

Science and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) Meeting

Minutes

Thursday 18 October 2018 10am-5pm, Thorndon 1 Room, Terrace Conference Centre, Levels 2-4, St John House, 114 The Terrace.

Attendees: STAG: Ken Taylor – Chair; Dr Bryce Cooper; Dr Clive Howard-Williams; Dr Chris Daughney; Dr Bev Clarkson; Graham Sevicke-Jones; Prof. Ian Hawes; Prof. Jenny Webster-Brown; Dr Joanne Clapcott; Dr Jon Roygard; Dr Marc Schallenberg; Ra Smith (11am onwards); Prof. Russell Death; **Ministry for the Environment (MfE) officials:** Lucy Bolton; Jo Burton; Nik Andic; Ton Snelder; Vicky Addison; Jen Price; Helli Ward; Kirsten Forsyth; Oscar Montes De Oca Munguia (afternoon)

Friday 19 October 2018 9am-3pm, Ahumairangi Room (1C), MfE, 23 Kate Sheppard Place, Thorndon.

Attendees: STAG: Ken Taylor – Chair; Dr Bryce Cooper; Dr Clive Howard-Williams; Dr Chris Daughney; Dr Bev Clarkson; Prof. Ian Hawes; Prof. Jenny Webster-Brown; Dr Joanne Clapcott; Dr Jon Roygard; Dr Marc Schallenberg; Dr Mike Joy (11am onwards); Ra Smith; Prof. Russell Death (morning); **MfE officials:** Lucy Bolton; Jo Burton; Nik Andic; Ton Snelder; Vicky Addison; Jen Price; Helli Ward; Kirsten Forsyth; Stephen Fragazsy; Carl Howarth

Apologies: Dr Adam Canning; Dr Dan Hikuroa

Items: Thursday 18 October

1. Welcome and introductions from Vicky Robertson – Secretary for the Environment, MfE, Martin Workman – Director – Water, MfE, Hon David Parker – Minister for the Environment

Introductions were made about the work programme and the group's role. The Minister talked about the role of science in informing policy and resolving controversy, and about areas of focus in the current Essential Freshwater programme such as sediment, wetlands and estuaries.

2. Terms of Reference (TOR), working with Freshwater Leaders Group and Kahui Wai Māori

The Terms of Reference were discussed, particularly in relation to confidentiality and working with the other advisory groups. Officials were asked to clarify these points in the TOR. There was discussion around the scope of the group being focussed on biophysical science, but also being informed by kaupapa Māori approaches.

Outcome: Officials will present an updated version of the TOR to the group

3. Te Mana o te Wai

MfE staff outlined the concept of Te Mana o te Wai as an overarching concept for the NPS-FM. There was discussion on how to integrate Te Mana o te Wai into a biophysical framework.

4. NPS overview

MfE staff gave a presentation on the NPS-FM and how it works by directing regional plans. Limits are placed on resource use to achieve freshwater objectives.

5. Discussion on NPS-FM

MfE staff provided an outline of the feedback received on the NPS-FM by Fish & Game NZ, Land and Water Forum, and others. It was noted that MfE was prioritising addressing this feedback.

6. At-Risk Catchments update

MfE staff gave a presentation on the progress to date of the At-Risk Catchments programme.

Outcome: The group agreed it would be useful for officials to give a summary of the latest water quality state and trends work, recently commissioned by MfE.

NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY

Items: Friday 19 October

7. Summary of previous day and introduction

The Chair reiterated some of the broad themes from Minister's talk, then referred to the Essential Freshwater work programme document, and highlighted its timeline with key themes, encompassing regulatory changes as well as work on at-risk catchments. He discussed the work programme of STAG as being focussed on testing and advising on scientific aspects of the NPS-FM.

Outcome: MfE officials were asked to provide more information on the forward work programme and schedule of meeting goals.

8. Different options for managing stressors (e.g. attributes, guidance, rules, NES)

MfE staff presented an overview of the function of attributes within the NPS-FM and how the intervention logic works by limiting resource use. This mechanism may not be suitable for some stressors such as pest plants and animals, but that other approaches could be required. Restoration is another example where other approaches might be necessary. The group was asked to consider other approaches than attributes, but it was noted that the group wasn't expected to make decisions around which regulatory mechanism would work best – that is the job of the policy analysts. There was discussion on these subjects.

9. Evidence requirements for policy development

MfE staff discussed the criteria that were applied to the existing attributes developed in the National Objectives Framework. A key point is that NPS attributes are compulsory, which has driven the need for due diligence to ensure that attributes can be applied nationally. MfE staff outlined the regulatory impact statement process that Cabinet needs to go through to change any regulations. There was discussion about the criteria and how they might be applied going forward, the situations in which they are suitable, and how they relate to the precautionary principle. There was discussion on the potential alternatives to attributes, such as guidance, and where they might be suitable. The role of STAG is to provide science advice that informs policy development, there needs to then be an iterative process where policy staff report back on progress. The definition of "maintain or improve" was noted as a topic requiring further discussion.

Outcome: The criteria will be framed as things that need to be considered, rather than strict decision gates. The definition of "maintain or improve" will be discussed further at a future meeting.

10. Ecosystem Health Framework

MfE staff summarised the Biophysical Ecosystem Health Framework report.

Discussion focussed on the importance of reference conditions, how mauri fits into the Framework, and application of the Framework as part of the NPS-FM. STAG members discussed potentially contributing to consistent ways to aggregate and harmonise data, how to make the framework nationally applicable, and how to apply the Framework to the NPS-FM.

Outcome: Statement from group: We are comfortable with the five components of the Ecosystem Health Framework to proceed with further work, noting that there is a caveat around Te Mana o te Wai and Maori views which are not measured directly by the framework, and that the Framework specifies that measurements must make comparisons to a defined reference state.

Additional agenda item: Brief introductions from Alison Dewes and Corina Jordan from Freshwater Leaders Group (FLG)

11. Wetlands update

MfE staff gave a brief update about wetlands to signal future work, and the management of wetlands was briefly discussed.

Outcome: It was flagged that this topic is to be discussed further at a subsequent meeting.

12. Sediment

MfE staff gave a presentation about the attribute development. There was discussion about the methods used to develop the draft attributes. New work will ensure consistency and comparability of classifications so that thresholds from different lines of evidence align, are comparable and have robust and transparent information behind them. This work will be discussed with STAG at future meetings.

Outcome: The group will focus on sediment further at future meetings and MfE staff will provide worked examples to assist.

13. Summary

The chair summarised the meeting and outlined potential agenda items for 29 November: current state and trends, sediment, wetlands, maintain or improve.

Not government policy