

## **Minutes of the Freshwater Leaders Group meeting 27-28 February 2019**

### **Venue: The Terrace Conference Centre, Wellington**

Attendees John Penno (chair), Tom Lambie, Alison Dewes, Nicola Shadbolt, Gary Taylor, Marnie Prickett, Mandy Bell, Corina Jordan, Stephanie Howard, Allan Lim, Bryce Johnson,

Traci Houpapa (day 1 only), Marc Schallenberg (day 1 only), Hugh Logan (part of day 1 and day 2), Graeme Gleeson (day 2 only)

Apologies: Graeme Gleeson (day 1) Traci Houpapa (day 2) Marc Schallenberg (day 2)

Ministry for the Environment officials: Martin Workman, Roger Bannister, Nick Vincent , Katherine Meerman

Other guests: Bryce Cooper, (Science and Technology Advisory Group), Bryan Smith, (Ministry for the Environment), Agricultural Packages Team (Ministry for the Environment)

Minutes: Catherine Lofthouse (Allen + Clarke)

### **AGENDA ITEM 6— DISCUSSION ABOUT NUTRIENTS**

1. Due to presenter's availability, there was a change to the agenda.
2. Bryce Cooper (Science and Technical Advisory Group, STAG) reported on their meeting held 26 February 2019 (refer to the presentation slides provided at the meeting).
3. The Freshwater Leaders Group (FLG) discussed the presentation by Bryce. Discussion included:
  - Some FLG members questioned whether there is a role for soil scientists to play in understanding the substance through which the water flows. The group agreed that the advisory groups need expertise from soil scientists. The group also noted that STAG has capacity in freshwater which is the key area under discussion at the moment.
  - The FLG noted that phosphorus in South Island rivers is systemically lower than those in the North Island. This prompted the question whether different attributes are needed for South and North Islands.
  - The FLG raised concerns about the certainty of the nutrients attribute numbers and stressed the importance of confirming the numbers before consultation in July. One member expressed that going to public consultation with numbers that are not robust presents a political risk.
  - The FLG agreed:

It is critical for STAG to provide more detail on the nutrient attributes needed to define ecosystem health. This will mean prioritising the key questions for resolution by the end of April 2019.

Action point/s: STAG to:

- Endeavour to confirm the numbers for the nutrients attributes by the end of April 2019.
- Consider changing the toxicity attribute for ammonia.
- Use national attributes where appropriate.
- Explore use of regional attributes where needed

## **AGENDA ITEM 5— ESSENTIAL FRESHWATER PROGRAMME WORK PACKAGE AND PROPOSALS**

4. Bryan Smith (Ministry for the Environment, (MfE)) presented to the FLG on the future policy architecture for freshwater management (refer to the presentation slides provided in the pre-reading material).
  - Some FLG members expressed concern about the demand placed on regional councils to deliver. One member also raised concern that there is an overemphasis on good management practice (GMP) as a solution and insufficient emphasis on the regulatory regime.
  - One FLG member commented that there appears to be movement towards voluntary action (e.g. Farm Environment Plans (FEPs), GMP). They questioned what can be done in the interim before NPS and regional plan changes come into effect.
  - One FLG member highlighted that a lack of knowledge on what is happening regarding council consents is an issue. The FLG agreed that monitoring of consents is poor and improved data gathering is needed.
  - One FLG member commented that the provisions of urban issues is missing from the National Direction Objectives Framework, specifically regarding urban development.
5. Officials informed FLG in confidence that an integrated budget package between MfE and MPI is being developed. The package is not restricted to freshwater only.

Action point/s: Officials to:

- Ensure proposals for urban issues are included in the National Direction Objectives and Framework.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7- PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT THE AGRICULTURAL PACKAGE**

### ***Overview***

6. Officials presented policy proposals on Provisions for the Rural Sectors (refer to the pre-reading material and presentation slides provided at the meeting). The FLG were asked to provide feedback on the proposals.

7. Some FLG members expressed concern that the proposals do not deal with the fundamental issue of an increase in nitrates in waterways where people are not being prevented from discharging high levels of nitrates into the water. They stated this needs to be addressed immediately. Some FLG members expressed concern that a policy that omits the key issues means that farm plans do not meet their potential. They feel that the policy presents a risk for Ministers.
8. Some FLG members considered it was important for the policy to take a risk-based (rather than input-based) approach. They felt this avoided the risk of going out of business for extensive farmers and those with the lowest environmental impact whilst longer term allocation policies are developed.
9. The FLG discussed that grandfathering is not acceptable, group members did not reach a consensus on this point. They expressed that this matter needs to be closely tied to the allocation work, which should be accelerated.

