



New Zealand. A Valuable Body of Water.

Plentiful, clean water is a valuable part of New Zealand's heritage. Our rivers and lakes provide us with water for drinking, for irrigation, for energy and for recreation and tourism. Water has cultural values and is the jewel of our environment.

While most New Zealanders have enviable access to water compared with other countries, demands on our freshwater in some regions are increasing and, in many cases, exceeding what is available or sustainable. Water quality, particularly in lowland streams, is also declining.

It is important that we determine how to fairly use, protect and preserve water. Given the range of interests and values in water, it is important to manage water fairly, efficiently and sustainably for the future. This is why the Government has embarked on the Sustainable Water Programme of Action. Coordinated by the Ministries for the Environment and Agriculture and Forestry, this Programme was established in 2003 as part of the Government's Sustainable Development Programme of Action.

In 2005, the Government held meetings and hui throughout New Zealand to discuss the problems facing water management, and to identify possible solutions. While a diverse range of interests and views was expressed, some common themes emerged. People want to see:

- greater strategic planning for water, nationally and regionally
- clearer direction and guidance from central government
- greater consistency in the way increasing demands on water resources are managed across the country
- a better framework for deciding between conflicting demands for water
- more effective Māori participation in water management

- better management of the impacts of diffuse discharges¹ on water quality.

Drawing on this feedback, the Government approved a package of actions to be discussed and developed.

OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAMME

Three national outcomes for freshwater have been identified; these are to:

- improve the quality and efficient use of freshwater by building and enhancing partnerships with local government, industry, Māori, science agencies and providers, and rural and urban communities
- improve management of the undesirable effects of land-use on water quality through increased national direction and partnerships with communities and resource users
- provide for increasing demands on water resources and encourage efficient water management through increased national direction, working with local government on options for supporting and enhancing local decision-making, and developing best practice.

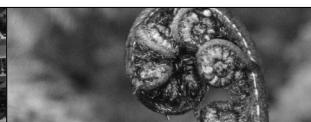
INITIATIVES UNDER THE PROGRAMME

Actions to be undertaken are to:

- develop agreed targets for land-uses that impact on water quality, in consultation with local government and primary sector industries
- consider the potential value of and options for a national policy statement on nutrients and microbial contaminants and sediment²
- scope and draft a national policy statement on managing increasing demands for water
- scope and draft a national environmental standard for methods and devices for measuring water take and use

1 A diffuse discharge is any general discharge or seepage (either over or under ground) of water-borne material which is not from any readily identifiable point.

2 National policy statements state objectives and policies for matters of national significance. National environmental standards are legally enforceable regulations that provide a standard to be applied nationally.



- scope and draft a national environmental standard on methods for establishing environmental flows
- investigate current practices and develop enhanced methods for transferring water consents (resource consents allowing users to take and use water from a given location) to other locations in the same catchment
- raise public awareness about the value of freshwater to New Zealand and New Zealanders through a national campaign.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROGRAMME

Key principles guiding development and implementation of the Sustainable Water Programme of Action include:

- water will continue to be managed as a public resource
- regional government will continue to have primary responsibility under the Resource Management Act
- resource users will be encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and will be given the flexibility to develop appropriate solutions
- community involvement and confidence in decision-making processes will be maximised, building on the opportunities for participation in the regional planning process.

Actions to improve water management will be investigated, developed and/or implemented over the next two years. Addressing water management asks for a long term approach and the Government welcomes input from all those with an interest in water.

WATER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



New Zealand.
A valuable body
of water.

Our bodies are two-thirds water, and just as we rely on it to survive, so too does our country.



This image is one of a series used for a national water awareness campaign. The three-year campaign is a partnership between central and regional government. The campaign aims to get people thinking about the importance of water to New Zealand, and to every New Zealander.

Research has shown us that New Zealanders largely take water for granted. Changing demands and increasing pressures on water makes it one of the core environmental issues facing the country.

The campaign sets the scene for New Zealanders to think about the way we manage water. It supports key government initiatives like the Sustainable Water Programme of Action and local programmes.

To find out more please visit www.4million.org.nz

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

You can contact the **Ministry for the Environment** by phoning (04) 439 7400, emailing information@mfe.govt.nz, writing to PO Box 10362, Wellington, or see our website: www.mfe.govt.nz