

Response ID ANON-URZ4-5FXX-Z

Submitted to Fast-track approval applications
Submitted on 2024-05-03 16:47:56

Submitter details

Is this application for section 2a or 2b?

2A

1 Submitter name

Individual or organisation name:
New Plymouth District Council (NPDC)

2 Contact person

Contact person name:
Lucy Rock

3 What is your job title

Job title:
Three Waters Planning Lead

4 What is your contact email address?

Email:

s 9(2)(a)

5 What is your phone number?

Phone number:

s 9(2)(a)

6 What is your postal address?

Postal address:

New Plymouth District Council
Private Bag 2025,
New Plymouth 4342
New Zealand

7 Is your address for service different from your postal address?

No

Organisation:

Contact person:

Phone number:

Email address:

Job title:

Please enter your service address:

Section 1: Project location

Site address or location

Add the address or describe the location:

944 Main North Road Onaero, is the proposed site for the treatment plant and irrigation. Wastewater will be collected from four areas, Urenui and Onaero townships and domains (campgrounds and holiday homes), piped along local roads and State Highway 3 to the treatment plant and irrigation site.

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Do you have a current copy of the relevant Record(s) of Title?

Yes

upload file:

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Who are the registered legal land owner(s)?

Please write your answer here:

NPDC owns 944 Main North Road (proposed treatment plant and irrigation site) and manages local roads where pipelines and pump stations will be located. NZ Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi) manages State Highway 3 where a pipeline and a pump station will be located.

Detail the nature of the applicant's legal interest (if any) in the land on which the project will occur

Please write your answer here:

NPDC is the owner of 944 Main North Road (proposed treatment plant and irrigation site) and manages local Roads. Discussions have commenced with NZ Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi) on locating a pipeline and a pump station on State Highway 3.

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

xxx

x

Section 2: Project details

What is the project name?

Please write your answer here:
Urenui and Onaero Wastewater Project

What is the project summary?

Please write your answer here:

A partnership project between NPDC and Ngāti Mutunga (mana whenua) to address significant environmental contamination of the Urenui and Onaero townships and Urenui River due to faecal contamination from the vast majority of septic tank systems failing. The Project involves collecting and piping wastewater from the Urenui and Onaero towns and domains (campsites and holiday homes) to a new local treatment plant where the treated water will be irrigated to land on site.

What are the project details?

Please write your answer here:

The Purpose of the Project is to address:

- public health and environmental issues, including contamination of the Urenui River, associated with failing septic tank systems in the Urenui and Onaero townships, and
- the environmental, cultural and erosion issues related to the Urenui and Onaero domains (campground and holiday homes) wastewater leachfields that are currently under abatement notice due to wastewater flows exceeding those allowed in the resource consents, the imminent risk of coastal erosion of the Onaero leachfield and the cultural offence cause by the Urenui leachfield currently being located on a cultural site of significance.

Properties in the Urenui and Onaero towns currently rely on septic tank systems for management of wastewater. Wastewater from the Urenui domain campground and holiday homes is collected, passes through a settling tank and is discharged to land via leachfields. Wastewater from the Onaero domain campground and holiday homes passes through individual septic tanks prior to collection and discharge to leachfields.

Water quality testing of the Urenui River has shown issues with the performance of private septic tank systems, which are contaminating the surrounding environment and stormwater systems. Due to health concerns, Health New Zealand (Te Whatu Ora) has advised (since November 2019) recreational users of Urenui River to stay off the mud flats, avoid collecting kai mātaītai/shellfish from the river and avoid swimming in the river for 72 hours after heavy rain. Ngāti Mutunga put a rāhui on the Urenui River, in the vicinity of the township, in October 2020, this has recently been reviewed to align with Health New Zealand advice.

Since 2019, NPDC has been working with Taranaki Regional Council, Ngāti Mutunga and Health New Zealand to help residents fix and maintain their septic tank systems. Unfortunately, this repair and maintenance work hasn't resolved the contamination issue as the towns' septic tank systems are too close together (due to property size) and the soil isn't suitable for septic tank systems.

In addition to the water quality concerns, the wastewater flows from the Urenui and Onaero Domains (campgrounds and holiday homes) are currently greater than Council's resource consents allow, resulting in the Taranaki Regional Council issuing abatement notices for these discharges. The Onaero wastewater irrigation site is at risk of coastal erosion and the Urenui wastewater irrigation site is on culturally important land.

Project Details

- collecting wastewater from Urenui and Onaero townships via a new reticulation system (low pressure sewer),
- connecting existing reticulation at the Urenui and Onaero domains campgrounds and holiday homes, from the current leachfield discharge into the new reticulated system,
- conveying the wastewater through pipes and pump stations to 944 Main North Road via local roads and State Highway 3,
- constructing a new wastewater treatment plant using an in vessel suspended growth or submerged fixed growth biological process and UV treatment, and
- irrigating the treated water to land on site.

Project Objectives

In the spirit of partnership, NPDC will work with Ngāti Mutunga to provide a sustainable and resilient long-term solution for the management of wastewater for the Urenui and Onaero communities that:

1. Protects public health and the mauri of the awa (water) and whenua (land), so the community can be healthy;
2. Recognises and provides for the relationship of Ngāti Mutunga with their culture, traditions, ancestral lands, water, wāhi tapu cultural and spiritual values and other taonga;
3. Achieves local centralised treatment and land-based discharge in a way that minimises adverse environmental effects and respects Ngāti Mutunga cultural values and community aspirations;
4. Has capacity to accommodate population growth in Urenui and Onaero Low Density Residential

Zones, Local Centre Zone and Special Purpose – Māori Purpose Zone, as allowed for in the Proposed District Plan 2023 and subsequent iterations of this Plan;

5. Supports an efficient wastewater network that maximises value for the community, is cost effective and safe;
6. Significantly improves the environmental and cultural impacts currently associated with existing on-site septic tanks and disposal fields, restoring Mana, Wairua and Mauri;
7. Minimises the production of greenhouse gases and is adaptive and resilient to the effects of climate change;
8. Manages the use of resources in a sustainable way, minimising waste and seeking opportunities to use waste as a resource; and
9. Can be constructed, operated and maintained in a manner which provides certainty for the community, Ngāti Mutunga and the requiring authority.

Activities Involved

Following granting of resource consents, designations and archaeological authority the next steps are:

1. Detailed design and Procurement (1.5 years)
2. Construction (2 years)
3. Commissioning and Connect properties (2 years)

Describe the staging of the project, including the nature and timing of the staging

Please write your answer here:

Activities Involved

Following granting of resource consents, designations and archaeological authority the next steps are:

1. Detailed design and Procurement (1.5 years)
2. Construction (2 years)
3. Commissioning and Connect properties (2 years)

What are the details of the regime under which approval is being sought?

Please write your answer here:

Resource Management Act 1991

- resource consent
- notice of requirement

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014

- archaeological authority

If you seeking approval under the Resource Management Act, who are the relevant local authorities?

Please write your answer here:

Taranaki Regional Council
New Plymouth District Council

What applications have you already made for approvals on the same or a similar project?

Please write your answer here:

No applications have already been made for this project.

Is approval required for the project by someone other than the applicant?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

NZ Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi) approval is required for piping along the State Highway 3 and location of a pump station in road reserve. Discussions are underway.

An archaeological authority is needed from Heritage New Zealand for the HNZPT authority required for the entirety of the project (due to the elevated archaeological risk of the project).

Taranaki Regional Council for resource consents.

If the approval(s) are granted, when do you anticipate construction activities will begin, and be completed?

