primary Industries is developing. That strategy will include $55 million invested over four years to establish an independent on-farm extension support service. This service will help farmers and growers navigate requirements around climate, water and the environment. The strategy is awaiting approval before being released to the public.

## Declining stock numbers

Provisional agricultural production data for the year from July 2021 to June 2022 shows that stock numbers have reduced.

Table 7: Total stock numbers in New Zealand in 2021 and 2022

| Stock type | Stock numbers  in 2021 | Stock numbers  in 2022 | Reduction in numbers |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dairy cattle | 6,185,000 | 5,917,000 | 268,000 (4 per cent)\* |
| Beef cattle | 3,965,000 | 3,842,000 | 123,000 (3 per cent) |
| Sheep | 25,733,000 | 25,150,000 | 583,000 (2 per cent) |

\*Dairy cattle numbers have been declining consistently since 2016 when they numbered 6.6 million.

## Reporting the taking of water

The [Resource Management (Measurement and Reporting of Water Takes) Regulations 2010](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2010/0267/latest/whole.html#DLM3174201) have been amended. Some of the new requirements are that permit holders must record their water take every 15 minutes, and then supply the data directly to regional councils. Table 8 sets out the required threshold trigger and compliance dates. The dates will phase in depending on the consented rate of take. We will provide more details in a later fact sheet.

Table 8: Thresholds and dates by which permit holders must comply when taking water

| Threshold trigger | Compliance date |
| --- | --- |
| 20 litres a second or more | by 3 September 2022 |
| 10 litres a second or more, but less than 20 litres a second | by 3 September 2024 |
| five litres a second or more, but less than 10 litres a second | by 3 September 2026 |

For more information, refer to the timeline in [Essential Freshwater Milestones – what happens when](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/essential-freshwater-milestones-what-happens-when/).

# Part 2: Translating long-term vision into action

## Regional councils – translating national direction into action

The National Policy for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) requires regional councils to put the national direction about freshwater into action.

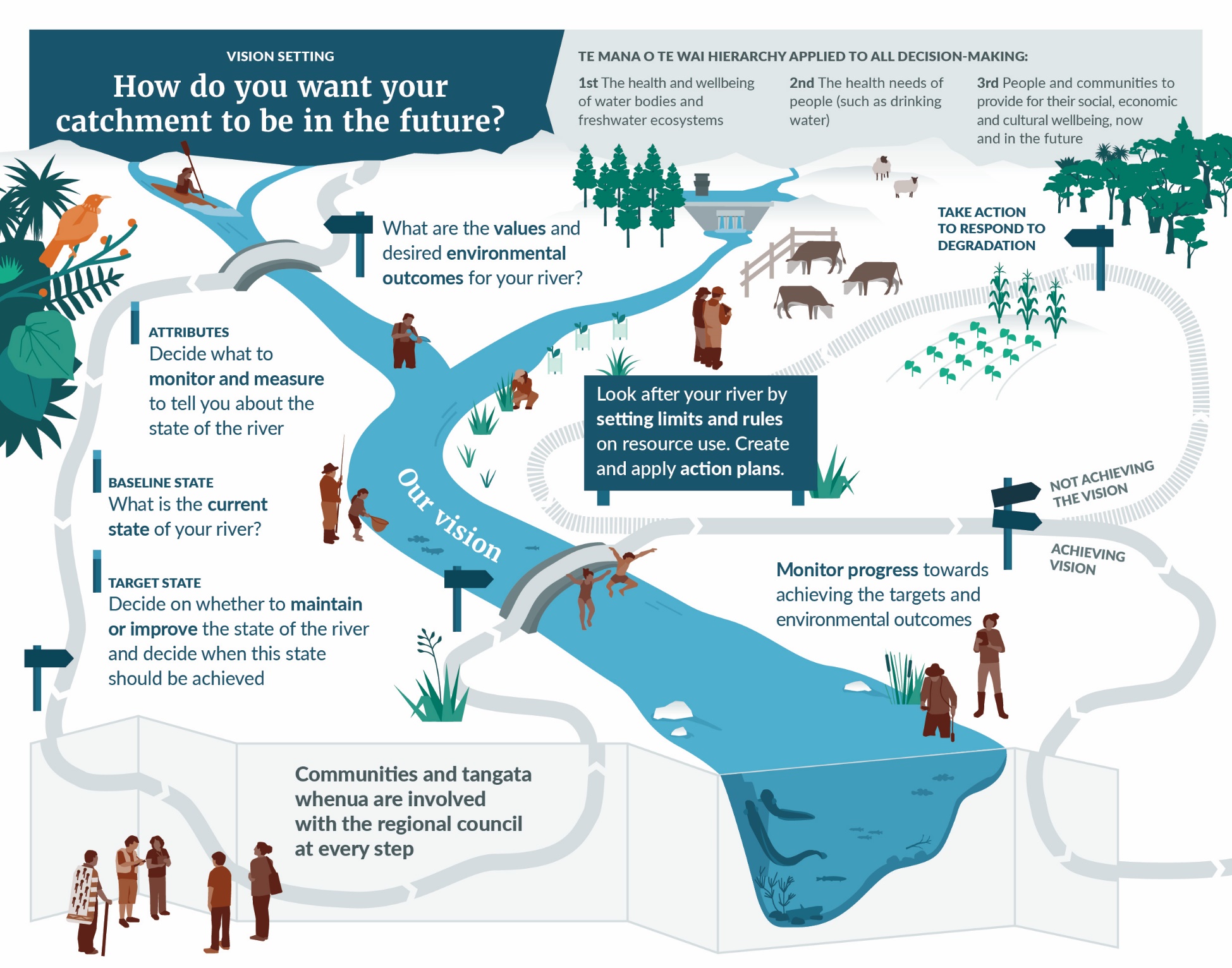
To ensure any long-term vision is fit for purpose, a regional council must discuss with, and capture the needs of, tangata whenua and communities in that region. To give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, regional councils must apply five requirements in their engagement and discussions.

1. Actively involve tangata whenua in freshwater management.
2. Adopt an integrated approach, ki uta ki tai (from the mountains to the sea), to the management of freshwater.
3. Enable diverse systems of values and knowledge, such as mātauranga Māori, to the health and well-being of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems.
4. Apply the hierarchy of obligations (when implementing the NPS-FM requirements), including the National Objectives Framework (figure 3).
5. Engage with communities and tangata whenua to identify long-term visions, environmental outcomes, and other elements of the National Objectives Framework.

Regional councils must also give effect to Te Mana o te Wai when making or changing regional policy statements and plans.

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| National Objectives Framework  The National Objectives Framework requires that every regional council:   * identifies values for each freshwater management unit in its region * sets target attribute states,[[1]](#footnote-2) and flows and levels, for water bodies * develops interventions (limits specified in rules or action plans) to achieve the target attribute states, flows and levels * monitors water bodies and freshwater ecosystems * takes action if deterioration is detected. |

Figure 3: National Objectives Framework



**Source:** Ministry for the Environment

### Regional councils must develop a long-term vision

Each regional council must develop a long-term vision for water bodies in their region. A long-term vision identifies a timeframe that is ambitious and reasonable (eg, 30 years). It must be based on the history and current pressures on local water bodies and catchments. Each regional council must regularly report their progress against their long-term vision.

### Councils must monitor the state of the environment

When carrying out their functions, councils must monitor the state of the environment, meet any environmental standards or guidelines, and measure to see whether they are achieving desired environmental outcomes.

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| CASE STUDY  **Auckland Council’s Healthy Waters Department is developing an innovative water quality accounting system to enable effective, transparent and adaptive freshwater management.**  Healthy Waters is building the Freshwater Management Tool (FWMT) by combining local data and knowledge with open-source models developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and used globally to inform regulatory water management programmes.  These models are designed to operate with a wide array of pollutants, catchment conditions, climate patterns, and implementation scenarios, including urban development, primary production, climate resilience, and catchment remediation.  They are being tailored to the Auckland context, using data from state of the environment monitoring, targeted sampling, and observational studies to simulate how different land uses interact with Auckland’s unique hydrology, climate and ecology.  Healthy Waters will use the FWMT to:   * estimate the current state of water quality in Auckland’s rivers, lakes and coasts * test the benefits and costs of setting water-quality objectives at different levels * develop action plans comprising the optimal (lowest cost) mix of actions to achieve desired improvements in water quality.   Estimates and predictions generated by the FWMT will support constructive discussions between rural and urban communities and between resource users and environmental managers. This will allow a transparent, informed assessment of the feasibility and effectiveness of different objectives and management scenarios.  Importantly, the FWMT will allow Healthy Waters to forecast the effect of investments that are specified in action plans, freshwater farm plans, and asset management plans. This will give farmers and growers recognition for the actions they are taking now, years before their effects can be observed. This forecasting will also pinpoint where public investment in ‘grey’ and ‘green’ infrastructure is likely to have the most positive impact.  The FWMT will provide information that can inform regulatory planning processes and decision-making, ensuring freshwater management actions are feasible, fair and targeted accurately. |
| The mapping in figure 4 includes the stormwater network (green lines), identifying a suitable area for wetland (orange) and a piped, as well as natural flow path, treatment area (white). The FWMT compares several hundred thousand combinations of actions in each catchment for effects locally and downstream to the sea. Local action plans are built up from the detailed water quality and long-term cost output. |
| Figure 4: Urban wetland opportunity in the Freshwater Management Tool  Map  Description automatically generated  **Source**: Auckland Council |

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| Figure 5 shows an area of pasture suitable for reverting into naturalised wetland (orange) and upstream treated land (white). The FWMT geospatially maps and individually assesses opportunities for various water-quality management actions, to guide decisions about where, what and how much action is feasible. Then it assesses what actions are least costly to meet the targets for local water quality. |
| Figure 5: Rural wetland opportunity in the Freshwater Management Tool  Map  Description automatically generated  **Source:** Auckland Council  **Link:** Perrin Ag: [New tool a game-changer for freshwater management in Auckland](https://www.perrinag.net.nz/news-and-community/new-tool-a-game-changer-for-freshwater-management-in-auckland%ef%bf%bc/) |

