



Integrating te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in environmental reporting

Information to support submissions on proposed amendments to the Environmental Reporting Act 2015

A key aspect of the Ministry for the Environment's work to improve the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 is giving a stronger voice to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori.

This includes exploring how mātauranga Māori, data, evidence, knowledge and science could be shared, collected, managed and protected in environmental reporting.

We're seeking input on 10 proposals to amend the Environmental Reporting Act (ERA) and some broader questions about how we can better incorporate te ao Māori (the Māori world view) and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) within environmental reporting.

The ERA provides the framework for independent, structured and regular reports on the state of Aotearoa's environment. This helps us understand how our environment is tracking and the impacts of our activities over time, which is vital for good decision-making.

After almost two full cycles of reporting under the ERA and a [review of the environmental reporting system](#) by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) in 2019, we have an opportunity to build on what we've learned to increase the impact of environmental reports.

Reflecting te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in amendments to the ERA will improve the coverage and effectiveness of environmental reporting and make it more meaningful and useful for Māori (as well as broader communities, local and central government, and other organisations).

This information sheet provides key context about te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in environmental reporting and sets out the opportunity for Māori to help shape amendments to the ERA.

It should be read in conjunction with the consultation document [Te whakawhanake i te pūnaha rīpoata taiao o Aotearoa Improving Aotearoa New Zealand's environmental reporting system](#), which provides detailed information about the ERA and current proposals to amend it.

Background

With the scale of environmental challenges (such as freshwater and climate change) increasingly apparent, there is a need to ensure our environmental monitoring and reporting system is fit for purpose, recognises all knowledge systems, and allows us to understand the impact of our interventions.

Strengthening the ERA is an important first step in improving the broader monitoring and reporting system. National environmental reporting will also be crucial to the implementation and operation of the new resource management system. Establishing effective links between the ERA and monitoring and reporting functions under the proposed Natural and Built Environments Act will be an ongoing process as reforms occur in parallel. We'll also align ERA amendments with other relevant initiatives underway, such as the Stats NZ led-work on Ngā Tūtohu Aotearoa – Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand and the Data Investment Plan, to ensure a coordinated approach.

In amending the ERA, we aim to better reflect Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership with Māori and Māori data sovereignty, by stronger inclusion of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori. Although te ao Māori perspectives on the environment are likely to differ among Māori, iwi, hapū and whānau, they often emphasise a holistic view, where concepts such as mauri (life force) affirm the connection between all living and non-living things and directly connect people's wellbeing to environmental wellbeing.

Together, mātauranga Māori and other sciences give us greater insight into environmental changes. The inclusion of mātauranga Māori in reporting can deepen our collective understanding of connections, interdependencies and long-term perspectives. Mātauranga Māori also promotes an intergenerational view of the actions we take now.

Current provisions and limitations

Under the ERA, the Ministry and Stats NZ are required to report on the state of different aspects of our environment every six months (domain reports), and our environment as a whole every three years (synthesis reports).

To recognise and respect the Crown's responsibility to take appropriate account of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the ERA:

- provides for te ao Māori to be an impact category in preparing synthesis and domain reports, to ensure these reports, and the topics, are informed by a Māori perspective
- requires consultation with iwi authorities before regulations are made.

As a result, while each synthesis and domain report has covered environmental matters relevant to te ao Māori, this reporting has largely focused on the consequences and effects of key environmental issues, such as the impact of declining water quality and land-use changes on Māori cultural values and identity. We also note that:

- the ERA does not explicitly involve Māori in environmental reporting, which means te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori are not meaningfully represented
- there is a lack of recognition of the value and validity of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori throughout formal environmental reporting under the ERA
- the current domain-based reporting prevents a more holistic view of the environment, which would require the inclusion of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori
- the current scale (focus on national data sets) limits quantitative approaches that are relevant in local areas, not recognising the valid empirical methods in te ao Māori.

Reporting impacts on te ao Māori

We commissioned Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research to propose a strategic direction and measures for reporting impacts from a te ao Māori perspective. The resulting report, *Reporting Environmental Impacts on Te Ao Māori: A Strategic Scoping Document*, sets out a framework and prioritised measures, as well as several recommendations.