Please write your answer here:

Activities Involved

Following granting of resource consents, designations and archaeological authority the next steps are:

1. Detailed design and Procurement (1.5 years)
2. Construction (2 years)
3. Commissioning and Connect properties (2 years)

Funding of this project was approved by Council in the 2021/31 Long Term Plan (LTP). The draft 2024/34 LTP again includes funding for the project (\$36.98 million). Funding for construction is currently included from years 2027/28. Should approvals be granted earlier, funding will be brought forward to ensure that resource consents and designations have been given effect prior to the 2 year maximum lapse date requirement within the draft Bill.

Project planning commenced early in 2022 following budget approval in the 2021/31 LTP. Land for the project was purchased in June 2023 at a cost of \$5.5 million, 84 Ha at 944 Main North Road. Project spend to the end of the 2023/24 year is anticipated to be approximately \$8 million.

24/34 Draft Long Term Plan

Year 1 2024/25 \$ 1,281,250
Year 2 2025/26 \$ 2,889,150
Year 3 2026/27 \$ 2,961,475
Year 4 2027/28 \$ 11,038,000
Year 5 2028/29 \$ 11,325,000
Year 6 2029/30 \$ 3,692,843
Year 7 2030/31 \$ 3,792,538
TOTAL \$ 36,980,255

Section 3: Consultation

Who are the persons affected by the project?

Please write your answer here:

There are many persons who will be positively affected by this Project. Removal of human faecal contamination from the Urenui River and the associated public health risk will positively affect all users of the river. The river will again be safe for recreation and collection of kai mātaimai/shellfish and can be enjoyed by the community, those who visit the area and campers at the Urenui Beach Motor Camp.

Removing the Urenui wastewater leachfield from a Site of Significance to Ngāti Mutunga will help restore the mauri to the site and address the cultural offence caused to the people of Ngāti Mutunga.

Adverse effects on the environment will be appropriately managed through the design of the wastewater treatment plant, irrigation system and pump stations, and through appropriate resource consent conditions to ensure effects on the environment and neighbours are less than minor.

The following external Project stakeholders have been identified:

Ngāti Mutunga/Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga
- Partner in the project, high interest as manawhenui for the rohe

Boundary neighbours of 944 Main North Road
- High interest as located closest to the treatment plant and irrigation

Pump station neighbours
- High interest as located closest to the pump stations

Residential property owners Urenui and Onaero
- High interest as each property will be connected to the new scheme

Urenui Domain Bach Owners & Bach Holders association, Onaero Bach Owners
- Will be connected to the system, high interest dependent on whether there are collection changes in the domains

Urenui and Onaero businesses located within the townships, fire station, Health Group, Plunket, Urenui School / Ministry of Education
- High interest as properties will be connected to the scheme.

Taranaki Regional Council

- Consenting authority, monitors the Urenui River water quality, working with NPDC to address issues, high interest

NZ Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi)

- Manage State Highway 3, high interest as pipeline and pumps station to be installed along the State Highway.

Urenui and Onaero Domain Campground manager / lessee

- Campground will be connected to the scheme, medium interest depending on with there are collection changes for the campgrounds

Health New Zealand (Te Whatu Ora)

- Public health interest, have been working with Council to address the contamination, medium interest.

Fish and Game, Department of Conservation and Forest and Bird

- Interested in environmental impacts, medium to low interest, dependent on whether infrastructure passes close to conservation land and the health of the Urenui River

Developers

- Interest in developing sections, low interest until the scheme is in place.

Fonterra

- Collecting milk from neighbouring properties, low interest, initial contact indicated not concerned

Zespri

- Potential neighbour growing kiwifruit, low interest, initial contact indicated not concerned

Detail all consultation undertaken with the persons referred to above. Include a statement explaining how engagement has informed the project.

Please write your answer here:

Engagement to date and anticipated engagement is summarised in the attached Engagement Plan for the Project. This plan is a working document which is regularly updated to ensure engagement is undertaken as needed and in a way that meets the needs of stakeholders. Further information on each interaction and the feedback provided is available on request.

Ngāti Mutunga

NPDC is working with Te Runanga O Ngāti Mutunga (Ngāti Mutunga) on this project in the spirit of partnership and collaboration, under a Terms of Reference (TOR). The TOR ensures that issues and opportunities that are of interest to Ngāti Mutunga are appropriately incorporated into the Project. It allows cultural issues arising in the context of the proposed development to incorporate cultural components and protections into the proposed design and resource consent process.

Council and Ngāti Mutunga collaborate at both the Working Group and Steering Group levels of the project with representation on these groups from both organisations. The working group considers technical advice on the options for the various parts of the project with the aim of reaching agreement on which options are preferred and the best way forward for both parties. The working group is in regular communication via meetings and workshops with NPDC also providing written reports on project progress.

Boundary neighbours to 944 Main North Road (treatment plant and irrigation site)

Boundary neighbours are regularly updated on Project progress and consultation is undertaken on significant decisions so that feedback can be heard and incorporated into project design. One on one discussions or group meetings are the preferred methods of consultation to ensure there is an opportunity to record all feedback. Neighbours are encouraged to contact Council if they have any questions or concerns.

Engagement to date has been via one on one discussions, group meetings, phone calls and written responses to questions. A quarterly update on any project progress relating to the proposed treatment plant and irrigating site is also provided to neighbours.

Urenui and Onaero community, businesses, other organisations

Engagement with the community to date has been via regular open days, project update mailouts, presentations to representatives of the community (Clifton Community Board and Council), the webpage (sign up to receive regular updates) and Long Term Plan consultation. Feedback is recorded and incorporated into project design.

Taranaki Regional Council and Health New Zealand

Since 2019, NPDC has been working with Taranaki Regional Council, Ngāti Mutunga and Health New Zealand to help residents fix and maintain their septic tanks and manage wastewater issues at both the Onaero and Urenui campgrounds. Unfortunately, the septic tank system issues were unable to be resolved through repairs and maintenance as the towns' septic tanks are too close together (due to property size) and the soil isn't suitable for septic tanks.

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2024_5_3 Fast-track Engagement Plan Urenui Onaero Wastewater Project - Combined.pdf was uploaded

Describe any processes already undertaken under the Public Works Act 1981 in relation to the land or any part of the land on which the project will occur:

Please write your answer here:

No processes have been undertaken under the Public Work Act 1981.

Section 4: Iwi authorities and Treaty settlements

What treaty settlements apply to the geographical location of the project?

Please write your answer here:

Mana whenua for the Urenui and Onaero area is Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Mutunga Claims Settlement Act 2006. NPDC is working in partnership with Ngāti Mutunga on this project.

The Urenui and Onaero Domain Recreation Reserves were returned to Ngāti Mutunga as part of their settlement and are administered by NPDC. The new wastewater scheme will collect wastewater from the domains and allow the existing Urenui leachfield to be removed from Ngāti Mutunga land.

The Urenui River which is being contaminated by failing septic tank systems is a statutory acknowledgement area, as is the Onaero River.

Are there any Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 principles or provisions that are relevant to the project?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Are there any identified parcels of Māori land within the project area, marae, and identified wāhi tapu?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Is the project proposed on any land returned under a Treaty settlement or any identified Māori land described in the ineligibility criteria?

No

Has the applicant has secured the relevant landowners' consent?

Yes

Is the project proposed in any customary marine title area, protected customary rights area, or aquaculture settlement area declared under s 12 of the Māori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004 or identified within an individual iwi settlement?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Has there been an assessment of any effects of the activity on the exercise of a protected customary right?

No

If yes, please explain:

Upload your assessment if necessary:

No file uploaded

Section 5: Adverse effects

What are the anticipated and known adverse effects of the project on the environment?