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| CASE STUDY  Environment Canterbury – using a rates tool to help budget for freshwater  Environment Canterbury structures its regional council work across five portfolios. Each portfolio is made up of programmes that include specific activities, levels of service, performance measures, and targets.  Quarterly portfolio performance reports give information about how Environment Canterbury is tracking for each portfolio.  The water and land portfolio has six strategic programmes. These are:   * w[orking together for healthy water and land](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/about/your-council/about-us/our-work/water-and-land/#Workingtogether) * [monitoring and understanding our environment](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/about/your-council/about-us/our-work/water-and-land/#Monitoring) * [freshwater regulatory framework](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/about/your-council/about-us/our-work/water-and-land/#FreshwaterFramework) * [healthy waterways actions](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/about/your-council/about-us/our-work/water-and-land/#HealthyWaterways) * [stewardship of water and land](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/about/your-council/about-us/our-work/water-and-land/#Stewardship) * [freshwater resilience](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/about/your-council/about-us/our-work/water-and-land/#Resiliance).   2022/23 – using the rates tool to budget for freshwater  **The** [Environment Canterbury Rates Tool](https://rates.ecan.govt.nz/public/root)illustrates how rates are budgeted to fund programmes and projects based on the Environment Canterbury Annual Plan 2022/23.  Here are total revenues for freshwater resilience and for the freshwater regulatory framework, as noted on the Water and Land tab from the Environment Canterbury Rates Tool. These are based on the draft Annual Plan 2023/24 as at 7 March 2023.  Graphical user interface  Description automatically generated with medium confidence  **Source:** Environment Canterbury website.   * [Our work](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/about/your-council/about-us/our-work/) (web page) * [Water and land portfolio](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/about/your-council/about-us/our-work/water-and-land/) (web page) * [Environment Canterbury Annual Plan 2022/23](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/your-region/plans-strategies-and-bylaws/annual-plans/) **(web page)** * [Water and Land tab](https://rates.ecan.govt.nz/public/Water%20and%20Land) (web page) from the [Environment Canterbury Rates Tool](https://rates.ecan.govt.nz/public/root). Click on tabs ‘Freshwater Resilience’ and Freshwater Regulatory Framework’. |

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| CASE STUDY  View Hill School and the Fish Habitat Fund are protecting the habitat of the Canterbury mudfish  Students from View Hill School near Oxford, North Canterbury are protecting the habitat of the Canterbury mudfish or [kōwaro](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/your-region/your-environment/our-natural-environment/nature-in-your-area/selwyn-waihora-zone-biodiversity/canterbury-mudfish/). Environment Canterbury’s Fish Habitat Fund is supporting the students’ efforts.  A 2020 survey by the Department of Conservation found 12 mudfish in the stream near the school. Since 2021, students have planted 350 natives along the stream to help improve the habitat of the endangered kōwaro. Kōwaro are endemic, non-migratory fish and found in only a few places in Canterbury. They live in small, slow-flowing streams, ponds, drains and wetlands. Many live among deep pools and lots of aquatic plants.  The Working Waters Trust, the school, and land owners will maintain the stream to ensure the kōwaro thrive. The kōwaro are even becoming part of the school’s science programme.  **Link:** Environment Canterbury, 8 December 2021: [Waimakariri youth protect mudfish habitat with planting project](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/get-involved/news-and-events/zone-news/waimakariri/waimakariri-youth-protect-mudfish-habitat-with-planting-project/) |

## Tangata whenua – making decisions and managing freshwater

The NPS-FM intends for tangata whenua to be involved in managing freshwater (including decision-making processes). Here are some examples:

* Local authorities will work with tangata whenua to identify matters important to them. Tangata whenua will identify ways to apply Te Mana o te Wai locally and identify the outcomes that tangata whenua want for relevant water bodies in the future.
* Tangata whenua will apply different systems of knowledge for freshwater care and be involved in monitoring (such as through application of mātauranga Māori).
* Tangata whenua will work with regional councils to implement the National Objectives Framework.

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| CASE STUDY  Work ramps up on restoring mauri of catchments  Ngāti Hauā Mahi Trust worked out that it would take 21 years to restore the mauri of the Mangaonua and Karāpiro catchments by putting in 30,000 plants a year.  But, thanks to $637,500 from One Billion Trees, applied to by Waikato Regional Council, the Trust has upgraded its nursery and the restoration work has been ramped up.  The Mangaonua and Karāpiro catchments are mainly farmland and highly modified. The catchments deliver high loads of sediment to the Waikato River due to the presence of erosion-prone soils and the impacts from land use. Traditionally, these catchments were used to connect Ngāti Hauā with other iwi. In addition, they were suitable locations for marae, with dedicated kai and rongoā gathering areas.  Ngāti Hauā Mahi Trust set up a native plant nursery in Morrinsville in 2013, to help restore the catchments.  For the Trust, riparian planting was a way to reconnect whānau to the land, nurturing kaitiakitanga practices and future-proofing mātauranga Māori for generations to come.  Waikato Regional Council also worked to restore the catchments to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality.  Together, the Trust and Regional Council agreed that combining resources, knowledge (cultural and scientific), and expertise would deliver better outcomes.  The Regional Council works with land owners to retire wetlands, waterway margins, and erodible hill country for plantings. The aim is to reduce sediment and nutrient going into streams and improve local fish habitat. The Trust eco-sources seeds, grows plants, and undertakes the plantings.  The intention is that this restoration alliance between Ngāti Hauā Mahi Trust and the Waikato Regional Council will involve multiple projects for many years to come.  **Link:** Waikato Regional Council: [Funding boosts reputation, restoration efforts](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/story-hub/ngati-haua-mahi-trust/) |

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| CASE STUDY  A medicinal plant garden is helping protect the Ōtaki River from flooding  A medicinal plant garden, or rongoā, has been established as part of Greater Wellington’s flood protection work along the Ōtaki River.  Members of local iwi Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga and Friends of the Ōtaki River joined with the Council’s flood protection staff to plant 500 native medicinal trees and shrubs at Chrystalls Bend.  The plantings are part of a larger project in Chrystalls Lagoon. They feed into a wider flood management plan to provide erosion stability for the area and to restore natives and water quality in the Ōtaki River.  **Link:** Greater Wellington, 29 October 2021: [Planting is nature’s best medicine](https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/news/planting-is-natures-best-medicine/) |

## Farmers and growers – applying the rules for freshwater use

Farmers and growers are important land users in catchments, and they:

* must follow the rules so they manage their land and any waterways in ways that give effect to Te Mana o te Wai locally
* must follow rules for land use and freshwater use that regional councils have developed to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai
* can contribute to the development process through regional council plan development.

Farmers need to consider and address any high-risk farming activities. Some actions they can take are to:

* exclude stock from certain types of waterways
* control high-risk feedlots and stockholding areas
* control high-risk intensive winter grazing practices
* restrict significant agricultural intensification
* manage excessive nitrogen discharges
* reduce or remove stock
* change the land use.

Part 3 of this report highlights progress by regional councils in working with farmers on applying the new rules. Part 3 also highlights the significant investment (through the Essential Freshwater Fund) for farmer support and catchment groups.

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| CASE STUDY  The Soil Conservation and Revegetation project is stabilising soils along the Hurunui and Kaikōura waterways to help prevent run-off and erosion  Reduced amounts of sediment and phosphorus are entering Hurunui and Kaikōura waterways, thanks to a Soil Conservation and Revegetation project. The project promotes soil stabilisation and improved soil management in areas that face erosion and high winds.  The four-year project (2019 to 2023) aims to:   * plant 20,000 poplar and willow trees * fence off, plant and retire 238 hectares of land for native reversion * share learnings on soil conservation at workshops.   About 9,000 poplar and willow trees (the most suitable trees for erosion-prone, exposed slopes) have been planted on 76 hill-country farms during the first three winters of the project.  The $4.1 million project is funded by Environment Canterbury, the Ministry for Primary Industries, and local land owners.  **Link:** Environment Canterbury, 27 September 2021: [Soil conservation project benefits environment and community](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/get-involved/news-and-events/2021/soil-conservation-project-benefits-environment-and-community/) |

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| CASE STUDY  Restoration works go well beyond regulatory requirements  Land owners in the lower Waikato River catchment are working with Waikato Regional Council to protect hill-country soils and reduce sediment flows into wetlands and lakes to protect and restore the mauri and life-supporting capacity of freshwater. The three-year Ngā Wai o Waikato project is a partnership between the Regional Council, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment; Waikato River Authority; and the Ministry for Primary Industries.  The $7.21 million project, which started in 2020, has a focus on the catchments of lakes Waikare, Waahi and Whangape and the Whangamarino and Opuatia wetlands.  These catchments deposit large quantities of sediment and nutrients into the Waikato River due to erosion-prone hill country, highly erodible banks of rivers and streams, and the impacts of land use. The catchments are identified as priorities for restoration work in the *Waikato and Waipā River Restoration Strategy*.  The Regional Council is working with land owners who wish to retire steep hill country, and take actions to reduce and prevent stream-bank erosion including planting trees and fencing waterways.  Works to date include 75 kilometres of fencing to retire 360 hectares of land, and revegetation of more than 200,000 plants. Nearly 4,000 poplar and willow trees have been planted to stabilise land at high risk of erosion, and 125 erosion control structures have been constructed to stabilise streams and rivers that have erodible banks.  The on-the-ground catchment management works under way are well beyond regulatory requirements and will, over the long term, lead to healthier freshwater.  The Regional Council is working closely with Waikato-Tainui on the project, to identify opportunities for tribal business over the life of the project and beyond, and on building the capacity of tribal members in catchment management.  Ngā Wai o Waikato received funding from the Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (administered by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment), the Ministry for Primary Industries, and the Waikato River Authority.  **Link:** Waikato Regional Council: [Ngā Wai o Waikato: We’re ready to dig in!](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/about-us/shovel-ready-projects/lower-waikato-erosion-protection-works/) |

## Communities – discussing local needs for freshwater

Communities are important users of freshwater and have an important role in setting a long-term vision for their region.

Given this, regional councils must also engage with communities to discuss and understand the values and aspirations they hold for the freshwater bodies and ecosystems in their region.

This engagement helps regional councils determine how Te Mana o te Wai applies to water bodies and freshwater ecosystems in the local region.

