The Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board has powers bestowed upon it via Section 6n of the Conservation Act 1987

4. Board Functioning

4.2. Powers of the Board under Section 6n of the Conservation Act

8) a) Advocate its interests at any public forum or in any statutory planning process

The Board has included in all its most recent annual plans provision to participate in decision making via written and oral submissions, should the need arise, with particular emphasis on our rohe.

Freshwater quality, its impact on our river catchments, habitats and fisheries and the effects on our coastal marine environment are areas of concern and have been priorities for TWCB for many years via annual plans and CMS internal reviews.

The 2019-2020 Letter of expectation from the Minister of Conservation also explicitly mentions, addressing the crisis of declining indigenous biodiversity and improve the protection of freshwater habitats and the marine environment as ministerial priorities for Conservation Boards to focus on for the year.

The Department of Conservation functions, “to preserve so far as practicable all indigenous freshwater fisheries and protect recreational freshwater fisheries and freshwater fish habitats”.

Taranaki–Whanganui Conservation Board | Private Bag 3072, Hamilton 3240 | Phone 07 838 5685
In summary our submission;

**TWCB strongly support**

- The concept of Te Mana o te Wai
- New Maori value and new threatened species values
- Interactions and alignment between National Environmental Standards for Freshwater, (NES-FW) the Draft National Policy Statement for Freshwater (NPS-FW) and The Essential Freshwater: Action for Healthy Waterways (AHW) document
- The RMA reviews to align policy
- Ecosystem Health Attributes

**TWCB supports** the direction of the freshwater reforms, however we have **some concerns**

- National standards - enforcement
- Exceptions for hydropower schemes
- Evidence that all the new legislation, across multiple ministries will align and provide for integrated management
- Ability of Regional Councils to meet the requirements in their own planning, policies and staffing capacity and capability
- The ability of District and City councils to integrate/reflect the same requirements into District Plan and other legal instruments
- Lack of Community conversations on impacts and their ability to assist in restoration of waterways, wetlands and habitats.

**National Standards:**

The NPS-FW needs to have strong national bottom lines with policy documentation and timeframes that align. We agree with National Standards for freshwater but are hearing concerns from some of the sectors in our rohe. For example:

- Farmers concerns about meeting the standards- Large dry stock lands that have multiple waterways requiring planting and fencing is, in their words, a costly and a potentially prohibitive exercise.
- Dairy farmers concern around extra cost of farm management plans
- TRC concerns about implementing the standards and the extra costs to employ staff, write the documentation, enforce the plans and engage with environmental groups in regional processes. (They have also voiced some concerns with the technology touted to monitor the new proposals, namely- OVERSEER
- The potential extra demands on iwi/hapū will be significant; relationships between iwi/hapū and councils will elevate to a level that will require stronger and more robust partnerships than ever before
- The ability to have ongoing feedback – we are hearing that the proposals feel like a great ‘big stick’ with very few ‘carrots’ or incentives to assist land-based industry to adjust to the new proposals.
TWCB supports the National Standards, however central government needs to ensure that policy interactions are robust, aligned and integrated, ie: giving support to Biodiversity strategy, and the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity. Align the RMA national direction. TWCB support mandatory farm environmental management plans, however, must also ensure the concerns of citizens in our rohe are voiced in our submissions.

TWCB submit that there needs to be a financial and management resource available for regional alignment to the national standards available for all partners and future community partners.

Hydropower Schemes

We continue to hear and experience concerns raised by local communities about the depletion of downstream environmental values of Te Awa Whanganui catchment due to the hydro power scheme that draws water from its headwaters.

TWCB is opposed to exceptions for Hydro Schemes and submits that companies currently enjoying long term consents continue to work with kaitiaki, communities and government to meet their obligations, including the proposed freshwater standards, national policy statements.

Ecosystem Health Attributes

TWCB strongly supports the concepts of ecosystem health, aquatic life, habitat protection, wetland and stream protection, fish passage, water quality, and water quantity issues. The zoning of catchments allows targeting of catchments bringing a focus of efforts to those areas at most risk. We trust that greater scrutiny to those areas will emphasise restoration needs.

Te Mana o te Wai

Community Conversations

The ability of ‘people power’ to engender change and to actually participate in the proposed changes, should not be underestimated. This has most recently been demonstrated by our tamariki and rangatahi on a global scale with their ‘Climate Change’ activism.

It will be part of a new future where communities take back responsibility for the health and wellbeing of their local environments- for any of these proposals to work for short and long term we need all the people of New Zealand to have a defined role.

We are reminded of the Whanganui whakataukī...
Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au
‘I am the river; the river is me’....
TWCB strongly supports the concept of Te Mana o te Wai, where the priority is the health of the water followed by human health needs and finally by consumptive uses. An intergenerational approach strengthens this concept.

We think there is a major opportunity to engage, empower and employ local communities to bring back and restore the mana of local waterways and habitats in a connected, resourced and meaningful way.

TWCB supports the proposal to incorporate Maori values in freshwater management and planning, as these values will be integral to recognising Te Mana o te Wai. Proposals one and two together will ensure that tangata whenua values of mahinga kai and kaitiaki duties hold weight and are recognised in the processes of freshwater management.

Chairperson
Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board