Please describe:

Positive Effects

The positive effects of the Project on both the environment and public health are considered significant. Positive effects include the removal of existing on-site wastewater discharge discharges at Urenui and Onaero (thus removing the adverse effects of those discharges), and the ability to provide for current and future wastewater volumes from Urenui and Onaero communities, including seasonal fluctuations. By treating municipal wastewater to a high-quality and discharging to land in a controlled manner the Project will avoid any direct discharge to the local waterways and improve environmental impacts within the region.

A robust site selection process was undertaken which involved a detailed analysis and assessment of alternatives to ensure the proposed site avoided all potential adverse effects. The proposed location includes favourable characteristics which include its large size, flat topography ideal for irrigation, appropriate buffer areas from adjoining neighbours, area for land discharge infrastructure, lack of waterways, no archaeological features on the site, and it is supported by Ngāti Mutunga.

The proposed centralised WWTP and irrigation will operate in a highly controlled manner that will protect the environment from uncontrolled discharges and will have a significant positive effect on a wide range of receiving environments currently impacted by septic tank discharges. The potential benefits in a reduction of diffuse discharge to surface water are an improvement in water quality and habitat value, improvements in the cultural health of the waterways and the community relationships (cultural, amenity and recreational) with local waterways.

Public human health risk from microbial contaminants in surface water paths and groundwater will be significantly reduced. The wastewater treatment and discharge system will provide for the health and wellbeing of the Urenui and Onaero communities; and without it there is evident localised effects from poorly functioning onsite wastewater facilities leading to adverse public health effects.

Air quality

The potential effects on air quality will be managed to ensure there are no objectionable odours beyond the boundary of the site, as well as reducing emissions and achieving energy efficiencies. Design parameters will include, but not be limited to, sufficient distances to boundaries, managed odour treatment processes as well as the managed removal of the residual wastes (biosolids).

The main discharges to air from the Project will be odour from the treatment processes. The WWTP will be designed and operated to minimise the risk of any adverse odour being experienced outside the site boundary. Odour mitigation will include the following:

- Providing sufficient separation distances between the treatment plant and the spray irrigation system, and the site boundary
- Positioning odorous processes away from sensitive receptors
- Minimise emissions through the implementation of appropriate odour controls and management procedures
- Minimising the risk for the occurrence of adverse odour events through plant design and process monitoring
- Selection of the irrigation system to limit spray drift

Process units and equipment will be specified and configured to minimise the release of fugitive greenhouse gas emissions. For example, providing for very stable nitrogen removal processes that release a minimum of nitrous oxide (N₂O) and avoiding processes where methane may be produced by anaerobic processes. In all process plant development, life cycle emissions will be given due consideration and it is anticipated that NPDC will adopt the zero carbon act aspirations and optimization of life cycle emissions generally. These will be drivers towards energy and efficiency and emission reduction. Overall, any potential adverse effects on air quality will be appropriately mitigated.

Archaeological

An Archaeological Assessment has been undertaken by Geometria dated 25 May 2023 which addresses the potential archaeological effects of the proposed WWTP and recommends measures which will mitigate the potential for adverse archaeological effects.

The assessment identifies that Onaero was an important location for early Māori settlement, however settlement was primarily focused on the Onaero River mouth and the coastal margins. Although there are no archaeological sites recorded within the project area, archaeological sites are abundant in the wider landscape. The types of archaeological sites recorded within 3km of the project are largely indicative of the general archaeological landscape of Onaero, of which is dominated by military sites, largely due to their prominent visibility, and settlements that they protected. The report has identified the following sites as having the potential of being impacted by the proposed works:

- Two possible kainga at the northern end of the property.
- An extensive wetland complex linked to Te Rau o te Huia Pā.
- A high-risk natural terrace linked to Te Rau o te Huia Pā.

The assessment concludes that development of the project site for WWTP purposes presents a general archaeological risk due to the relatively high pre-contact Māori settlement of the area. Te Rau o te Huia Pā lies immediately north of the project site and was spatially linked to the project locality prior to the establishment of SH3. A pre-1900 settlement is indicated on survey plan SO 359, which shows the location of 'whare' on the northern part of the site, as well as pā and whare elsewhere in the immediate locality. Early settlement is also indicative from PDP archaeological site #528, which is a fire feature located on an adjoining property. The interfluvium on which that site is located extends through the northern end of the proposed WWTP site, thereby indicating that any settlement associated with that feature could have extended into the application site. To mitigate any potential archaeological effects, recommendations have been included which will be adhered to throughout the life of the project.

Cultural

A Cultural Values Statement (CVS) (Jan 2024) has been provided by Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga for the NPDC for the Urenui/Onaero wastewater project (CVS attached).

The CVS sets out the Ngāti Mutunga Cultural Values as identified in its Iwi Environmental Management Plan and how these are to be applied to the Project. This document has been compiled by Ngāti Mutunga to inform NPDC on its cultural values so that they can be considered through the planning, design and implementation of the Wastewater Project. Ngāti Mutunga will use these cultural values to assess the impact of the various aspects of the project and will refer to the CVS when undertaking the Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) for the project.

The key cultural values that Ngāti Mutunga have identified and want to see as key outcomes for the Urenui /Onaero Wastewater project are summarised as follows:

Rangatiratanga – that a Ngāti Mutunga voice is strong and is heard. This is achieved by ensuring that Ngāti Mutunga is able to work as a valued and impacted partner and most importantly is resourced to do so. The opportunity to build Ngāti Mutunga capacity for this project and for future projects and beyond supports the on-going resurgence of Ngāti Mutungatanga.

Kaitiakitanga – demonstrate Ngāti Mutungatanga through our role as kaitiaki. This is achieved by working in partnership to improve the environmental condition of the awa and whenua. Environmental improvements implemented by this project need to reflect Tikanga and traditional concepts. Environmental Enhancements will enable kaitiakitanga practises to return.

Ara Whakamua – to look forward to the future. Ngāti Mutunga supports looking forward to progress solutions. Ngāti Mutunga recognise the concepts of Hauora Taiao, Hauora Tangata and Hauora Mahinga kai that will underpin any future direction. Ngāti Mutunga recognises the need to apply traditional knowledge and how this can assist innovation and progress. Long term intergenerational outcomes are essential to the project's success and will also work to ensure enduring benefits for Ngāti Mutunga.

The project provides Ngāti Mutunga an opportunity to be delivered in accordance with Ngāti Mutunga cultural values, to build and strengthen Ngāti Mutungatanga and also strengthen its relationship with the council and the community. It is considered that potential adverse effects on cultural aspects can be suitably mitigated through ongoing partnership and recognition of the cultural values identified by Ngāti Mutunga.

Landscape and Visual

Visual assessments from potentially affected properties and surrounding landscapes, as well as a landscape assessment are being prepared to ensure specific visual effects and targeted mitigation can be recommended.

The topography of the area is flat to gently rolling and slopes to the north, toward the coastline. The site sits just inside the broad landscape type of the Taranaki volcanic ring plain bordering the inland hill country and coastal marine terraces to the north and east.

Land use is generally associated with rural activities including dairy and pastoral farming and associated residential uses. As a result, the landscape generally comprises areas of pasture, segmented by access tracks, roads and fencing.

Shelterbelts are common features bordering paddocks and fence lines and vegetation is largely exotic particularly around residential properties. As pastoral farming continues to be the dominant land use of the ring plain and marine terraces, indigenous vegetation is generally only found within the riparian margins of waterways. Waterways with steep sided gullies are common and meander across the landscape, generally flowing in a north to northeast direction towards the coast.