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| CASE STUDY  Land owners, agencies and communities are working together to protect threatened flora and fauna along the Waiau Toa (Clarence River)  Collaboration between land owners, community and agencies is helping protect and enhance the braided Waiau Toa (Clarence River), which flows through the Kaikōura Ranges.  Monitoring, weed control, ground-nesting-bird protection, and trapping are all contributing to the ongoing health and naturalness of the river. Significant resources and funding has been allocated to the waterway over the past eight years. The protection work will continue for at least another three years.  The catchment has 125 species of threatened or at-risk flora and fauna. Since 2014, various agencies and land owners have contributed more than $1 million to help fund weed and predator monitoring and control by Environment Canterbury, the Department of Conservation, [Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura](https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/te-runanga-o-ngai-tahu/papatipu-runanga/kaikoura/), the Clarence community, and [Marlborough District Council](https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/). Black-fronted terns nesting in the upper catchment had a particularly successful breeding season in 2022, with the best results for breeding islands outside the trapping area since the programme started. The result is seeing 123 fledglings at the end of the season.  B[iodiversity funding](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/your-region/your-environment/our-natural-environment/biodiversity-funding/) of $250,000 from Environment Canterbury over the past five years is supported by the [Kaikōura Water Zone Committee](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/meet-your-water-zone-representatives/). A further funding boost of $300,000 from Land Information New Zealand [in 2021](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/get-involved/news-and-events/zone-news/kaikoura/funding-boost-for-weed-control-in-waiau-toa/) ensured these efforts across the catchment could continue.  In 2022, a range of different funding sources supported the mahi in the Waiau Toa. These included:   * $150,000 from Land Information New Zealand for weed and predator control * $150,000 from the Department of Conservation for weed, ungulate and predator control for black-fronted terns * $20,000 from Environment Canterbury for weed control (Canterbury Biodiversity Strategy Fund) * $70,000 from Environment Canterbury’s Ki uta ki tai Revival Fund.   **Link:** Environment Canterbury, 11 February 2022: [Waiau Toa wows with continued whanaungatanga](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/get-involved/news-and-events/zone-news/kaikoura/waiau-toa-wows-with-continued-whanaungatanga/) |

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| CASE STUDY  **Kaitiaki Flows – a water management framework grounded in science and mātauranga**  Tarimano Marae is the home of Ngāti Rangiwewehi Iwi and is situated on the north-western shores of Lake Rotorua, next to Te Wai Mimi o Pekehāua, the Awahou Stream. The stream runs from Te Puna a Pekehāua – Te Waro Uri (Taniwha Springs) into Lake Rotorua; out to the Ōhau Channel, making its way to Lake Rotoiti, then to the Kaituna River and eventually out to Maketu at the coast.  Ngāti Rangiwewehi have an innate spiritual and cultural relationship with Te Puna o Pekehāua. It was once the home of the great taniwha Pekehāua who was slain by Pītaka (also known as Pītaua). Pekehāua made his lair in the main spring, Te Waro-Uri (‘the dark chasm’) and stories of the taniwha remain significant to Ngāti Rangiwewehi as an iwi.  In 1966 almost an acre of land that contained the sacred spring Te Waro Uri was taken by the Rotorua Borough Council under the Public Works Act for waterworks as part of the network supplying freshwater to the Ngongotahā area, including Awahou. Up to this point, Awahou village collected their water from the river or maintained their own water pumps for domestic water use. Since then, Rotorua Lakes Council (and its predecessors) have been taking water from Taniwha Springs for a municipal water supply. The Council applied for renewal at an increased quantity and rate of take, which was granted in April 2004 (at a lower rate of quantity and take than applied for).  In the Environment Court decision in *Te Maru o Ngati Rangiwewehi and Anor v Bay of Plenty Regional Council ENV A095/2008*, the Court granted the existing municipal water supply (only) a 10-year renewal of consent based on findings that the water take had a significant adverse effect on the identity of Ngāti Rangiwewehi and that 10 years was sufficient time to establish an alternative groundwater supply. The decision was considered a major win for Ngāti Rangiwewehi and started a process of healing and restoration due to being alienated from their sacred spring. The return of the land surrounding Te Waro Uri was included in the Ngāti Rangiwewehi Treaty negotiation process.  Mana whenua, mana wai  In August 2015, Ngāti Rangiwewehi were present in the Council chambers when the Rotorua Lakes Council voted unanimously to return Te Waro Uri to its traditional owners. This was with the agreement of Ngāti Rangiwewehi that the Council would continue to take water from the spring until its consent expired in 2018. The establishment of a new relationship between the two entities began with the development and ratification of a Memorandum of Understanding protocol.  After a time of celebration, Ngāti Rangiwewehi ultimately determined it would work alongside the Council to reach mutual benefit for the wai, Iwi and community. In 2019, Rotorua Lakes Council and Pekehāua Puna Reserve Trust applied for resource consent for water abstraction from Taniwha Springs for municipal supply to Ngongotahā and agreed emergency supply areas. The joint resource consent allowed Ngāti Rangiwewehi Iwi to be involved at all stages of planning and development of the application. |
| In 2014, before Te Mana o te Wai was introduced as the fundamental concept of the Essential Freshwater regulations for the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management, Ngāti Rangiwewehi partnered in a Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund research project ‘Ka Tū Te Taniwha’ with GNS Science. This was co-designed with Ngāti Rangiwewehi to incorporate traditional knowledge to inform and prepare future freshwater plans in the Awahou catchment. It was then followed by Ngāti Rangiwewehi leading ‘*Kaitiaki Flows*’ in‑stream baseflow research with GNS Science in 2018. |
| **Kaitiaki Flows model**  *Kaitiaki Flows* is defined as in-stream flow that is consistent with tangata whenua values (eg, amenity, environment, spirituality and sustainability). The development of *Kaitiaki Flows* worked because it was led by Ngāti Rangiwewehi to have mana over its taonga. It is a water-flow framework that was determined by the people for the people and for generations to come. The model was both qualitative and quantitative and provided an opportunity for iwi members to actively participate on site at the water source, as well as in wānanga settings.  The determining of what Te Mana o te Wai means to the Iwi itself (mātauranga-a-Iwi) was then modelled alongside Western science data (hydrological expertise), which proved to be complementary and established *Kaitiaki Flows* water management framework as valid and grounded in both conventional science and mātauranga.  The unique cultural context of *Kaitiaki Flows* was incorporated into Te Puna o Pekehāua and Rotorua Lakes Council Taniwha Springs’ recent municipal supply resource consent. Although *Kaitiaki Flows* was determined before the NPS-FM 2020, it aligns with Te Mana o te Wai hierarchy of obligation where the wai has an allocation first to itself, followed by an allocation for the community for drinking water, as well as providing an allocation for the Iwi who endeavour to restore and sustain the mana and mauri of the people and wai. This model is now implemented through the four iwi-led management plans produced by Ngāti Rangiwewehi Tari Taiao and included in the water consent conditions.  Ngāti Rangiwewehi continue their journey to engage in and exercise Te Mana o te Wai across their wider water catchment interests.  **Link:** [TMOTW-Case-Study-Ngati-Rangiwewehi.pdf (ourlandandwater.nz)](https://ourlandandwater.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TMOTW-Case-Study-Ngati-Rangiwewehi.pdf)  K Pihera-Ridge, on behalf of Ngāti Rangiwewehi Tari Taiao and Te Puna o Pekehāua Trust, personal communication, 2023. |

# A picture containing text, tree, outdoor Description automatically generatedPart 3: The journey so far

## Implementing Essential Freshwater – an overview

One way to see the journey so far is to view environmental outputs for biodiversity, freshwater and pest control (as noted in the Jobs for Nature programme).

The data in table 9 provides an overview of the progress made up to December 2022. This data is in proportion to Ministry for the Environment funding, which is 50 per cent. For example, for every 10 kilometres of fencing done by the recipient, the Ministry funds five kilometres of that fencing.

Table 9: Progress up to 1 December 2022 compared with total work planned (ie, target)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project/fund | Area covered by farm environment plans (ha) | | Area of riparian or lake or wetlands planting (ha) | | Freshwater area under active restoration (riparian/wetland) (ha) | | New fencing constructed or existing fencing maintained (km) | | Number of farm environment plans | | Number of fish passage barriers remediated | | Number of plants planted | |
|  | At Dec ‘22 | Target | At Dec ‘22 | Target | At Dec ‘22 | Target | At Dec ‘22 | Target | At Dec ‘22 | Target | At Dec ‘22 | Target | At Dec ‘22 | Target |
| At-risk Catchments |  |  | 0 | 23 |  |  | 0 | 53 |  |  | 0 | 42 | 0 | 112,192 |
| Essential Freshwater Fund | 0 | 2 | 3 | 48 |  |  | 2 | 52 | 3 | 1,405 | 0 | 2 | 31,107 | 308,130 |
| Freshwater Improvement Fund Round 2 | 21,243 | 48,903 | 85 | 199 | 6 | 48 | 3,653 | 5,309 | 59 | 98 | 215 | 1,271 | 204,970 | 978,128 |
| Freshwater Improvement Fund Round 3 | 4 | 19 | 36 | 138 | 8 | 58 | 24 | 186 | 66 | 184 | 11 | 209 | 107,892 | 684,237 |
| Kaipara Moana Remediation | 40,581\* | 39,181 | 59 | 94 |  |  | 207\* | 182 | 246\* | 193 |  |  | 335,670 | 423,766 |
| Public Waterways and Ecosystem Restoration Fund | 25 | 25 | 246 | 350 | 498\* | 255 | 674 | 886 | 83\* | 36 | 86 | 227 | 1,237,187 | 1,874,110 |
| \*Target exceeded | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## Implementation in action

### Regional planning to implement the NPS-FM continues at pace

Table 10: Progression of council planning implementation of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 as at 1 December 2022

| Task | Actions |
| --- | --- |
| Arrangements for advice on Te Mana o te Wai and tangata whenua values continue to be formalised | All regional councils and unitary authorities continue to progress work with tangata whenua on National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) delivery. Relationship arrangements are still evolving. Co-design work continues, sometimes at the catchment scale, such as in the Mohaka catchment in Hawke’s Bay and the Waiapu catchment with Ngāti Porou. Councils are receiving advice from tangata whenua, which is shaping material for wider consultation.  In those regions and catchments where Treaty of Waitangi settlement legislation establishes arrangements, councils are giving effect to these arrangements as they progress on freshwater requirements. |
| Regional and unitary councils continue to understand community priorities more | All regional councils and unitary authorities have advanced their understanding of community priorities. Since May 2022, a further eight councils have engaged with their communities about vision, values and outcomes, and two more are set to complete this work in mid-2023. Almost all councils have working versions of visions and values, with many councils already in discussion with tangata whenua. Targeted engagement with tangata whenua and other stakeholders continues throughout. |
| Councils are moving more of their monitoring and catchment information to web-based hubs | All councils have an active science programme to support the NPS-FM, most of which have established baseline states for the National Objectives Framework attributes for which they have data. Councils have established their approach to attributes for which they have little or no data.  Four councils have completed options for target attribute states as well as options to achieve these for key attributes. Greater Wellington and Gisborne District Council have completed options for target states in some catchments. All other councils are working to develop options for target states and ways to achieve these in the first half of 2023, ready for public discussion in the second half of 2023. |
| Wider public engagement is scheduled for 2023 | Wider public engagement on options, limits and potential plan provisions is scheduled for the second half of 2023. The only exceptions are those councils intending to notify a plan change in 2023. These councils are Greater Wellington (provisions relating to water infrastructure), Gisborne District Council (Motu catchment), and Otago Regional Council. Otago Regional Council and Greater Wellington have notified the regional policy statements that give effect to the  NPS-FM. |

### We have linked each implementation action to policy outcomes

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| **1.** Stop further degradation of our freshwater | **2.** Start making immediate improvements so water quality improves within five years | **3.** Reverse past damage, to bring our waterways and ecosystems to a healthy state within a generation |

#### Workshops, guidance and toolkits

##### Te Mana o te Wai 2021 workshops

We delivered 16 Te Mana o te Wai workshops separately to tangata whenua (six workshops) and councils around the motu (see tables 11 and 12). Our aim was to increase awareness of changes in the NPS-FM.