Action point/s: Officials to:

Look into high loss nitrogen and to consider it as a high-risk activity.

### ***Farm Environment Plans***

Refer to FLG draft advice on the Rural Package. This will be worked on further and finally discussed at the FLG meeting 20 and 21 March 2019.

10. The FLG advice is that:
  - The FEP is a useful tool to improve farm management. It should not replace consents, Standards or other regulatory tools. The FEP must be part of a package of tools. Whilst it could be regulatory, it does not need to be.
11. The FLG did not reach consensus on whether FEPs should be mandatory. Group members were divided on this.

Action point/s: Officials to:

Provide an update on their proposals before the 20 and 21 March FLG meeting

### **AGENDA ITEM 1— APOLOGIES**

14. Apologies were noted for members who were unable to attend both days.
15. Lees Seymour has withdrawn from the process due to competing commitments.

### **AGENDA ITEM 2— CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

16. No new conflicts of interest were raised.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3— MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

17. The minutes of the 29 January 2019 meeting were discussed and accepted by those present.
18. The FLG agreed that the purpose of the minutes is to capture points of agreement and disagreement, key decisions and actions. The minutes should be succinct.
19. FLG agreed in principle to having an independent facilitator attend future FLG meetings. The facilitator's role would be to help the FLG form their written document for the Minister.
20. Officials agreed that the FLG will see the draft MfE briefing paper that goes to the Minister. This will enable the FLG to tailor their advice appropriately.

Action point/s: FLG members to:

Nominate to the Chair any suitable candidates to be the facilitator

### **AGENDA ITEM 4- MATTERS ARISING**

21. Some members of the FLG raised concerns that the reform presented by MfE is a does not go far enough, which is not what the FLG or the Minister wants. MfE responded that the biggest gap was in how quickly limits could be set. Other members of the FLG also responded that the work is still in progress; it will continue to evolve and gain clarity.
22. One member questioned when MfE will respond to non-rural responses.

Action point/s: Officials to:

Provide proposals to address urban water issues for the next FLG meeting (20-21 March 2019).

### **AGENDA ITEM 7 CONTINUED: DISCUSSION ABOUT THE AGRICULTURAL PACKAGE**

23. The FLG members were provided with a Working Summary of Views. This summarised their earlier discussion on the Agricultural Package policy proposals.
24. The FLG members divided into subgroups and provided feedback on this document. The aim was to agree the key issues that should go into a final report for the Minister in April 2019.
25. Feedback/comments from the FLG subgroups on the Working Summary of Views are included in the summary document being prepared by the Chair and Stephanie Howard.

Next steps

26. FLG agreed that the Chair and Stephanie will refine the FLG's summary of views and prepare a proposition statement for the Minister. This will be disseminated for discussion and confirmation at the next FLG meeting.
27. The next FLG meeting was rescheduled for 20-21 March 2019.

**Meeting Ended 4.25 pm**

## FRESHWATER LEADERS' GROUP MEETING 27-28 FEBRUARY 2019 - ACTION POINTS

		Date to be completed by	Responsibility	Comments
<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b>				
1	Nominate to the Chair any suitable candidates to be the facilitator	20 March 2019	FLG members	
<b>Matters arising</b>				
2	Provide proposals to address urban water issues for the next FLG meeting (20-21 March 2019).	19 March 2019	Officials	Speakers arranged supporting material being drafted.
<b>Nutrients</b>				
3	Endeavour to confirm the numbers for the attributes		STAG	
	Consider including an attribute for ammonia		STAG	
	Use national attributes where appropriate		STAG	
	Explore use of regional attributes where possible		STAG	

<b>Essential freshwater programme work package and proposals</b>				
7	Ensure provisions for urban issues are included in the National Direction Objectives Framework.	June 2019	Officials	
Agricultural package policy proposal				
8	Prepare an update on proposals before the next FLF meeting (20-21 March 2019).	19 March 2019	Officials	Speaker arranged ma
9	Look into high loss of nitrogen and to consider it as a high-risk activity	April 2019	Officials	
10	Look into issue of intensity, specifically whether intensive farming practices are happening short or long term	April 2019	Officials	