Having regard to associative attributes, there are no Outstanding Natural Landscapes or Outstanding Natural Features identified in the broader landscape, however the Onaero and Urenui River mouths are identified as 'significant coastal areas' and as 'regionally significant landscapes' within the Taranaki Regional Coastal Plan.

Mount Taranaki is a unique distinctive landform which dominates the region through the height and slope of its volcanic cone, and the extent of its indigenous vegetation. Special scenic, recreational, scientific and Māori cultural and spiritual values are associated with Mount Taranaki.

With respect to existing physical attributes on the subject site, the predominant feature is highly productive grazing pasture, with exotic shelter belts and large exotic trees in proximity to main buildings. Two Motukara tributaries have varying amounts of riparian planting along their lengths (2-5m) with native species on the steep sides of the gullies.

Recommendations from the landscape and visual impact assessment will determine the appropriate level of avoidance, remedy or mitigation to ensure that unique landscape of the WWTP is maintained.

Ecological

While the project has the potential to create adverse effects on the ecology of the area, in particular, terrestrial and aquatic effects resulting from the works within the vicinity of the wetlands, measures will be put in place to ensure these are suitably mitigated. Investigations undertaken in June 2023 confirmed that the site contains 13 natural inland wetlands. The concept design of the indicative WWTP operational zone (including process area and area for treated wastewater storage) has been designed to be outside a buffer distance (no less than 50m) from any natural wetland on site. An ecological assessment will be undertaken to address the hydrological connection between the function of the wetland and the discharge of water for the purposes of constructing the specified infrastructure, and to ensure overall consistency with the National Environmental Standard for Freshwater Management 2020 (NES-FW).

Potential impacts on surface water quality derive from the potential for irrigated wastewater to enter the Motukara Stream either directly via runoff, potentially in association with rainfall, or indirectly by combining with groundwater and emerging from seepages or springs where this groundwater naturally enters surface water. Municipal wastewater typically includes elevated concentrations of alkalinity, suspended solids, biological oxygen demand, bacteria, nitrogen and phosphorus. Following treatment and application to land, these concentrations, while reduced, can still cause deterioration in surface water quality if it were to enter either directly or by flowing through permeable soil.

In order to mitigate potential effects on surface water quality, water quality baseline sampling has been undertaken upstream and downstream of the application area. Appropriate sampling will show whether there is any change in the concentrations of selected parameters as the stream flows through the application area. An initial monthly sampling regime for 12 months has been completed to capture the baseline seasonal changes in water quality (in-line with the frequency of groundwater quality sampling). Overall, it is considered with sufficient sampling procedures in place, the quality of the surface water will be managed to ensure the effects are appropriate.

A desktop assessment of ecological effects was undertaken in accordance with Ecological Impact Assessment (EiA) EIANZ guidelines for use in New Zealand: terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems (Roper-Lindsay et al., 2018). These guidelines are consistent with significance assessment criteria set out in the Proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (2019) Appendix 1: Criteria for identifying significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitat of indigenous fauna. This baseline assessment will assist in identifying potential changes from baseline ecological values likely to occur as a result of the Project and recommendations can be implemented to ensure ecological values of the area are maintained.

Monitoring of macroinvertebrates, fish, and macrophytes has been undertaken to ensure the potential ecological effects can be appropriately measured and addressed. Such sampling will also provide an indication of whether there is a change in community health as the streams flow through the irrigation area. EDNA sampling has provided an indication of the species present. A rapid assessment of macrophyte growth looking at submerged and emergent macrophytes within the stream channel has also been completed (based on Waikato Regional Council guidelines).

The monitoring methods will be used to complement the Mauri Compass assessment which will be undertaken by representatives of Ngati Mutunga. Water quality and flow inform the catchment health aspect, while fish, macroinvertebrates and macrophytes provide information on taonga species health and abundance, mahinga kai, habitat and biodiversity. Some of the methodologies may need to be varied slightly or expanded upon to enable it to fit in with the structure of the mauri compass.

Overall, appropriate measures will ensure there are no adverse effects on the ecology of the site and surrounding environment as a result of the proposed activity.

Groundwater Quality

Groundwater quality will be monitored to ensure that effects are appropriately remedied or mitigated. A 12-month survey of baseline groundwater quality is being undertaken through the establishment of on-site groundwater monitoring boreholes. The Concept Design of the treated wastewater irrigation system will be designed to ensure that the treated wastewater application rates match the physical and chemical properties of the soil to maximise nutrient uptake and minimise nutrient losses to groundwater. The overall aim of the system is to reduce nutrient losses to groundwater when compared to the historic dairy farming land use of the site.

Transportation Network

The activity has the potential to create adverse effects on the road network however mitigation measures will ensure these are managed appropriately. An assessment of traffic-related effects will be provided however the known effects are detailed below. Potential effects relate to both construction and operation of the WWTP including the ability to enter and exit the site safely.

Main North Road / State Highway 3 (SH3) has a One Network Road Classification as a Regional State Highway. Regional State Highways make a major contribution to the social and economic wellbeing of a region and connect to regionally significant places, industries, ports or airports. SH3 in this location has a traffic volume of 4100 vehicles per day (vpd) of which approximately 13% are heavy commercial vehicles.

Due to the relatively low traffic volumes on the surrounding network and having regard to the associated crash history, traffic volumes generated by construction activity would not increase risk to the safe operation of the surrounding network. Whilst the increase in traffic volumes may require upgrades on local roads, if used, any associated inconvenience would be temporary in nature but would result in longer-term safety improvements which extend well beyond the construction phase of the project. A Construction Management Plan is proposed to mitigate associated effects, including that associated with construction-related traffic.

Traffic associated with day-to-day operation of the WWTP is assumed to travel from New Plymouth, and is dictated in part, by the finalised choice of treatment plant. However, day-to-day operational traffic is less than that associated with existing on-site activity and does not pose any additional risk to the safe operation of the surrounding transport network. As the volume of operational traffic is significantly lower than construction traffic, no further improvements to roads and intersections will be necessary beyond the construction phase of the project.

Contaminated Land

A Preliminary Site Investigation has been carried out to determine the potential contaminants present at the site to ensure these are appropriately managed. The findings conclude that the site was historically and is currently being utilised as a dairy farm. As the paddocks have been utilised for agricultural activities for several decades, it is possible that the site has received regular fertiliser application for many years and that there is potential for elevated cadmium concentrations in topsoil. However, no HAIL activities have been identified at the site therefore the NESCS is not considered to apply. In the event that any soil is being removed from the site, sufficient soil management and disposal processes will be established. Overall it is considered that potential effects relating to soil contamination will be acceptable.

Stormwater

The impermeable areas are likely to be very small and largely suitable for on-site soakage systems. Stormwater swales may be considered alongside access tracks during detailed design, however, the operational stormwater generated from impermeable areas will be negligible. The stormwater system will be designed to ensure that freshwater is maintained and there are no changes to the quality of the water. Overall, potential effects on stormwater are considered negligible.

Construction effects

Potential adverse effects relating to construction will be temporary in nature and will be appropriately managed. Noise and vibration will be managed through a Construction Management Plan to ensure that effects are localised and are not extending beyond the site boundaries. Traffic effects will be managed through a Traffic Management Plan which will be implemented throughout the construction period and will be consistent with Waka Kotahi and NPDC guidelines. Erosion and Sediment Control methodology will be developed through a certified Erosion and Sediment Control Plan. Overall, opportunities exist to ensure that any potential adverse effects resulting from the construction of the proposed activity will be avoided, remedied, or mitigated.

Noise

Operational noise would be managed via a Management Plan to ensure compliance with relevant standards for the life of the activity. No adverse effects are anticipated.