Table 11: Workshops about Te Mana o te Wai delivered to tangata whenua

| Date in 2021 | Rohe | Location |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 27 July | Te Tairāwhiti (Gisborne) | Te Tairāwhiti (Gisborne) |
| 28 July | Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) | Whangārei |
| 30 July | Waikato | Kirikiriroa (Hamilton) |
| 3 August | Manawatū-Whanganui | Whanganui |
| 5 August | Taranaki | Ngāmotu (New Plymouth) |
| 11 August | Te Moana-ā-Toi (Bay of Plenty) | Rotorua |

Table 12: Workshops about Te Mana o te Wai delivered to councils

| Date in 2021 | Rohe | Location |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 22 July | Ōtākou  (Otago) | Ōtepoti (Dunedin) |
| 26 July | Te Tairāwhiti (Gisborne) | Te Tairāwhiti (Gisborne) |
| 27 July | Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) | Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) |
| Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) | Whangārei |
| 29 July | Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) | Pōneke (Wellington) |
| Te Matau-a-Māui  (Hawke’s Bay) | Ahuriri (Napier) |
| Waikato | Kirikiriroa (Hamilton) |
| 2 August | Manawatū-Whanganui | Whanganui |
| 4 August | Taranaki | Ngāmotu (New Plymouth) |
| 10 August | Te Moana-ā-Toi (Bay of Plenty) | Rotorua |

##### Guidance for implementing the NPS-FM sediment requirements

The purpose of the guidance is to help regional councils achieve sediment targets for rivers, as specified in the NPS-FM.

This guidance, prepared by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) – with contributions from Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research and the Ministry for the Environment – will help councils to implement the NPS-FM sediment requirements. Specifically, it covers:

* linking current sediment attribute states and target sediment attribute states to catchment sediment loads
* setting limits on resource uses, to achieve target attribute states for suspended fine sediment (and therefore visual water clarity)
* developing action plans, to achieve target attribute states for deposited fine sediment
* managing catchments, to mitigate fine-sediment effects in estuaries and downstream receiving environments.

The guidance was written for people and organisations with a key role in NPS-FM implementation, including local authorities and industry stakeholders.

For more information, see [Guidance for implementing the NPS-FM sediment requirements.](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/freshwater-policy/Sediment-ME1663-Final-1.9.pdf)

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##### A kete (toolkit) for implementing mahinga kai in the context of the NPS-FM

The kete (toolkit) consists of consolidated information and examples around different stages of identifying and protecting mahinga kai. These illustrate various approaches to facilitate implementing the compulsory mahinga kai value (set out in the NPS-FM) through the National Objectives Framework.

For more information, see [Implementing Mahinga Kai as a Māori Freshwater Value](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/Implementing-mahinga-kai-as-a-Maori-freshwater-value.pdf).

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##### Guidance on interactions between the NES-PF and NES-F

The guidance is intended to explain the relationship between the [Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2020/0174/latest/LMS364099.html) (NES-F) and the [Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry) Regulations 2017](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2017/0174/latest/whole.html) (NES-PF).

For more information, see [Guidance on interactions between the NES-PF and NES-F.](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/Freshwater-policy/interaction-between-the-nes-f-and-nes-pf.pdf)

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##### Calculator research to assess distances to set drainage back from wetlands

We are working with the Department of Conservation and Greater Wellington to develop a calculator to assess distances to set drainage back from wetlands and help with earthworks consenting.

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##### Guidance on wetlands definitions in the NPS-FM and NES-F

Guidance is available to support the interpretation of the NPS-FM and NES-F. This guidance clarifies the application of the definitions of ‘natural wetlands’ and ‘natural inland wetlands’, as defined in the NPS-FM. It also clarifies the policy intent of the definitions and covers common queries about interpreting the definitions and recent relevant case law.

The initial guidance was published in May 2022. We have updated the guidance in accordance with changes to wetlands in the NPS-FM and NES-F under ‘Managing our Wetlands’.

For more information, see [Natural inland wetlands factsheet](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/essential-freshwater-wetlands-factsheet/).

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##### Guidance on excluding pasture from the definition of natural inland wetlands in the NPS-FM

The guide presents the [New Zealand national pasture exclusion assessment tool](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/pasture-exclusion-assessment-methodology/). The tool was developed to identify wetlands in areas of pasture used for grazing that do not meet the definition of ‘natural inland wetland’ under the NPS-FM and associated regulations.

The [National list of exotic pasture species](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/national-list-of-exotic-pasture-species/) presents the full list of exotic pasture species in Aotearoa that may be considered under clause (e)(ii) of the ‘natural inland wetland’ definition in the NPS-FM.

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##### Wetland delineation hydrology tool for Aotearoa New Zealand

The NPS-FM establishes the existence or extent of a natural wetland if uncertain or in dispute. The wetlands delineation hydrology tool for Aotearoa New Zealand is the final component of these protocols. The tool is adapted to Aotearoa conditions from the US system used for regulatory purposes.

For more information, see [Wetland delineation hydrology tool for Aotearoa New Zealand](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/wetland-delineation-hydrology-tool-for-aotearoa-new-zealand/).

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | **Wetland delineation hydrology tool released in December 2021** |

##### Wetland mapping methods: proof of concept

We commissioned research to improve understanding of mapping at a scale needed to fulfil the NES-F and NPS-FM requirements. Morphum Environmental and Lynker Analytics developed the proof of concept. The [Wetlands Mapping Method](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/wetland-mapping-methods-proof-of-concept/) (the proof of concept) uses commonly available earth observational data and machine-learning techniques to map and classify wetlands in Aotearoa.

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| CASE STUDY  Friends of the Taupō Swamp and Catchment are creating new habitats in the wetland, including among the urban sprawl  Friends of the Taupō Swamp and Catchment, with support from Greater Wellington and Ngāti Toa Rangatira, have planted 10,000 plants in the wetland so far. Wetlands provide critical habitats for animals, birds and plants, and they maintain water quality, sequester carbon, and reduce the impacts of flooding and drought.  A kahikatea tree grows in a section of the swamp (next to Ulric Street in Plimmerton) that is owned by Porirua City Council. The northern section features dense harakeke (flax). It is owned and managed by the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, which Friends of the Taupō Swamp and Catchmenthas worked closely with to control willow and restore fire-affected areas.  Greater Wellington’s involvement in Taupō Swamp started with weed control back in 1981. Today, Taupō Swamp is recognised as an outstanding natural wetland and a significant native ecosystem. The swamp lays claim to some of the highest biodiversity values of wetlands (top eight per cent) in the region and is home to native plants and at-risk birds and fish, including the spotted crake, or pūweto, and giant kōkopu.  **Link:** Greater Wellington, 8 December 2021: [Wetland restoration reaches milestone](https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/news/wetland-restoration-reaches-milestone/) |

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| CASE STUDY  Farmers have formed the Hapua partnership to restore wetlands in Wairarapa  Since 2016, a partnership of Wairarapa farmers has led wetland restoration to prevent flooding, drought, landslides and water pollution. They have called this the Hapua partnership.  They have been fencing off stock, planting native plants, and trapping pest animals to restore wetlands and surrounding areas.  The Hapua partnership is supported by Greater Wellington’s Healthy Waterways Programme.  **Link:** Greater Wellington, 2 February 2021: [Wairarapa farmers leading the way with wetland restoration](https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/news/wairarapa-farmers-leading-the-way-with-wetland-restoration/) |

##### New Zealand Fish Passage Assessment Tool

The New Zealand Fish Passage Assessment Tool is practical and easy to use. It helps users identify instream structures and assess their likely impact on fish movements past the structures. The tool can be used to collect instream structure information that will help to understand the extent to which fish migrations are disrupted in Aotearoa.

The tool can gather information such as the location of the structure, photos of the structure, and type of structure and its characteristics. That information is automatically uploaded to a national database. People can view and download the information from NIWA’s [Fish Passage Assessment Tool website](https://niwa.co.nz/freshwater/management-tools/fish-passage-assessment-tool).

The tool is consistent with, and can be used to collect all the required information set out in, the fish passage provisions of the NES-F and NPS-FM.

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| CASE STUDY  Assessing and restoring streams for fish passage in the Tasman District  The five-year Tasman Fish Passage project (2020–25) will see more than 4,000 in-stream structures assessed. Of these, about 1,500 will be restored for fish passage, including culverts, weirs, dams and water intakes that migratory fish cannot climb or swim over. In 2020, we dedicated $1,750,000 of funding from the Freshwater Improvement Fund for this restoration project.  The remediation project also intends to improve local freshwater knowledge and foster kaitiakitanga through iwi-led education events and mātauranga Māori monitoring.  Trevor James, senior scientist at Tasman District Council, says that, with over 70 per cent of New Zealand’s fish currently in decline, projects like this are more important than ever. “This is a huge opportunity to improve the mana and ecological health of Tasman District streams and waterways. For the fish, it means they’ll be able to get home, have increased habitat access and ability to migrate as well as greater connection within catchments.”  **Link:** Ministry for the Environment: [Fish Passage remediation in Tasman District going swimmingly under Jobs for Nature](https://environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/stories/fish-passage-remediation-in-tasman-district-going-swimmingly-under-jobs-for-nature/) |

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| CASE STUDY  Swimming against the tide of decline  Almost three-quarters of Aotearoa New Zealand’s indigenous freshwater fish species (39 of 54) are either threatened with extinction or at risk of becoming threatened. One of the biggest causes of this decline is reduced access to habitat due to structures and other modifications to streams and rivers that prevent the fish from migrating.  The Fish Passage Action Plan project, which started in 2022, aims to address this. This collaborative project connects NIWA, four regional councils, tangata whenua, and the Ministry for the Environment’s expert science practitioners. The goal of the project is for iwi, hapū and regional councils to identify barriers to fish migration, mitigate those barriers, and then monitor their effectiveness.  NIWA is upskilling regional council scientists and iwi and hapū rangatahi through a series of workshops. These workshops teach participants how to identify issues with, and recommend changes to, culverts, weirs and other structures that might be blocking fish from migrating. The feedback from participants has been positive, with one council staff member saying it was a “dream come true” to have NIWA scientists working with them. The project forms part of the implementation strategies for the Essential Freshwater package.  **Link:** Ministry for the Environment:[Showcasing science in the policy process](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/showcasing-science-in-the-policy-process/) |

##### Module updates and technical guidance for intensive winter grazing

We released new guidance for intensive winter grazing (IWG) covering the topics of pugging, groundcovers and critical source areas. The guidance will be a valuable resource for councils and farm advisors in particular. It provides a synthesis of research and good practice recommendations for IWG to help shift practices and support better outcomes for freshwater. It is intended to compliment the IWG Module.

