

**SUBMISSION ON PROPOSAL FOR NATIONAL POLICY
STATEMENT
FOR
FRESHWATER MANAGEMENT**

Section 49 of the Resources Management Act 1991

FROM:- THE GUARDIANS OF LAKE WANAKA

***TO: The Chairperson,
Board of Inquiry***

Introduction – The Guardians of Lake Wanaka

The Guardians of Lake Wanaka are a body established under The Lake Wanaka Preservation Act 1973, to advise the Minister of Conservation over several matters, including... *“Maintaining and improving (where possible) the quality of the water in the Lake”*. The Guardians and the Otago Regional Authority are required to liaise with each other over matters which may affect the Lake.

The Guardians are appointed by the Minister of Conservation, who also appoints the Chairman. One member (denoted with a * below) is nominated by Te Rununga o Ngai Tahu to represent their interests. The current Guardians are:-

- Peter Hook (Chairman)
- David Knowles
- Russell McGeorge
- Andrew Panniket
- Taare Bradshaw*

Our Submission:

Our submission is that we **oppose** the proposed National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS) **in its entirety**.

We consider the subject National Policy Statement to be a poor document that is likely to do little to assist or improve the performance of Regional Authorities in ensuring that New Zealand's fresh waters are managed wisely for the benefit of present and future generations.

New Zealand has been called *a Land of Water [Ref #2]* on account of the number of rivers and lakes in the country and the iconic nature of many of them for both New Zealanders and visitors. In comparison with freshwaters in many other parts of the world, our freshwaters have an international reputation for being pristine and largely un-contaminated. However, many are under threat from continuing development, intensive agriculture, industrial discharges and a growing population. It is now critical to put national policies in place to halt the degradation of our freshwaters, to encourage remediation of degraded notable freshwaters and to enable us to provide

responsible stewardship of the resource for future generations. We do not consider that the proposed NPS will achieve this.

We are disappointed that the NPS which was projected to be an output of the Government's *Sustainable Water Programme of Action* in the 2004-05 financial year, has taken so long to be released, and provides so little to address what has become an urgent national issue.

Under the Resource Management Act, regional councils have a strong mandate to look after our freshwaters and this is clearly a public expectation of regional councils. Unfortunately, the councils appear to have focussed more on the use of our fresh water resources than on their protection and they appear to have achieved little in terms of control of the growing problem of diffused source pollution. We are not aware of regulations established by regional councils that set specific pollution loading limits on water bodies, or which set specific water quality standards that must be met by land and water users. Situations abound where intensive land uses have been allowed in sensitive catchments.

In our opinion, the subject NPS does not address these issues in a practical or effective manner.

Our specific concerns with the NPS include:-

1. The NPS is issued under the general framework of the RMA. As such it should support the RMA by providing the specific quantitative scientific measures and standards necessary for managing and controlling our freshwaters to achieve scientifically defined states of water quality to meet the public's expectations.

However, the NPS released for public consultation is all words - and loose politicised "feel good" words at that. The NPS provides no definitions of terms used, and there is not one quantitative measure or standard in the document.

2. The NPS devolves responsibility to each regional authority in the country to establish their own set of criteria, standards, loading limits etc. This will be a huge and expensive task, with of the order of 100 authorities required to establish their local requirements under the NPS. This was a major defect of the Resource Management Act itself, and should not be repeated at the NPS level.
3. The devolution of responsibility to each regional authority to establish their own set of criteria, standards, loading limits etc., will inevitably lead to uneven standards across the country.
4. There are no overarching national water quality and use criteria or standards established in the document. This seems inconceivable given our pride in our "Clean Green" image, the public's expectations concerning the maintenance of high water quality, the growing public concern over the allocation of water and future water availability, and the fact that much of our tourism depends on the purity and pristine nature of our water bodies.
5. The implementation of the NPS will be far too slow. It will take years for all authorities in New Zealand to act on the devolved responsibilities in the NPS, during which time water qualities are likely to degrade further from their condition today.

6. The NPS's objective of having the water quality of our freshwaters meet the publics' expectations by 2035 is not adequate or appropriate. This is some 27 years, (or more than a generation) away, and we must move much faster to preserve or improve the water quality of our freshwaters. In Europe, 2015 is the enforceable deadline!
7. The proposed NPS would require communities to apply to their local authorities to have any degraded "outstanding freshwaters" restored to high quality, and must demonstrate that the value of these waters for community purposes outweighs the economic gain from leaving them in their degraded state.

This is the reverse of the approach that should be adopted. The public should be able to rely on the local authorities safeguarding and improving water quality, and any party wanting to use waters in a manner that degrades their quality should be required to do the demonstrating that the proposed loss of quality is not detrimental to the community's interests.

8. The NPS fails to address in any direct or substantial manner the pressing issues of fresh water ownership, governance and allocation, despite the current situation where many catchments in the South Island, are either over-allocated or are close to being over-allocated. It is unbelievable that a National Policy Statement on freshwater does not address these difficult national topics and leaves these matters to be addressed by regional authorities on a case by case basis.


We seek the following changes to the NPS:

Complete revision of the proposed NPS to:

1. Establish over-arching national water quality and use standards based on European practice and experience. In particular the Danish approach seems particularly relevant and appropriate for New Zealand (Ref #1).
2. Establish quantitative policies that can be adopted by regional authorities rapidly to meet a deadline of 2020.
3. Provide national freshwater policies on:-
 - a. Water ownership
 - b. Water governance
 - c. Water allocation

We wish to be heard in support of our submission

For the Guardians of Lake Wanaka



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Peter Hook, Chair
Guardians of Lake Wanaka

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References

- #1 "*European Case Study*" – European policy measures to reduce nutrient loadings from catchments to freshwaters and groundwater and their effects – using agricultural Denmark as a key example. Paper by Dr Erik Jeppesen and Brian Kronvang, National Institute, Aarhus University, Silkeborg, Denmark to the Lakes Water Quality Society Rotorua Seminar, 12&13 August 2008
- #2 "*A Land of Water – Rivers & Lakes of New Zealand*" by Pamela & Russell McGeorge, published by David Bateman Ltd, New Zealand, 2007