Natural Hazards

The WWTP has been designed to provide for adaptive, resilient and recovery outcomes, and as such, has been located to avoid natural hazards. A natural hazards assessment report (Urenui and Onaero Wastewater Treatment Plant – Natural Hazard Assessment Beca) has been undertaken as part of the proposed works. The following is a summary of the existing environment in the context of natural hazards.

Natural hazards that may impact the proposed Urenui and Onaero WWTP site were assessed from the New Plymouth District Council (NPDC) hazard overlays, StoryMap, aerial imagery, and publicly available assessments and reports. The review focused on hazards listed in the RMA and known to impact the Taranaki region, and the locality that the proposed site is situated within. The natural hazards which were assessed include Flooding, Coastal risks, Tsunami, Landslides, Fault lines, Liquefaction, Volcanic, and Atmospheric related hazards.

The proposed WWTP site is not identified as being susceptible to flooding and the inland nature of the site renders it less likely to be affected by coastal risks (such as erosion or tsunami) compared with other more coastal locations. Published information does not identify the site as being affected by slope instability or fault lines and the site is located approximately 7.5km east of the nearest Volcanic Hazard Area, which is located at Waitara. The nearest fault line (the Inglewood Fault) is located approximately 10km southwest of the site. Due to the limitations of published information, this report is unable to quantify liquefaction risk for the proposed WWTP site, although liquefaction damage is recorded as 'being possible' approximately 1km due east of the site. This may (or may not) need to be investigated further during the detailed design stage of the project. The site is not identified as being affected by overland flow paths or flood zones and based on topography and proximity to headwaters, natural flooding is not considered to be a critical hazard. Any risks associated with surface flooding can be addressed at the detailed design stage by ensuring appropriate ground levels for physical infrastructure, and by grading to achieve appropriate drainage.

Overall, and based on the limitations of published material, no natural hazard risks have been identified that would render the proposed WWTP at 'significant risk' for the purposes of s6 of the RMA. In light of this, and through identification of the coastal erosion risks as per the existing situation, the project supports adaptation, resilience, and recovery from natural hazards.

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Section 6: National policy statements and national environmental standards

What is the general assessment of the project in relation to any relevant national policy statement (including the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement) and national environmental standard?

Please write your answer here:

New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement

The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) is a national policy statement under the Resource Management Act 1991 ('the Act'). The purpose of the NZCPS is to state policies in order to achieve the purpose of the Act in relation to the coastal environment of New Zealand. There is clear direction within the NZCPS around avoiding the discharge of human sewage to water in the coastal environment unless (i) there has been adequate consideration of alternative methods, sites and routes for undertaking the discharge; and (ii) informed by an understanding of tangata whenua values and the effects on them (Policy 23). The proposed WWTP and associated infrastructure/system will provide for enhanced water quality of the coastal environment by removing the discharge of contaminants to the coast providing for a wastewater system that discharges treated municipal wastewater to land. Further, coastal hazards will be avoided through the relocation of a new wastewater network away from the coast and areas subject to coastal erosion and other hazards. The Project will be a major shift from the status quo to be consistent with the NZCPS and will achieve sustainable management in relation to the coastal environment.

National Environmental Standard for Sources of Human Drinking Water

The National Environmental Standard for Sources of Human Drinking Water 2007 (NES- DW) sets requirements for protecting sources of human drinking water from becoming contaminated. Contaminants such as microorganisms can pose a risk to human health when they enter drinking water supplies, and that water is then consumed. The NES-DW requires regional councils to ensure that effects of activities on drinking water sources are considered in decisions on resource consents and regional plans.

The proposed works are subject to the provisions NES-DW as the nature of the discharge (being treated wastewater) has the potential to contaminate registered sources of drinking water to greater than 501 people. Regulations 7, 8 and 10 of the NES-DW apply to activities specifically upstream of an abstraction point. The Hydrogeological Assessment will ensure that the Project is consistent with the NES-DW, and where mitigation measures are required, these will be implemented.

Regulation 12 of the NES-DW sets out that when considering a resource consent application, a consent authority must consider whether the activity may lead to an event occurring that may have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the water at any abstraction point; or as a consequence of an event (for example, an unusually heavy rainfall) have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the water at any abstraction point. There are numerous mitigation measures that will be imposed as conditions of consent that will address Regulation 12 of the NES-DW.

National Policy Statement – Fresh Water Management (NPS-FM)

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) supports improved freshwater management in New Zealand by directing Regional Councils to establish objectives and set limits for fresh water in their regional plans.

The intent of the NPS-FM includes prioritisation of the management of the natural and physical resources and has a particular focus on the concept of Te Mana o Te Wai. Te Mana o Te Wai refers to the fundamental importance of water and recognises that protecting the health of freshwater protects the health and wellbeing of the wider environment.

An assessment against the objective and policies of the NPS-FM relevant to this Project is included below.

Objective 1: The objective of this National Policy Statement is to ensure that natural and physical resources are managed in a way that prioritises:

- a) first, the health and well-being of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems
- b) second, the health needs of people (such as drinking water)
- c) third, the ability of people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being, now and in the future.

The Project represents an approach to improving and preserving the surface water quality of waterbodies around Urenui and Onaero communities by transferring the management of wastewater from septic tanks to a centralised treatment facility with controlled discharge of treated wastewater flows to land irrigation (Objective 1(a)). The Groundwater Assessment will ensure that infiltrated wastewater does not migrate towards the public/ individual water supply bores and overall consistency with this objective will be achieved (Objective 1(b)).

This Project also forms part of and provides for a lifeline utility (WWTP) for the communities of Urenui and Onaero. The Project is a long-term solution that will provide for the social and cultural wellbeing of the communities into the future through improved wastewater treatment and management providing for the health and needs of the Urenui and Onaero communities (Objective 1 (c)).

The Project represents a managed approach to improving and preserving the surface water quality of the waterbodies around the communities of Urenui and Onaero by replacing treated wastewater flows from septic tanks (uncontrolled) to a centralised WWTP facility to land irrigation. The physical structures and the irrigation field have avoided the wetland areas so that there is no loss of extent to the wetlands and their values will be protected. The Project does not adversely impact habitats of indigenous freshwater species or the habitat of trout and salmon (Motukara Stream ecology) consistent with Policy 9 and 10. The Project will contribute towards achieving freshwater water quality improvement (i.e. wastewater discharge being transferred from the septic tanks to land irrigation) by providing a long-term solution for the community through improved wastewater treatment and management.

Overall, it is considered that consistency with the NPS-FM will be achieved as part of the project and future recommendations to mitigate potential adverse effects.

National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020 (NES-F)

The NES-F regulates the undertaking of activities that pose risks to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems and rules specifically relate to works in, or adjacent to, wetlands, structures in waterbodies that may impact on fish passage and the diversion or reclamation of water bodies.

The proposed works meet the definition of specified infrastructure in the NPS-FM (Subpart 3 Section 3.21(1)) as the WWTP is a lifeline utility (as defined in the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002). NES-F regulations 45, 46 and 47 apply to the construction, maintenance and operation of specified infrastructure within specified distances of a natural wetland. The Ecology report will identify whether there is a hydrological connection between the project and the adjoining wetlands, and recommendations are expected to ensure that the overall intent of the NES-F will be achieved.

National Policy Statement for Urban Development Capacity 2020

The purpose of National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity 2020 (NPS-UDC) is to ensure local authorities enable development capacity for housing and business – through their land-use planning and infrastructure – so that urban areas can grow and change in response to the needs of their communities.