We have worked with councils throughout the development of the guidance to help support delivery of a fit-for-purpose product, with an implementation focus.

Links to the guidance documents:

* [Introduction to the intensive winter grazing guidance package](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fenvironment.govt.nz%2Fpublications%2Fintroduction-to-the-intensive-winter-grazing-guidance-package%2F&data=05%7C01%7CMichael.Paterson%40mfe.govt.nz%7Ca37ee25453eb4d11d7ab08db29b06c45%7C761dd003d4ff40498a728549b20fcbb1%7C0%7C0%7C638149609933171114%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=5oJZVXhCj01Pbj9IEGN4OFU8kvvqEnNX0Fnxq7oHB80%3D&reserved=0)
* [Pugging](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fenvironment.govt.nz%2Fpublications%2Fpugging-guidance-for-intensive-winter-grazing%2F&data=05%7C01%7CMichael.Paterson%40mfe.govt.nz%7Ca37ee25453eb4d11d7ab08db29b06c45%7C761dd003d4ff40498a728549b20fcbb1%7C0%7C0%7C638149609933327346%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=iDA2SA5SJMcSpM8l8xHMZGz0jZA73fynL2Q%2Bi8bRT9o%3D&reserved=0)
* [Groundcovers](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fenvironment.govt.nz%2Fpublications%2Fgroundcovers-guidance-for-intensive-winter-grazing%2F&data=05%7C01%7CMichael.Paterson%40mfe.govt.nz%7Ca37ee25453eb4d11d7ab08db29b06c45%7C761dd003d4ff40498a728549b20fcbb1%7C0%7C0%7C638149609933327346%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=5XDBju1zp9zeZnpuuUtpdYSuuU2Wa2Z%2BCeNUxuqJtfc%3D&reserved=0)
* [Critical source areas](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fenvironment.govt.nz%2Fpublications%2Fcritical-source-areas-guidance-for-intensive-winter-grazing%2F&data=05%7C01%7CMichael.Paterson%40mfe.govt.nz%7Ca37ee25453eb4d11d7ab08db29b06c45%7C761dd003d4ff40498a728549b20fcbb1%7C0%7C0%7C638149609933327346%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=FMvQkGG8%2FKqEIrrTkvi3v%2FmkaMzsM02D1uqZDtnBjCg%3D&reserved=0).

The Module (Ministry for Primary Industries and Ministry for the Environment) is being updated to include important regulatory information. Key messages for farmers were released in November in time for the regulations for IWG, which came into effect November 2022. The Module is aimed primarily at farmers, as a farm management tool. The updated [IWG Module](https://www.mpi.govt.nz/agriculture/farm-management-the-environment-and-land-use/protecting-freshwater-health/intensive-winter-grazing/) is available on the website of the Ministry for Primary Industries.

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | **Technical guidance published in March 2023 and module updates undertaken in November 2022** |

##### Guidance on nitrogen cap for farmers and regional councils

Several nitrogen cap guidance documents have been produced, each for a different audience. For more information, see the [synthetic nitrogen fertiliser cap](https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/freshwater-implementation-guidance/agriculture-and-horticulture/synthetic-nitrogen-fertiliser-cap-in-place-from-1-july/) web page.

The guidance clarifies the regulations for dairy farmers, other pastoral farmers, non-pastoral farmers, and farm advisors, as well as regional council policy, consent and compliance staff. The regulations affect each differently. All versions of the guidance include:

* a flowchart of how the nitrogen cap applies to different farming operations
* a checklist of key synthetic nitrogen cap management tasks for farmers
* how to calculate synthetic nitrogen use to ensure that it does not exceed the cap
* limits for synthetic nitrogen use in different settings.

The guidance defines:

* contiguous landholding
* pastoral land use, and how the nitrogen cap applies to different categories of pastoral use land
* harvested pastoral crops (silage, hay and cut and carry fodder)
* seed crops
* arable crops, horticulture and forestry
* crop stubble grazing.

The guidance also addresses monitoring and enforcing of the cap. Two ways to achieve this are to:

* routinely monitor permitted activities
* analyse the yearly reports from dairy farms about their nitrogen use.

The guidance also has information about existing use rights, non-complying activity consents, ‘good practice’ consent, and ‘phased reduction’ consent.

The guidance has two appendices. Appendix A is about how to calculate synthetic nitrogen use. Appendix B is a copy of the relevant part of the nitrogen cap regulations.

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | **Guidance published in October 2021** | | |
| Linked to policy outcomes | | Icon  Description automatically generated | A picture containing text, clipart, vector graphics  Description automatically generated |

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| CASE STUDY  A dairy farm in rural Kaikōura is restoring waterway margins  For the past three years, two dairy farmers have been restoring 25 hectares of waterway margins along the waterways on their 125-hectare property in rural Kaikōura. The project, which began in 2018, is expected to end in 2028.  The $12,000 of Immediate Steps Biodiversity funding from Environment Canterbury has funded the planting of 2,000 plants along the riverbank once a year. After planting, weeding and spot spraying is done every six weeks.  The project is well on the way to seeing a healthy, restored riparian cover that will shade the stream and provide a corridor from the spring source to the [Kahutara River](https://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/canterbury-region/river-quality/kahutara-river/), allowing freshwater species to thrive.  Since starting to improve freshwater values on farm, the land owners’ youngest daughter is “already out there, catching eels and bringing them home to smoke”.  **Link:** Environment Canterbury, 9 February 2021: [Dairy farm delight on Inland Road](https://www.ecan.govt.nz/get-involved/news-and-events/zone-news/kaikoura/dairy-farm-delight-on-inland-road/) |

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| CASE STUDY  Jo and Geoff Crawford are award winners for turning rundown farms into environmental successes  Jo and Geoff Crawford won the 2022 Northland Supreme Ballance Farm Environment Award. They have slowly converted some rundown farms into award-winning environmental successes, “taking the time to understand and know the land before making changes”.  Over time, they have worked hard to fence, restore and plant waterways. Many of these waterways are now well established and flourishing with mānuka and flax.  Recently, the Crawfords started two pest-control groups (as well as being active members of the Tanekaha Community Pest Control Area). They have encouraged neighbours and their local community to get involved. They are targeting possums, stoats and wild cats in the hope of regenerating the bush and returning birdsong to the area.  **Link:** Northland Regional Council: [Leading the pack – Crawford Farms : Case study](https://www.nrc.govt.nz/your-council/work-with-us/funding-and-awards/for-landowners/environment-fund-case-studies/leading-the-pack-crawford-farms-case-study) |

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| CASE STUDY  Land owners sign up for Clean Streams  A two-year project enabled land owners who fenced and retired waterway margins in priority catchments in Waikato to have that land planted at little or no cost to them.  By the end of August 2022, a total of 333,574 native plants were planted across 27 sites, with 88 hectares of land retired and 66 kilometres of fencing completed.  Where possible, the Waikato Regional Council used community-based nurseries to grow the plants and put them in the ground.  The environmental benefits of the project include protected and enhanced water quality, achieved by reducing nutrients and sediment, and improved aquatic biodiversity values.  The $4.38 million project received $1.998 million from One Billion Trees, Te Uru Rākau  – New Zealand Forest Service.  **Link:** Waikato Regional Council: [Clean Streams 2020: We’re ready to dig in!](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/about-us/shovel-ready-projects/clean-streams-2020/) |

#### Upcoming rollouts of freshwater farm plans

Freshwater farm plans (FW-FPs) will come into effect from 2023, with full implementation across all regions expected to take several years. The first regions for the planned rollout of FW-FPs are Southland and Waikato. We are running pilot projects in these regions to test FW-FPs at a catchment level.

The Government confirmed FW-FP regulations in June after testing an exposure draft of the regulations with primary sector groups, regional councils, tangata whenua and environmental groups in January.

For more information about progression of the FW-FP system, see:

* [Freshwater farm plan regulations discussion document](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/freshwater-farm-plan-regulations-discussion-document.pdf)
* [Public sharing of personal farm information](https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/freshwater-implementation-guidance/freshwater-farm-plans/#public-sharing-of-personal-or-farm-information).

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | **Progress rollout of farm plans from 2023** | |
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| CASE STUDY  Oneriri Station wins major award after building fencing that helps to protect against the spread of kauri dieback disease  Oneriri Station, a 2,750-hectare farm that borders the Kaipara Harbour near Kaiwaka, took home an award from the Northland Ballance Farm Environment Awards in 2022. The Northland Regional Council Water Quality Enhancement Award recognises a farm that has made a conscious effort to protect and enhance water quality and biodiversity values within water that flows through their property.  The judges at the Northland Ballance Farm Environment Awards praised the farm for the huge amount of fencing built to prevent stock from entering waterways. The judges felt that this significant investment benefitted the wider environment, and was a standout achievement for a large-scale property.  Nearly all of Oneriri Station’s 47 kilometres of coastline is fenced, along with all waterways and large areas of established native bush. The judges commended this fencing, along with strict controls on access to stands of kauri, as the best use of protection available against the spread and effects of kauri dieback disease.  **Link:** Northland Regional Council, 27 July 2022: [Northland Regional Council Water Quality Enhancement Award](https://www.nrc.govt.nz/our-northland/story/?id=74888) |

### Funding

This section describes different funds, their initiatives, and funding available for different projects.

#### Tangata whenua

##### Essential Freshwater Fund

The aim of the Essential Freshwater Fund is to improve capability and capacity that is needed long term across the many roles associated with the freshwater management system required to support delivery of the Essential Freshwater reforms.

The Fund aims to have a national impact by addressing local needs. Supporting the implementation of the Essential Freshwater package requires taking a systemic approach to investment. This means investing in groups such as iwi, community groups, and farmers so they can drive behavioural changes needed across the freshwater and land management system.