The framework reflects Te Tiriti o Waitangi principle of partnership, presenting the Crown's kāwanatanga responsibilities to govern and enact laws while guaranteeing full authority for iwi and hapū over taonga (including mātauranga). Within the framework, a whakapapa ideology – which binds iwi/hapū to the natural environment, ancestral homelands, the wider community, mokopuna or future generations, and empowers mana whenua to carry out their duties as tangata kaitiaki (human guardians) – is represented through the following principles:

- mana whakahaere (decision-making authority)
- tūrangawaewae (place to stand/sense of place)
- whanaungatanga (community connectivity)
- taonga tuku iho (intergenerational transfer of knowledge, practice/resources)
- te ao tūroa (interaction with the natural world).

Using this framework, a set of measures were developed and prioritised. It was proposed that Māori-related impact topics could be reported on through these measures, both quantitatively (eg, metrics, statistics) or qualitatively (eg, case studies, narratives, commentaries). Components of measures for which there are likely to be sufficient data available for immediate to near-term reporting were identified as:

- wetland extent
- abundance of
 - a. shellfish and in-shore fish species (eg, pāua, kina)
 - b. tuna, whitebait and other freshwater species
- water drinkability and swimmability
- health of aquifers and number of freshwater springs
- abundance of taonga manu using Department of Conservation Tier 1 data where possible (kererū, kiwi)
- wild food availability assessed by abundance of exotic animal and plant species (Department of Conservation Tier 1 data).

The report also recommended that a cross-domain technical advisory group be established to further refine and order the priority measures, and that further scoping of the suitability of existing data be undertaken.

More information about the framework and the full list of measures proposed can be found in the report.

As no additional funding was provided for environmental reporting when the ERA was enacted, this work has not progressed further. However, as we look to strengthen the ERA, it is timely to consider the report's findings alongside a wider range of opportunities to incorporate te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in environmental reporting.

Proposed amendments

The consultation document sets out 10 proposed amendments, informed by the [PCE's 2019 review](#), the Resource Management Review Panel's 2020 report [New Directions for Resource Management in Aotearoa New Zealand](#), and findings from previous environmental reports.

1. Clarify the purpose of environmental reporting.
2. Mandate a government response to synthesis reports.
3. Add drivers and outlooks to the reporting framework.
4. Adjust roles and responsibilities.
5. Mandate a standing advisory panel.
6. Replace environmental domains with cross-domain themes.
7. Reduce the frequency of synthesis reports to six-yearly.
8. Replace domain reports with one commentary each year.
9. Establish a set of core environmental indicators.
10. Strengthen the mechanisms for collecting data.

While the PCE's report discussed te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori, and acknowledged the limitations of the current approach, he did not make any recommendations on incorporating te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in the ERA. He noted that his review was not the place to prescribe the way national-level agencies should seek to treat mātauranga, and recommended the Ministry and Stats NZ pursue this with Māori.

There is now an opportunity to bring a te ao Māori lens to the 10 proposed amendments and we're seeking feedback from Māori to help us shape the final proposals. There are a series of questions throughout the consultation document that directly reference te ao Māori:

6. What should the purpose include to reflect te ao Māori values and perspectives?
12. In what way could a formal response adequately address the needs of te ao Māori?
18. What drivers and outlooks can be included to reflect the perspective of te ao Māori?
22. Do you consider there are broader roles and responsibilities for Māori under the ERA?
31. What themes are appropriate for te ao Māori? Should te ao Māori be considered as a theme?
36. What frequency and timing will fit with te ao Māori to meet Māori information needs?
40. Should the indicators include topics based on te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori?
43. How can we strengthen the data to reflect the perspective and values of te ao Māori?

There is also the opportunity to share a te ao Māori perspective in response to the final question about each proposal:

In your view, have we overlooked any costs, benefits, risks or opportunities? Please describe these and any mitigations.

Any other feedback you'd like to share on the proposed amendments is also welcome.

Additional questions

In addition, we're seeking input from Māori on a broader range of questions about how to best incorporate te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in environmental reporting.

Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The Crown has Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities to support Māori rights and interests and contribute to and address Māori needs and aspirations. This includes the protection of taonga (treasures), both tangible (such as native plants and animal species) and intangible (such as mātauranga Māori). We know that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is under-represented in the ERA. These questions explore how that relationship could be strengthened.