The NPS-UD outlines the requirements for what an FDS must show and be informed by. Both TRC and NPDC have a statutory responsibility as Tier 2 local authorities to develop and implement an Future Development Strategy for the New Plymouth District.

In response to this, NPDC and TRC have released a draft Future Development Strategy (FDS) for Ngāmotu New Plymouth in April 2024. Its purpose is to promote long term strategic planning by setting out the region will achieve well-functioning urban environments and how it will provide sufficient housing and business development capacity over the next 30 years. The FDS also assists in the integration of planning decisions with infrastructure planning and funding decisions.

The development of the WWTP has the potential to provide for increased growth opportunities within Urenui and Onaero through the provision of resilient infrastructure, consistent with the policy direction to deliver a well-functioning urban environment.

National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2023

The new National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) seeks to ensure the availability of New Zealand's most favourable soils for food and fibre production, now and for future generations. The policy provides direction to improve the way highly productive land is managed. The NPS-HPL exempts activities which address a high risk to public safety, as well as activities where there is a functional or operational need for the use or development to be on the highly productive land, such as the maintenance, operation, upgrade, or expansion of specified infrastructure. As the proposed activity would fit within the above definitions, the activity would be exempt and the policy statement is not applicable.

National Environmental Standard for Assessing and Managing Contaminants in Soil to Protect Human Health 2011

The Preliminary Site Investigation has determined that as no HAIL activities have been identified at the site, the NESCS is not considered to apply. Therefore the project is consistent with the objectives and policies of the NESCS.

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Section 7: Eligibility

Will access to the fast-track process enable the project to be processed in a more timely and cost-efficient way than under normal processes?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The fast-track process will enable the full suite of approvals to be considered through a single process, which will result in a significantly more timely and cost-efficient approval process than under normal processes.

The project requires a suite of district and regional consents as well as designations, and an archaeological authority from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

Under the normal process, the consents and notice of requirement for a designation would be applied at the same or a similar time and would be considered together by independent commissioners. The applications would likely be notified and a public hearing would be held. We estimate that process would take at least a year but more likely 18 months. The commissioners' decision could be appealed to the Environment Court, which would add a further 18 months to get a hearing and a decision (if that process went smoothly). Further High Court appeals (and beyond) are then possible.

An archaeological authority would need to be obtained separately. That decision could also be challenged in the courts.

It is the Council's recent experience that a single, determined, appellant can hold up a major project for many years. The Mt Messenger Bypass project has been subject to considerable delays. It was granted consents and alteration to a designation in 2017 and the litigation is still live in 2024.

Any delays are likely to cause significant increases in costs through both the direct costs of defending court proceedings, but more significantly, construction cost escalation. Delays also mean a longer period whereby the discharges from the existing septic tank systems continue to occur causing public health risks.

The Fast-track approval system would see the full suite of consents, designation, and archaeological authority processes together through a single, efficient hearing and decision-making process. That would significantly reduce the length of time taken to obtain the necessary approvals by several years, if not longer if there are multiple appeals.

What is the impact referring this project will have on the efficient operation of the fast-track process?

Please write your answer here:

The project will not have an adverse impact on the operation of the fast-track process. The reasons for this are:

- The project is at an advanced state of preparation. The suite of applications for the approvals are on track to be ready to be submitted at the same time the Bill is anticipated to be passed into law (ie September/October 2024). Consequently, the project would be able to be referred to an expert panel very shortly after the Bill is passed.

· The project is a 'good news story' which has been developed in partnership with Ngāti Mutunga and its purpose is to clean-up contamination to freshwater caused by failing septic tanks. It is a necessary and large-scale infrastructure project that needs to be completed as soon as possible.

· The potential effects of the project are well understood and capable of management through orthodox conditions for wastewater infrastructure. We anticipate that an expert panel will have little difficulty understanding and then making recommendations about the project.

· In summary, the project is an ideal candidate to be one of the first projects to be processed under the fast-track process.

Has the project been identified as a priority project in a:

Local government plan or strategy

Please explain your answer here:

The Urenui and Onaero Wastewater Project has been identified as a priority project in Council's Draft 24/34 Long Term Plan as well as in the 21/31 Long Term Plan when funding was first approved for the Project.

This project is a significant financial commitment by Council being the highest cost individual capital project in the 24/34 Plan, \$36.98 million over the next 7 years. Anticipated \$8 million spend to the end of 23/24 financial year, including \$5.5 million land purchase. Total \$44.98 million.

Looking at the draft 24/34 Long Term Plans for other Council's in the Taranaki region, (South Taranaki District Council (STDC), Stratford District Council (SDC) and Taranaki Regional Council (TRC)) this project is also the highest cost individual capital project in the region.

Will the project deliver regionally or nationally significant infrastructure?

Regional significant infrastructure

Please explain your answer here:

The Urenui and Onaero Wastewater Project is the highest cost individual capital Council project planned in the Taranaki region for the next 10 years (draft LTP's for NPDC, STDC, SDC, TRC) as discussed in the previous question and is therefore regionally significant infrastructure in terms of financial investment.

The scheme will involve construction of a new state of the art treatment plant with UV disinfection, centre pivot and fixed spray irrigation infrastructure, several pumps stations and a significant pipe network, along with low pressure sewer infrastructure for each residential and commercial property. A multifaceted wastewater scheme of this extent within Taranaki is considered to be a significant infrastructure undertaking.

The scheme provides wastewater infrastructure to four areas, two coastal towns and two domains with campgrounds and holiday homes. The area is a popular holiday spot that has and will continue to accommodate regional, national and international holiday makers.

This project is a first for the region, it's the first time any Taranaki Council has discharged municipal wastewater via irrigation to land, which aligns to national policy to move toward discharge of highly treated wastewater to land rather than to the coast. It is also the first time that low pressure sewer has been utilised in Taranaki for whole townships, which allows major pump stations to be located outside of the Coastal Hazard Zone. This will be a best practice regional example of what can be achieved for future wastewater projects.

In their recent submission on the draft Long Term Plan 2024/34 Ngāti Mutunga identified this project as the priority project for its rohe. Ngāti Mutunga are committed to working in partnership with Council towards the improvement of the environmental condition of the awa and whenua in their Rohe. Because this project is considered a priority project for Ngāti Mutunga Council considered it regionally significant.

Will the project:

increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, contribute to a well-functioning urban environment

Please explain your answer here:

Currently the lack of a reticulated wastewater system in Urenui and Onaero is restricting the ability for growth via infill housing with smaller section sizes. Reliance on septic tank systems requires larger property sizes with very limited ability to subdivide. This limits the ability to increase the supply of housing and provide a range of types of housing and business sites needed for a well-functioning urban environment.

Once the area has wastewater reticulation it will be possible to provide a range of types of housing and business sites and plan for growth. Council's experience with reticulating wastewater in other towns within the district is that growth accelerates once wastewater reticulation is operating.

Providing more residential development in rural settlements like Urenui aligns with Council's Draft Future Development Strategy outcome of providing a variety of housing types, sizes and tenures, including papakāinga, across the district and helps to meet the community's diverse cultural, social, and economic housing and wellbeing needs.

Recent submissions on Council's Draft Future Development Strategy have requested that land within Urenui be rezoned to residential for housing

development, however, these submissions were not supported by Council planners due to infrastructure constraints. If wastewater infrastructure was in place Council planners advised that it would be appropriate to reconsider the zoning of Urenui and Onaero through a district plan change.