The Fund is $144.7 million. Current funding has been allocated and projects are under way or due to get under way.

##### Essential Freshwater Fund: Support for tangata whenua participation

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The Essential Freshwater Fund invests in iwi, hapū and marae groups to build capacity and capability for tangata whenua to act as kaitiaki and deliver environmental mahi in line with their aspirations.

Connections and relationships are fundamental to the investment through the tangata whenua theme. A collaborative and strategic funding approach is needed to reflect the diversity of capability and capacity among iwi, hapū and marae, as well as their regional contexts.

Local solutions need to be tailored to operate alongside tangata whenua and regional council initiatives as well as being responsive to iwi, hapū and marae needs and aspirations. Iwi, hapū, marae, regional councils, and our funding partners need to collectively determine what is needed locally.

A range of capabilities and resources will likely be needed, including policy and planning roles, trainers, scientists, cultural monitoring, and specific support with freshwater farm plans.

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In August 2022, Sustainable Land Use Ministers agreed an investment package that supports iwi, hapū and marae to:

* engage with other key participants in the freshwater system
* partner locally to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai.

We have worked closely with delivery partners, including the Freshwater Iwi Leaders Group and iwi, and will continue to do so.

The Freshwater Iwi Leaders Group is developing resources, such as tools and training programmes, which a network of practitioners can use.

#### Freshwater Improvement Fund

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The Freshwater Improvement Fund supports the management of lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater and wetlands in Aotearoa. In 2020 and 2021 the Fund administered environmental funding as shown in table 13.

Table 13: How environmental funding was used, and expected outcomes

| How funding was used | Expected outcomes |
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| Reduction of sediment eroding from the land  Wetland construction and restoration  Stream reinstatements  Estuary protection and restoration  Restoration of fish passage  Job creation  Building capacity and capability in freshwater management and restoration | Application of animal pest control to 26,454 hectares  Ecosystem restoration of 14,000 hectares  Freshwater restoration of 377 hectares  Plant pest control of 1,176 hectares  Protective fencing of 544 kilometres  Remediation of 1,631 fish passages  Planting of 1,608,555 plants |

See our [list of funded projects](https://environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/funding/freshwater-improvement-fund/freshwater-improvement-fund-projects/). For more information, see our web page about the [Freshwater Improvement Fund](https://environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/funding/freshwater-improvement-fund/).

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| CASE STUDY  Pūharakekenui (Styx) River Project  The Pūharakekenui (Styx) River is one of several spring-fed river systems that originate and flow through the city of Christchurch. The Styx Living Laboratory Trust, established in 2002, aims to connect all the nature reserves that surround the Pūharakekenui (Styx) River.  The Trust hopes to breathe life back into the river and create local jobs in Christchurch through the Pūharakekenui Freshwater Improvement Fund Project. The project (2022–26) will create about eight full-time employment positions. The jobs will focus on eradicating pest plants and protecting freshwater quality.  “We can really get things happening with the river, creating employment, creating an interest and awareness in the Styx,” says John Knox, Trustee of the Styx Living Laboratory Trust.  To date, the project has controlled over eight hectares of woody weeds (such as the grey willow) and planted more than 24,000 native plants in the catchment.  The Trust received $4.1 million of funding from the Jobs for Nature programme for this project.  **Links:** Ministry for the Environment: [Urban waterway restoration well under way in Christchurch thanks to Jobs for Nature](https://environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/stories/urban-waterway-restoration-well-underway-in-christchurch-thanks-to-jobs-for-nature/); and Styx Living Laboratory Trust: [The Styx Projects](https://www.thestyx.org.nz/styx-projects) |

#### Te Mana o te Wai Fund

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** $30 million |

The goals of [Te Mana o te Wai Fund](https://environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/funding/te-mana-o-te-wai-fund/#goals-of-the-fund) are to:

* support Māori to improve the health of freshwater water bodies of importance to them
* create nature-based employment opportunities
* build capacity and capability for Māori to participate in and make decisions for freshwater management (including in the implementation of the Essential Freshwater reforms).

The aim is to ensure the freshwater of Aotearoa supports the health of the people, environment and economy. The concept of Te Mana o te Wai is central to the Government’s Essential Freshwater policies and regulations that came into force on 3 September 2020.

Find out more on the [role of Te Mana o te Wai in managing freshwater](https://environment.govt.nz/news/te-mana-o-te-wai-putting-freshwater-first/).

The Jobs for Nature Reference Group has developed an investment framework to help shape proposals submitted to Te Mana o te Wai Fund. The framework includes information on the key principles the overall programme is promoting, including:

* employment priorities
* environmental scope
* benefits of partnerships
* importance of financial and delivery aspects of projects
* risk management.

Groups that can submit an expression of interest for funding are:

* marae and whānau
* iwi
* hapū
* Māori land trusts and incorporations
* individuals or groups representing one or more of the above and/or with an interest in a specific catchment area
* collaborations, collectives, or clusters of the above.

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The funding process has three stages: review, assessment and funding agreement (if the project is approved). Every two weeks from late March 2021, the Fund reviews expressions of interest to check if they are eligible for funding.

To find out how projects are assessed and prioritised, read the [Te Mana o te Wai Fund Guide for expressions of interest](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/te-mana-o-te-wai-fund-guide-for-expressions-of-interest-2021/). To find out more about the investment framework, see the [Jobs for Nature Reference Group investment framework](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/Funds/appendix-jobs-for-nature-reference-group-investment-framework-1.pdf).

##### Te Mana o te Wai – 2021 workshops

We sought to increase awareness of the NPS-FM changes through delivering Te Mana o te Wai workshops around the motu to tangata whenua and councils.

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Workshops were delivered to tangata whenua and council groups separately in 2021. Of the 16 workshops held, six were for tangata whenua. These workshops are listed earlier in this report, see [Workshops, guidance and toolkits: Te Mana o te Wai 2021 workshops](#_Te_Mana_o).

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| CASE STUDY  Te Tauihu Iwi trusts collaborating on a Te Mana o te Wai project  Te Tauihu Iwi trusts are collaborating on a Te Mana o te Wai project to build capacity and capability to participate in, and make decisions for, freshwater management.  These trusts (and projects) received funding from the Ministry for the Environment’s Te Mana o te Wai Fund:   * Te Ātiawa Manawhenua ki Te Tau Ihu * Ngāti Tama ki Te Waipounamu Trust * Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Koata Trust * Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira * Ngāti Kuia * Ngāti Apa ki te Rā Tō * Te Rūnanga a Rangitāne o Wairau collaborative project.   This funding will support Te Tauihu Iwi trusts to engage with whānau and hapū to implement the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management and Te Mana o te Wai. Protecting and enhancing the mana and mauri of wai is one of the highest priorities for whānau, iwi and hapū.  This project will support the Iwi trusts to co-design planning frameworks for Te Mana o te Wai (where it relates to, or affects, tangata whenua interests as kaitiaki) with their local councils: Nelson City Council, Tasman District Council, and Marlborough District Council.  This project will also support whānau, iwi and hapū to strengthen whakapapa relationships with their tupuna awa and te taiao, and enhance te ao Māori values and approaches to freshwater management in their takiwā. |

### Communities

A range of projects are under way at the community level.

#### Public Waterways and Ecosystem Restoration Fund projects

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** In 2020, the Government announced $67,080,287 of funding from the Public Waterways and Ecosystem Restoration Fund to 24 projects to improve freshwater quality. |

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The funded projects are listed here: [Public Waterways and Ecosystem Restoration Fund](https://environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/funding/public-waterways-and-ecosystem-restoration-fund/).

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| CASE STUDY  Ecological corridor along Piako River to connect Kopuatai Wetland  and the Firth of Thames (Tikapa Moana)  Waikato Regional Council is planting a 17-kilometre ecological corridor along the Piako River to connect Kopuatai Wetland with the Tikapa Moana.  Planting started in June 2021 following a site blessing led by Ngāti Hako. The project brings to life a long-held dream of iwi to reconnect the Kopuatai Wetland to Tikapa Moana. The Hauraki Plains, known as Tikarahi by Ngāti Hako, were once a huge wetland forest dominated by kahikatea, tōtara and maire tawake.  The five-year Piako River Green Corridor project includes planting along a drainage system near the foreshore to:   * provide shade for native fish and bird species during the dry summers * establish a vegetated corridor along the Piako River.   Deep water refuges and sediment traps are also included at key locations in the drainage system. These refuges and traps help reduce sediment entering the Piako River and provide deeper pools for eels and other fish to retreat to when water levels are low.  A quarter of a million plants will go in the ground, and 35 hectares of land will be retired along 36 kilometres of riparian margins. The riparian margin along the Piako River will be 14 metres wide, and two-metre-wide riparian margins will extend along the foreshore drain.  Most of the land is council flood scheme land. This gives the Council an opportunity to showcase how planting can become part of a flood scheme without compromising capacity and integrity.  The project received $2.8 million from the Public Waterways and Ecosystems Restoration Fund, administered by the Ministry for the Environment, as part of the Jobs for Nature programme. |

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| CASE STUDY  Habitat enhancement project improves water quality  A collaboration between iwi, land owners and Waikato Regional Council is restoring 48 kilometres of riparian margins along Waiomou Stream and two of its tributaries: the Tukutapere and Rapurapu streams.  The upper Waiomou Habitat enhancement project, which started in 2020, is helping establish a biodiversity corridor between Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park and the Waihou River. This corridor will help improve water quality by making the banks more stable. The biodiversity corridor will also enable community recreation opportunities, including swimming and fishing.  Work includes:   * removing overgrown willows and poplars along three kilometres of the Rapurapu Stream and along two kilometres of the Waiomou Stream * fencing off and retiring from grazing about 48 kilometres of riparian margins * planting 150,000 eco-sourced native plants within the fenced riparian margins.   The $2.06 million project received $1.7 million from the Public Waterways and Ecosystems Restoration Fund, administered by the Ministry for the Environment, as part of the Jobs for Nature programme.  **Link:** Waikato Regional Council: [Upper Waiomou habitat enhancement: We’re ready to dig in](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/about-us/shovel-ready-projects/upper-waiomou-habitat-enhancement/)! |

### Regional government

A range of projects that focus on regional government are under way.

#### Essential Freshwater Fund: Fish passage action plans

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** $4 million |

The purpose of this funding is to expedite fish passage action plans in key regions to:

* deliver immediate, tangible and measurable improvements in ecosystem health
* provide training and development opportunities.

##### The Ministry will prioritise regions when developing the plans, to optimise the project’s benefits

To bring the greatest benefit, we will prioritise fish passage action plans being developed in regions and catchments according to existing capability and capacity in councils, and the likelihood of species being present that would benefit from interventions. Table 14 shows how fish action plans will complement other programmes and what benefits the fish action plans provide.