1. How could Te Tiriti o Waitangi be reflected in the ERA?
2. Should the principles of Rights and Interests, Partnership, Participation and Protection be stated or referred to in the ERA?
3. Manaaki Whenua's report *Reporting Environmental Impacts on Te Ao Māori: A Strategic Scoping Document* proposes a Te Tiriti-based framework with five key principles: mana whakahaere, tūrangawaewae, whanaungatanga, taonga tuku iho and te ao tūroa. Do you agree with these principles? What other principles are important? How might the ERA be more inclusive of these principles?

Participation and advice

Māori are knowledge holders – gathering, analysing, reporting and responding to environmental data. It is widely recognised that there is need to ensure Māori have a more effective role in the environmental system, consistent with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and that more opportunities should be created for shared monitoring and reporting of the environment. These questions explore how Māori could be more deeply involved in environmental reporting, and what advice and expertise is needed to effectively integrate mātauranga Māori into environmental reports.

4. How can the work of active kaitiaki contribute to environmental reporting?
5. If a Standing Advisory Panel was established, how should it be organised to ensure that te ao Māori voices are represented? What roles and responsibilities should representatives have to ensure te ao Māori is meaningfully represented in environmental reporting?
6. Is participation in a Standing Advisory Panel preferred, or is a dedicated committee or panel needed?

Reporting framework and themes

Proposed amendments seek to promote a more comprehensive story about Aotearoa's environment, connecting it with ongoing driving forces (the past) and outlooks (the future), and using cross-domain themes to better represent the complexity and interrelationship of environmental systems. Including mātauranga Māori would provide greater insight than western science alone, by providing a deep understanding of connections, interdependencies and long-term intergenerational perspectives. These questions explore how mātauranga Māori could be effectively incorporated within the reporting framework and themes.

7. How would you like to see the reporting framework expanded to include mātauranga Māori?
8. How do you think mātauranga Māori can be better reflected and incorporated in domain themes?

Making reports useful

The PCE noted that, in collecting data of any kind to inform reporting, due emphasis should be given to information that is useful to Māori. Including relevant information and methodologies within environmental reporting will help inform effective decisions on environmental issues of significance to Māori. These questions explore what types of information, measures and indicators would make environmental reporting more inclusive of te ao Māori.

9. How can environmental reporting be more inclusive of te ao Māori? What information should be included? Who should provide this information? How can environmental reports be more useful for Māori audiences, and decision-making?
10. Do you support the integration of the measures and indicators proposed in Manaaki Whenua's report *Reporting Environmental Impacts on Te Ao Māori: A Strategic Scoping Document*? Why or why not?
11. What other measures or indicators should be included within the ERA to be inclusive of te ao Māori?

Protecting Māori data and mātauranga

We are mindful of calls for the science system to be based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership in a way that keeps mātauranga Māori within Māori stewardship. Ownership of mātauranga Māori and

intellectual property rights are important, and we acknowledge that Māori – regionally and nationally – are best placed to regulate and include mātauranga Māori in environmental reporting strategies, policies and investments. It's critical that appropriate consent is given before data or knowledge associated with mātauranga Māori is used or published, and it's also important to consider how the information is presented or communicated to ensure it is not misappropriated or misrepresented.

12. How should information that is important to Māori be collected and protected to ensure Māori data sovereignty is upheld?

13. What permission is needed for mātauranga Māori to be provided to the Ministry and Stats NZ for environmental reporting?

14. What permission is needed before mātauranga Māori that has been included in environmental reporting is released?

Have your say

We encourage you to read the [consultation document](#) alongside this information sheet for detailed information about the ERA and current proposals to amend it. Share your feedback until 5pm on Friday 18 March 2022 by:

- using our online survey to answer some or all of the questions set out in the consultation document and this information sheet
- writing your own submission.

For more information, visit consult.environment.govt.nz/environment/proposed-amendments-environmental-reporting-act/.

If you have any questions about the submission process, or you would like to provide feedback in a different way, contact the team at era.consultation@mfe.govt.nz.

Next steps

We will analyse all the feedback we receive to inform final recommendations to the Government. We will work closely with the Ministry's Interim Mātauranga Science and Insights Panel to shape and refine proposals.

Once proposals are agreed, legislation will be drafted and an amendment to the ERA (through an amendment bill) will be introduced to Parliament, likely at the end of 2022. A bill passes through several stages before it can become an Act of Parliament. You can find out more about the legislative process on the [New Zealand Parliament website](#).

Some issues may also be addressed through non-legislative change.