Will the project deliver significant economic benefits?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

There are two significant campsites and growing visitor opportunities in North Taranaki, however these are currently hampered by warning notice signs regarding the public health risks associated with using the Urenui River. This is an issue not only for our local people, but also for promotion and growth of visitors to this part of our region. Our region promotes and prides itself on its environment and biodiversity as a point of visitation, and this area is unable to gain the visitor/promotion currently due to the environmental impact of failing septic tank systems and lack of a reticulated wastewater system, particularly in Urenui.

North Taranaki has significantly highly productive land, in particular for horticulture. The region is undertaking a significant land diversification program which includes new growing trials in North Taranaki. Having fit for purpose infrastructure to enable growth and attraction of new business ventures is crucial for economic growth. Venture Taranaki is actively working with producers in Taranaki through their Branching Out Land Diversification project and aim to create 50 new jobs and \$8m of investment to the region.

Will the project support primary industries, including aquaculture?

No

Please explain your answer here:

n/a

Will the project support development of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum?

No

Please explain your answer here:

n/a

Will the project support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The Project supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and opportunities are being explored for further climate change mitigation. Beca have been engaged by NPDC to provide a Capital and Operational Carbon Baseline assessment for the proposed Urenui and Onaero wastewater scheme. The development of a baseline for the Urenui and Onaero wastewater scheme will facilitate a sustainable design by providing insight into potential opportunities to increase energy efficiency during operation and reduce carbon-release during operations and construction. The reduction of carbon emissions was a factor contributing to the proposed treatment and location. This included the differences in whole of life greenhouse gas emissions generated from the construction of the conveyance infrastructure. Opportunities exist to explore the use of low-carbon concrete options or alternate materials such as Glass-Reinforced Plastic (GRP) as concrete substitutes and reduce the use of stainless steel required where possible. Similarly, operational carbon emissions may be reduced through a Build Clever mentality that maximises efficiency and resource recovery onsite. Based on the results of the assessment, opportunities will be considered for the next stage of design.

Overall, the project seeks to support climate change mitigation through exploring opportunities throughout further design stages to understand areas for potential carbon reduction and enable a comparison of improvements to the existing baseline assessment.

Will the project support adaptation, resilience, and recovery from natural hazards?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The WWTP has been designed to provide for adaptive, resilient and recovery outcomes, and as such, has been located to avoid natural hazards.

The current locations of the leach fields both within decommissioned and Onaero, are subject to coastal erosion. As a result, the proposed WWTP and associated infrastructure has been located to be outside of areas susceptible to coastal erosion and flooding associated with climate change. This will avoid potential adverse effects of climate change whilst facilitating sustainable development of the regionally significant infrastructure.

The current discharge field in the Onaero Domain is within an area predicted to be lost to coastal erosion and therefore further development of a septic discharge would not be considered appropriate in that area from the perspective of long-term resilience planning. The Urenui leachfield area is also located within the Coastal Hazard and Flooding Area. These leachfields will be decommissioned as part of the project.

A natural hazards assessment report (Urenui and Onaero Wastewater Treatment Plant - Natural Hazard Assessment Beca) has been undertaken as part of the proposed works. The following is a summary of the existing environment in the context of natural hazards.

Natural hazards that may impact the proposed Urenui and Onaero WWTP site were assessed from the New Plymouth District Council (NPDC) hazard overlays, StoryMap, aerial imagery, and publicly available assessments and reports. The review focused on hazards listed in the RMA and known to impact the Taranaki region, and the locality that the proposed site is situated within. The natural hazards which were assessed include Flooding, Coastal risks, Tsunami, Landslides, Fault lines, Liquefaction, Volcanic, and Atmospheric related hazards.

The proposed WWTP site is not identified as being susceptible to flooding and the inland nature of the site renders it less likely to be affected by coastal risks (such as erosion or tsunami) compared with other more coastal locations. Published information does not identify the site as being affected by slope instability or fault lines and the site is located approximately 7.5km east of the nearest Volcanic Hazard Area, which is located at Waitara. The nearest fault line (the Inglewood Fault) is located approximately 10km southwest of the site. Due to the limitations of published information, this report is unable to quantify liquefaction risk for the proposed WWTP site, although liquefaction damage is recorded as 'being possible' approximately 1km due east of the site. This may (or may not) need to be investigated further during the detailed design stage of the project. The site is not identified as being affected by overland flow paths or flood zones and based on topography and proximity to headwaters, natural flooding is not considered to be a critical hazard. Any risks associated with surface flooding can be addressed at the detailed design stage by ensuring appropriate ground levels for physical infrastructure, and by grading to achieve appropriate drainage.

Overall, and based on the limitations of published material, no natural hazard risks have been identified that would render the proposed WWTP at 'significant risk' for the purposes of s6 of the RMA. In light of this, and through identification of the coastal erosion risks as per the existing situation, the project supports adaptation, resilience, and recovery from natural hazards.

Will the project address significant environmental issues?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The new wastewater scheme will address significant environmental contamination issues including contamination of the Urenui River which is a treasured taonga and resource of Ngāti Mutunga iwi and the wider community, as well as being a statutory acknowledgement area.

The existing contamination of waterways is a significant environmental issue, given the needs of the local communities with the waterways and surrounding landscapes. Protection of the natural character, amenity, cultural and recreational values all contribute to the need for the establishment of a future wastewater solution. The on-site wastewater systems (septic tanks) and onsite wastewater discharge (soakage trench systems) are creating significant adverse environmental and public health effects, in terms of water quality and public health. The future of the coastal environments is therefore heavily reliant on the sustainable management of a reticulated wastewater network and related infrastructure.

In August 2019, sewage contamination was found in two waterways (the modified stream and the Ngakoti Street stormwater network), in the lower Urenui Township, discharging into the Urenui Estuary. Further investigations found four significant contamination sources, including discharges into the Ngakoti Street stormwater network and the Whakapaki Street modified stream. Despite efforts to eliminate identified sources, further investigations in 2022 detected ongoing contamination of the affected waterways. The presence of faecal matter is considered most likely due to cumulative effects of septic tank discharges infiltrating underground drainage pipes and adjacent surface water bodies, potentially via shallow groundwater in some areas. It has been considered that wastewater contamination in Urenui would not be eliminated without fundamental changes to the treatment and disposal of wastewater.

A public health risk assessment carried out by Te Whatu Ora, recommended the avoidance of consumption of shellfish collected from within the Urenui estuary and recreational activities in the mudflat area (adjacent to lower township). More recently, Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga reviewed its rāhui on the Urenui river and aligned it with the latest public health advice from Te Whatu Ora.

Recent bacteriological sampling of the Urenui and Onaero Domains indicated E.coli concentrations, with the Urenui levels being higher than historical medians, and Onaero levels being similar to historical medians. The E.coli concentrations at Onaero upstream and downstream sites were above the MfE 'Alert' level and the MfE 'Action' level for freshwater, respectively.

Furthermore, NPDC is currently under Abatement Notices EAC-23206 and EAC-23207 due to exceedances of wastewater volumes discharged to the soakage trenches at Onaero and Urenui Domains. As a result, occupancy rates have been reduced in attempt to comply with consent conditions.

The current situation presents issues for growth in relation to the townships of both Urenui and Onaero. While not the only factor determining the density of growth, the provision of reticulated wastewater would theoretically allow for increased density due to increased capacity as well as providing for increased infill development where onsite soakage is not required.

Overall, environmental issues include the degradation of water quality, public health, natural character, amenity, cultural and recreational values pertaining to the existing wastewater system. The project seeks to resolve these issues through the sustainable development of a long-term wastewater solution.

Is the project consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

New Plymouth District Plan

The New Plymouth Proposed District Plan Appeals Version (PDP) was released on 14 September 2023. Some provisions of the Plan are subject to an appeal. For the purposes of this assessment, it is considered that the timing of this application will align with all appeals being resolved. Therefore, no assessment has been made against the Operative District Plan.