Table 14: What fish passage action plans will complement and help provide

| What fish action plans will complement | What the funding will help provide |
| --- | --- |
| Developing fish action plans will complement our freshwater implementation work programme. That programme is developing guidance to support councils so they can meet the fish passage requirements in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management.  Funding will complement work already under way in the regional sector. | Access to technical experts to provide advice and increase council capacity.  Access to mātauranga Māori by involving tangata whenua in fish passage assessments and providing training opportunities to remediate barriers (this could target rangatahi as a career development pathway).  Mapping or ground truthing of existing barriers, structures and fish distribution as required.  Limited kick-start funding towards priority physical interventions that will improve fish passage and provide workforce opportunities for emerging technical experts. |

Once the fish passage action plans are complete, councils will be able to align implementation costs with their annual and long-term planning processes so that funding is available for staged implementation.

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In July 2022, NIWA was contracted as the supplier of the fish passage action plans. Delivery is under way and will be completed in June 2024.

Work has begun in four regions to provide training to councils and tangata whenua. Teams will develop a fish passage action plan in at least one freshwater management unit for each region, and will make case studies and lessons available across the motu. Planning is also under way to update the technical guidelines for freshwater fish passage as part of the project.

#### Essential Freshwater Fund: Access to Experts

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The aim of this theme is to provide councils, iwi, hapū and community groups with access to knowledge and expert advice about implementing the reforms. The Access to Experts service helps organisations and groups define their needs, access technical advice, develop practical implementation plans (including catchment plans), and adopt long-term practices that achieve national freshwater goals.

The service targets groups and organisations that have difficulties accessing expert advice and support is capped at a defined number of hours. Targeting support encourages users to work cooperatively (such as through catchment-type groups).

The consultancy firm Beca has been appointed as the broker agency, and they are working with experts and users to:

* design efficient services that minimise costs for users and experts
* increase the attractiveness of small-scale and medium-scale work to experts
* identify common needs that might be met through information and extension services.

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Beca has begun to co-design the service and identify the most urgent needs. A number of case studies have been initiated to trial the service for a range of users. These will be used to inform the final design. We expect the needs of people who use the Access to Experts service to evolve as plan-change processes advance. Beca will adapt the service over time to meet changing needs.

### Rural sector

A range of projects are under way across the rural sector.

#### Essential Freshwater Fund: Catchment group support

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** $15 million for regional councils |

Catchment groups are a key element in freshwater- and land-management systems.

The aim of the catchment groups is to:

* enable a national network of catchment coordinators and groups to be developed who will support the uptake of freshwater action on the ground
* offer support for coordination, regional umbrella groups, and some project implementation by existing groups
* explore options to support a national catchment group network (to explore these options, we will work with other agencies, the regional sector, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

This theme is linked with Jobs for Nature – a community of practice network.

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In August 2022, Sustainable Land Use Ministers agreed to a package of funding that included several projects with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as funding for capacity and capability improvement within councils to partner with, and support, catchment communities and groups.

The aim is to deliver the projects over the next three years to 30 June 2025.

We have set aside funding through the Essential Freshwater Fund to support councils to implement the Essential Freshwater regulatory reforms. The support package for councils complements the funding provided to catchment communities and groups through NGOs and to tangata whenua within the Essential Freshwater Fund. The aim is to have these partners adequately resourced to connect, partner and work together to deliver the Essential Freshwater reforms.

The support package provides for additional roles within councils that traditionally work with catchment communities, such as land management roles. The package also provides specific support to improve connections with catchment groups.

The funding for regional councils is focused on three main roles:

* regional catchment coordination
* iwi and hapū engagement and partnership
* internships for iwi and hapū.

All councils will receive a dedicated regional catchment coordination role, to work with catchment groups in their region. The aims will be to establish relationships and trust by working alongside catchment groups to:

* coordinate support and information for groups within council
* establish collective approaches for developing and actioning FW-FPs that are consistent with regional requirements
* develop integrated catchment management plans that incorporate action plans as required under the NPS-FM
* develop and communicate information on catchment context.

Officials within the Ministry for the Environment have contacted all councils. Contracts are expected to be finalised and in place in 2023.

#### Essential Freshwater Fund: Farm advisors and certifiers

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** $24 million to help train, develop and accredit the workforce of freshwater farm plan certifiers and auditors. |

This theme is focused on improving the capability of farmers, growers and advisors to develop FW-FPs, and on establishing statutory roles (certifiers and auditors).

The aims of investment here are to:

* support existing groups and training providers to increase the availability of their services to train more advisors
* communicate and promote the current advisory opportunities available, including the vocational pathways
* develop and support new models of training for new advisors and primary producers
* support tertiary organisations to improve and increase the availability of formal qualifications for advisors, certifiers and primary producers.

This theme is complementary to funding support in place through other government agencies that do not specifically focus on FW-FPs or support establishing statutory roles or requirements for FW-FPs.

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Sustainable Land Use Ministers have approved a portfolio of projects with primary sector organisations and universities. The aim is to increase the capability and capacity of the farm advisory and certifier network to support the rollout of FW-FPs.

In addition, $24 million has been approved specifically to develop the workforce of freshwater farm plan certifiers and auditors and to support delivery of the FW-FP system.

Projects will be delivered over the next three years, to 30 June 2025.

### Kaipara Moana Remediation Programme

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** $100 million |

The Kaipara Moana Remediation Programme (KMR) aims to restore the health of the harbour and reduce the flow of sediment into it. The harbour has a surface of 950 square kilometres and a catchment of 600,000 hectares. Together with Hōteo, the Wairua and the Mangakāhia catchments, the Kaipara Moana catchment is environmentally, culturally and economically important to Aotearoa and is of global significance.

Kaipara Moana and its catchment contain some of the rarest ecosystems in Aotearoa, with sand dune, seagrass, freshwater and estuarine wetlands.

After many years of land-use change, the health of Kaipara Harbour has degraded, mainly because soil erosion is causing sediment to enter streams and rivers. This degradation is harming wildlife, such as fish and the wider ecosystem.

We have provided $100 million over six years to KMR, the single largest allocation of funding in the Jobs for Nature programme. This funding has been matched by another $20 million from Auckland Council and Northland Regional Council and $80 million from land owners and other contributors.

KMR has become an example of councils, government and iwi working together to create positive outcomes for the environment through the combined efforts of Ngā Maunga Whakahī o Kaipara Development Trust, Te Rūnanga o Ngā Whātua, Te Uri o Hau Settlement Trust (together Kaipara Uri), Northland Regional Council, and Auckland Council.

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##### Accelerating sediment reduction in Kaipara Moana

KMR has been developing strategic partnerships with Fonterra, the Forest Bridge Trust, and Environs Ltd (Te Uri o Hau Trust acting on behalf of Kaipara Uri) to deliver more planning and projects which will help reduce sediment.

In its 2021/22 Annual Report, KMR reported that 47,000 hectares of the catchment were covered by sediment reduction plans.

##### Building capability in nursery suppliers

KMR has worked with a wide range of partners, including commercial companies, iwi- and hapū-affiliated providers and whānau-based teams, to evaluate and accredit nursery, planting, site preparation and fencing suppliers to the programme.

In its 2021/22 Annual Report, KMR reported that the 278 land owners involved in the programme have built 238 kilometres of waterway fencing, with 85 hectares of river and wetland margins newly planted or committed for planting.

##### Innovating through digital tools

New digital tools will enable KMR to:

* identify and target funding to the most highly erodible land in the catchment
* identify wetland areas that would most benefit from restoration to reduce sediment flows over land
* understand what activities will be most cost-effective to reduce sediment loss to waterways.

##### Creating nature-based employment opportunities

KMR has developed and delivered training courses to local KMR field advisors, including tangata whenua, to work with land owners to develop sediment reduction plans. Through a memorandum of understanding with the New Zealand Association of Resource Management, KMR will provide further training opportunities to field advisors to help them obtain qualifications related to freshwater farm planning.

KMR, through a partnership with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), jointly funded a kaitiaki employment advisor based with the Kaipara Uri, to engage with rangatahi and help them enter into nature-facing employment. KMR has also supported MSD-led community outreach to school leavers and developed profiles of KMR suppliers, nurseries, field advisors, and staff to tell the stories of the local people working in these roles and demonstrate that jobs protecting nature are inclusive.

### At-risk catchments

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** $12 million |

The At-Risk Catchments Programme has funding of $12 million for accelerating action in catchments at risk to:

* halt further degradation of freshwater resources
* restore the damage of the past
* protect the environment and freshwater for future generations.

Principles of the programme include:

* local communities, iwi, hapū and land owners (as far as possible) leading each catchment project
* tailoring solutions for each catchment
* making it easier for iwi, hapū, councils, communities and land owners to be able to access the support the Government has available
* bringing together local resources and knowledge with central government resources to achieve synergy and scale that deliver on the Government’s objectives
* learning how to improve by piloting an approach in a small number of catchments.

#### Manuherekia Catchment Restoration Project

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** $4.5 million |

The Manuherekia catchment in Central Otago provides water for farming, viticulture and horticulture. It is also a popular place for people to swim, kayak and fish.

The river is under pressure, with water quality declining and over-allocation of water reducing the flow available for ecological processes, providing habitat for wildlife, and for recreational use.

The Government is working with the Central Otago community, along with Treaty partner Ngāi Tahu, to lead the work to help improve the health of the river.

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The progress within the Manuherekia catchment includes:

* establishment of an inter-agency governance group to guide the work programme
* development of the Thomson’s Creek Wetland Project
* initial engagement to start developing an integrated catchment management plan that will design actions to connect to the aspirations of Ngāi Tahu rūnanga and the local community.

#### Te Hoiere / Pelorus Catchment Restoration Project

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| Icon  Description automatically generated | ***Funding:*** $6.4 million |

The purpose of the Te Hoiere / Pelorus Catchment Restoration Project is to restore the mauri of Te Hoiere waters, land and coast. The community and supporting partner agencies are coming together to work on an ambitious approach to look after the whole catchment ki uta ki tai (from the mountains to the sea). Through this, the natural environment will flourish and support individual and community well-being and livelihoods.

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The progress within Te Hoiere / Pelorus catchment includes:

* establishment of the Te Hoiere Kaitiaki Charitable Trust to provide the systems and resources to guide the work programme
* development of the Te Hoiere Pelorus Integrated Catchment Enhancement Plan and a lessons learnt report
* formation of catchment groups that are now looking at specific local issues
* local school children in the Rai Valley working with New Zealand Landcare Trust to undertake citizen science monitoring of their awa
* restoration activities (including fencing, weed control, and planting) undertaken in several wetlands
* completion of a fish passage action plan for the catchment, with migration barriers identified and prioritised for remediation.

# A picture containing text, water, outdoor Description automatically generatedPart 4: Where to from here?

## Reporting and collecting data

Our goal is to have effective reporting on the delivery of systems and outcomes.

### Setting the stage for further reporting about essential freshwater

This report is a stepping-stone as we further embed implementation. The reporting framework will evolve as implementation progresses and councils are able to provide more information.

We, and others, are developing:

* short-term indicators to track progress and monitor performance for the implementation of the Essential Freshwater package workstreams
* long-term indicators to track progress and determine whether the objectives of the Essential Freshwater package have been met or are in the process of being met.

Effective reporting is essential in determining the effectiveness of the Essential Freshwater package. We are creating an Essential Freshwater (EFW) Reporting Strategy and Framework, due to the size and complexity of freshwater reporting needs, and the contributing data of various players that will be used for reporting.

The EFW Reporting Strategy and Framework will identify the main elements in scope, contributing players, data sources, deliverables, and responsibilities, as well as the intervention indicators required to effectively report on the package. The strategy will be developed by scaling up the existing Freshwater Farm Plan Strategy and Framework to meet the requirements of the EFW Reporting Strategy and Framework.

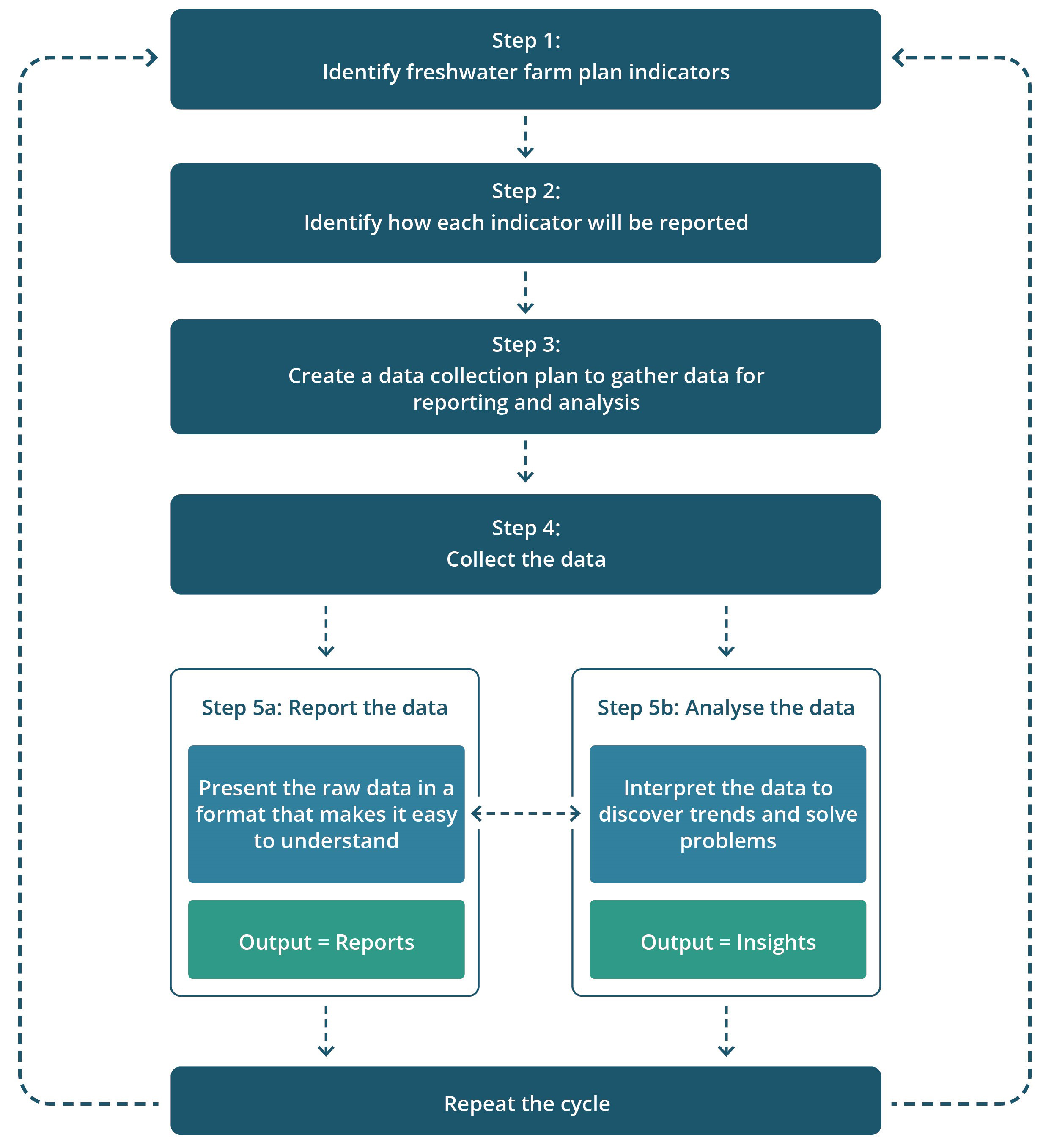
#### The six-step reporting cycle

An important component of the reporting strategy is the reporting cycle. This cycle is a six-step process to ensure the reporting produced is fit for purpose, timely and accurate. Table 15 and figure 6 show the six-step reporting cycle.

Table 15: Actions in the six-step reporting cycle

| Step | Action | Description |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Identify the freshwater farm plan indicators | Engaging with all key players is necessary to ensure all indicators have been identified. |
| 2 | Identify how each indicator will be reported  Create a mock-up of anticipated reports for each indicator | The mock-ups determine what information is required, at what time, and with what level of detail. |
| 3 | Create a data collection plan for each indicator | The purpose of the data collection plan is to provide confidence in the data by ensuring the data collected is meaningful, accurate and consistent.  The data cycle for each indicator dataset will be identified. Guidance materials will be created to convey how each dataset is to be captured, by who and when.  The people designing the data collection will not be the same people who collect the data. Engagement with the people collecting the data is essential to promote buy-in and ensure data submission dates and data collection methods are realistic. |
| 4 | Collect the data |  |
| 5 | Report and analyse the data | The priority is to create reports identified in the mock-ups during step 2. Any insights discovered through data analysis after reporting on the raw data may create additional reporting. |
| 6 | Repeat the entire reporting cycle | Reports and insights delivered in step 5 are reviewed in step 1, to determine if existing indicators and reports remain fit for purpose. |
| **Note:** | The reporting cycle timeframe will differ between indicators, as well as the various reports within each indicator. Some data cycles will be faster than others, both in the time required to collect the data and the availability of the data to be collected. | |

Figure 6: The six-step reporting cycle



## **Regional government update**

At the end of 2022, we met with each regional council and unitary authority to discuss implementation progress of the NPS-FM. Our discussions covered regional and freshwater contexts, progress towards plan notification, investments, and local engagement with iwi, Māori and communities.

The purpose of the engagement was to identify any barriers councils may be facing and to work with councils to meet the NPS-FM timeframes.

We identified a range of challenges during these conversations, including:

* local issues, such as water quality, over-allocation, erosion and sediments, nutrients, and fish passage
* staff capacity and capability, and balancing other council requirements and workstreams
* limited information, incomplete data, and monitoring gaps
* sequencing and navigating environmental regulatory changes.

The conversations with regional councils also noted opportunities, which included:

* expert hubs and centres of excellence for different skillsets to pool expertise and share capacity
* government investment in the region (funding and other resources) to support implementation
* regional and national coordinators and relationship managers to support engagement, build relationships, and provide support specific to each council’s needs
* sharing information from projects and learning from what other councils have done.

We will consider these potential new initiatives alongside other work under way in 2023, including an implementation support guide and another round of meetings with councils to discuss progress.

Table 16: Council timeline for notification as at 1 December 2022

Table 16 shows councils’ expected dates for consulting on their regional freshwater plans and making them public through notification. This is based on information provided by regional councils to the Ministry for the Environment as at 1 December 2022.

| Region | Plan drafting | Notification |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Northland** | Drafting is under way because the draft Freshwater Plan and supporting documents are the basis for public engagement between September and November 2023. | Scheduled for August 2024 |
| **Auckland** | Draft regional policy statement provisions are prepared and will be shared with the community in October 2023. | Scheduled for October 2024 |
| **Waikato** | Working draft of the Waikato Regional Policy Statement, Waikato Regional Plan are due in April 2024. | September 2024 |
| **Bay of Plenty** | Public engagement on a working draft was under way when this report was published in July 2023. | Mid-to-late 2024 |
| **Gisborne** | Motu Catchment Plan – March 2023.  Regional Freshwater Plan, including all remaining catchment plans – September 2024. | Motu Catchment Plan – April 2023  Regional Freshwater Plan – November 2024 |
| **Taranaki** | Early 2024 | Late 2024 |
| **Manawatū-Whanganui** | May 2024 | December 2024 |
| **Hawke’s Bay** | Late 2023 | December 2024 |
| **Greater Wellington** | First tranche of draft plan changes near completion in December 2022 | Aiming for public notification of change to regional plan in mid-2023. Further and final changes to the regional policy statement and regional plan are scheduled by the end of 2024. |
| **Marlborough** | May 2024 | December 2024 |
| **Nelson** | June 2024 | December 2024 |
| **Tasman** | Late 2024 | Scheduled for late 2024 |
| **Canterbury** | Scheduled for late 2024 | Scheduled for late 2024 |
| **Otago** | April 2023 | Scheduled for November 2023 |
| **Southland** | March 2024 | July 2024 |
| **West Coast** | December 2023 | October 2024, subject to agreement by mana whenua |

# Acknowledgements

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* Katerina Pireha, Ngāti Rangiwewehi
* Tom Stephens and Andrew Schollum, Auckland Council
* Kim Whitwell, Environment Canterbury
* LeeAnn James, Greater Wellington
* Waikato Regional Council
* National Iwi Chairs Forum Pou Taiao Technicians.

1. An attribute is something we can measure and monitor that tells us about the state of a river or lake.

   There are 22 compulsory attributes in the NPS-FM 2020, many of which have a minimum standard, or national bottom line – these contribute to understanding how freshwater provides for ecosystem health and human contact.

   The council and community must set target attribute states at or above the bottom line and plan what actions they will take to meet these targets. They are required to improve or at the very least maintain the current state of waterways. Regions can choose to add additional attributes, or higher targets. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)