With regards to the PDP, the project has been assessed in relation to relevant objectives and policies. In particular, the relevant Strategic Objectives, which address key strategic matters for the district are identified as historic and cultural, infrastructure and energy, natural environment, rural environment, tangata whenua and urban form and development. The project will recognise and protect the heritage and cultural values whilst providing for a well-functioning and resilient natural environment which provides for the social, economic and cultural well-being of communities and for the needs of future generations. Tangata whenua are partners of the project and their participation will be ongoing throughout the project. The new infrastructure will provide for community needs whilst minimising environmental impacts. Overall, it is considered that the project will be consistent with the strategic objectives, and their corresponding policies within the PDP.

Taranaki Spatial Strategy

Despite the Spatial Planning Act (2023) being repealed, the Taranaki region is exploring opportunities to develop a Regional Spatial Plan to provide a consistent and coherent plan for future development and environmental protection. A spatial plan has the potential to identify growth areas, infrastructure corridors, environmentally significant areas to protect and areas at risk from natural hazards and climate change. With regards to the WWTP, a spatial plan can provide for coordinated growth and planning around upgraded infrastructure to deliver sustainable outcomes. NPDC have been preparing a Future Development Strategy for their district. This is required as part of the National Policy Statement for Urban Development (2020) and identifies locations for urban growth and critical infrastructure. This strategy has not yet been adopted, but it is understood Council officers have recommended the inclusion of this project within the FDS, given it will enable urban growth in the townships.

Taranaki Regional Policy Statement

The operative Regional Policy Statement (RPS) for Taranaki became operative on 1 January 2010. The objectives and policies within the Taranaki Operative Regional Policy Statement that relate to this Project relate to the Use and Development of Resources, Healthy Soils, Hazardous Substances, Surface Water Quality, Groundwater, Wetlands, Air Quality, Treaty of Waitangi, Kaitiakitanga and Recognising and Providing for the Relationship of Māori with Ancestral Lands, Water, Sites, Wāhi Tapu and other Taonga.

Overall, the Project will be consistent with the relevant RPS objectives and policies. Where there are potential inconsistencies, mitigation will be recommended to ensure consistency is achieved.

Taranaki Regional Freshwater Plan

The purpose of the Taranaki Regional Freshwater Plan is to promote the sustainable management of the freshwater resources of the Taranaki region. The Plan identifies how the freshwater resources of the region (both surface water and groundwater) are to be managed. The Project will enable the establishment and operation of a long-term, resilient wastewater treatment system for the growing Urenui and Onaero communities. Providing for the reliable and effective management and treatment of wastewater will subsequently protect the amenity and ecological values of freshwater in the district by avoiding the discharge of contaminants into these ecosystems. The ongoing operation and maintenance of the proposed system will ensure potential adverse effects are avoided or mitigated.

Overall, the Project will be consistent with the relevant RFP objectives and policies including the protection and enhancement of natural, ecological and amenity values, recognising and providing for iwi and hapu of Taranaki and their culture, tapu and other taonga, transitional policies – NPS on Freshwater Management, Water Quality and Natural Inland Wetlands. Consistent with the NPS-FM, the project will also contribute towards the achievement of swimmable rivers and lakes for the Taranaki region. Taranaki Regional Air Quality Plan.

The purpose of the Taranaki Regional Air Quality Plan is to promote the sustainable management of the air resource of the Taranaki region. As a “waste management process”, the activity will be assessed in relation to contaminants and effects, the protection of the air resource (taonga) and wāhi tapu from the intrusion of odour or visual, discharge of contaminants to air from waste management processes and the discharge of contaminants to air from site development, earthworks or the application of soil conditioners.

Overall, the Project will be consistent with the relevant RQAP objectives and policies. Where there are potential inconsistencies, mitigation will be recommended to ensure consistency is achieved.

Taranaki Regional Soil Plan

The Regional Soil Plan for Taranaki seeks to manage effects of soil and vegetation disturbance, as well as soil health as a result of inappropriate land management practices. The project will ensure that sustainable land management practices which control the adverse effects of soil and vegetation disturbance, and the use of the soil for disposal and treatment will be subject to robust land management conditions to ensure the purpose of the RSP is achieved.

The Proposed Natural Resources Plan for Taranaki

The proposed Natural Resources Plan for Taranaki will replace and integrate the Regional Policy Statement and three regional plans for managing soil, discharges to land, freshwater and air. The Council is currently in the early engagement and drafting stages of the Plan.

Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki

The Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki sets out the rules around using and protecting Taranaki's coastal marine area, setting legally enforceable rules for structures, disturbances, discharges, and the taking of natural resources and the protections for surf breaks, native marine biodiversity, taonga species, archaeological sites, sites of historic significance to Taranaki iwi, areas with outstanding natural character and areas popular for fishing, bird watching, swimming and walking.

Given the proposed WWTP and associated infrastructure/system will provide for enhanced water quality of the coastal environment by removing the discharge of contaminants to the coast and implementing a wastewater system that discharges treated municipal wastewater to land. This aligns with the clear policy direction within the Regional Coastal Plan that aims to eliminate untreated human sewage discharges to coastal waters. Further, coastal hazards will be avoided through the relocation of a new wastewater network away from the coast and areas subject to coastal erosion and other hazards. Overall, it is considered that the Project will be consistent with the NZCPS and any potential adverse effects can be appropriately avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Anything else?

Please write your answer here:

The project is a 'good news story' which has been developed in partnership with Ngāti Mutunga and its purpose is to clean-up contamination to freshwater caused by failing septic tanks. It is a necessary and large-scale infrastructure project that needs to be completed as soon as possible..

Does the project includes an activity which would make it ineligible?

No

If yes, please explain:

Section 8: Climate change and natural hazards

Will the project be affected by climate change and natural hazards?

No

If yes, please explain:

Section 9: Track record

Please add a summary of all compliance and/or enforcement actions taken against the applicant by any entity with enforcement powers under the Acts referred to in the Bill, and the outcome of those actions.

Please write your answer here:

NPDC is itself a regulatory body with compliance and enforcement obligations under the Resource Management Act 1991 and a range of other legislation. The Council is responsible (and accountable) to its community and ratepayers in all of its functions.

NPDC is a highly responsible operator. It is also the sole body responsible for the provision of wastewater services under the Local Government Act 2002 in New Plymouth District.

However, as explained above, the genesis of this project relates to non-compliance with the Coastal Plan for Taranaki 2023 of the Council's discharge of stormwater at Urenui. The source of non-compliance is failed septic tank systems within the Urenui catchment. Whilst not known at the time of installation, the soil and property size are not suitable for septic tank systems used in the communities of Urenui and Onaero.

The septic tank systems are not owned by the Council. However, the discharges from the septic tank systems are contaminating the Council's stormwater. In September 2019, Te Whatu Ora advised the Council that the stormwater contamination in Urenui township is causing a public health risk. Council has been working with TRC, Ngāti Mutunga, and Te Whatu Ora to address this risk.

In addition, the leachfields that take the wastewater from the Urenui and Onaero domains and campgrounds have flows that exceed consent limits. Abatement notices have been issued by Taranaki Regional Council in relation to these discharges.

The project would remedy the non-compliances and public health risk by creating a reticulated wastewater system for Urenui and Onaero communities.

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Declaration

Do you acknowledge your submission will be published on environment.govt.nz if required

Yes

By typing your name in the field below you are electronically signing this application form and certifying the information given in this application is true and correct.

Please write your name here:

Lucy Rock

Important notes