



4 February 2014

Mackenzie Guardians Inc.

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Submission on National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management

The Society appreciates the opportunity to make this submission on the proposed amendments to the NPS for Freshwater Management.

Mackenzie Guardians Inc. is a community group which was formed in response to a large number of applications to take, use and discharge water in the Mackenzie Basin. Mackenzie Guardians became an Incorporated Society in October 2009. Members of the Society live in the Mackenzie region, and throughout New Zealand.

The objectives of the Society are to:

Promote the protection of the naturalistic wildlife, water, vegetation, heritage and landscape values of the Mackenzie Country.

Water quality is one of the most important environmental issues facing New Zealand today. As a result of intensive farming in Canterbury, water quality has been deteriorating at an alarming rate. There is an urgent need for freshwater reforms and the Society welcomes the National Policy Statement (NPS FW).

Our main concern with the proposed amendments is that the bottom lines set are inadequate and do not provide assurance that fresh water quality/quantity in our lakes, rivers and aquifers will be maintained or improved.

Mackenzie Guardians believe the proposals will result in the further decline in the state and character of our waterways.

This submission addresses some of the questions seeking feedback.

4.1 Accounting for water quality and quality

6. Agree councils be required to account for all water takes
7. Agree councils be required to account for all sources of contaminants.

4.2 National Objectives Framework (NOF)

Values

10. Agree there should be a national set of values but Objective A1 does not go far enough.
11. Request **swimming** in all lakes and rivers, is included in the list of compulsory values. Swimming, without the risk of infection, is important to Mackenzie Guardians. Enjoying the experience of swimming, boating and fishing in clean rivers and lakes is fundamental to New Zealanders. It is a significant part of our heritage and an experience we must protect for present and future generations. It is also important that overseas visitors can enjoy a 'clean water' experience in NZ. This is an important landscape attribute.

Additional National Values (page 65)

Support the inclusion of the "*Natural form and character*" value to recognise the importance of such attributes at all scales. As the smell and sound of water are often important attributes, we seek that "*iconic visual features*" be replaced with "*iconic aesthetic features*" as "aesthetic" addresses all the senses, not the visual alone.

Attributes

Ecological health

14. Agree with narrative and numerical attributes stated in Appendix 2. but do not agree with the weak bottom lines set for each attribute state.
15. and 16. Request attribute A be set as the bottom line for the ecological health of both **rivers and lakes** for impacts by chlorophyll, nitrogen, phosphorous, ammonia and dissolved oxygen.

The current limit which allows ecological communities to be put at a moderate to high risk of contamination, and a moderate to high impact from dissolved oxygen, is unacceptable.

Include a limit on sediment to protect ecosystem health and waterway character.

Include Macro-invertebrate Community index surveys as an important indicator of river and lake health.

Include **clarity** and **periphyton** cover as an important indicator of river and lake health.

Human health

Request attribute A be set for narrative and numerical attributes for human health stated in Appendix 2. As well as ecoli and cyanobacteria, include other forms of

bacterial contamination which may endanger human health. Mackenzie Guardians support any further recommendations to the NPS (FW) from Public Health officials.

A limit which poses a human health risk from the effects of ecoli, cyanobacteria, and other chemical/bacterial pollutants is unacceptable.

4.3. Compulsory values and national bottom lines

25. The Society agrees ecosystem health should be a compulsory value.

26. The Society agrees that human health for secondary contact recreation should be a compulsory value.

27. The Society requests **swimming** be included, along with 'boating and wading', as a compulsory value.

4.4 National bottom lines

Questions in section 4.4. have been addressed above. In broad terms the bottom lines are too weak and need strengthening.

4.5 Exceptions to national bottom lines

The proposed exceptions regime is too permissive. With such a flexible regime, the potential for development which cannot meet the NPS (FW) bottom lines to then resort to using the exception clause, is too great. Such an exemption clause will permit economic development to proceed at the expense of the environment.

Existing infrastructure which cannot meet bottom lines should have consents reviewed and mechanisms found to improve water quality and quantity breaches.

If economic benefits can only be realised by breaching bottom lines then the objectives of the NPS (FW) will not be realised and freshwater will continue to degrade.

Section 4.7 Monitoring

41. Agree with the new section requiring monitoring plans. Monitoring is vital for the management of the freshwater resource.

Request at least two monitoring sites for each Freshwater Management Unit.

Collaborative process

The management of freshwater appears to rely heavily on collaborative processes. With the proposed RMA changes to the purpose and principles of the RMA, which are designed to lower environmental standards, it's unlikely collaborative processes will achieve the objectives set out in the NPS for Freshwater Management.

Interpretation

Attributes (page 51). The attributes to be addressed should be expanded to include “experiential” properties. The degree of naturalness experienced is an important aspect of management of water bodies.

“Freshwater Management Unit” The definition should include the containing lands along with the water body/bodies. An amendment is thus sought to insert after “...any part of a water body” “and the containing land”.

“Outstanding freshwater bodies”. (page 52)

1. needs to explicitly include the containing lands, to avoid confusion and potential legal argument. Thus after “are those water bodies”, insert “and their containing lands”.
2. Not only those identified in regional-scale documents, but also of districts, need to be recognised. As some councils utilise assessment matters rather than scheduled or mapped areas, these need to be utilised. Thus amend to “identified by a regional policy statement, regional plan, or district plan, or which meet the assessment matters in these documents, as having outstanding value, including”

Proposed amendments to **B Water quantity** (page 55) are supported, particularly to Objective B4, inserting “and outstanding freshwater bodies” and Policy B1 c. re “the connections between freshwater bodies and coastal water.”

C. Integrated Management (page 57).

Amendment to **Policy C2** is sought to recognise the need, not only for “integrated management”, but for the avoidance, remedying and mitigation of adverse effects. Thus we seek that the words “avoid, remedy and mitigate adverse” be inserted in Policy 2. For, as currently written, Policy 2 provides no guidance on sustaining the waters, and could merely result in a well-integrated demise of the resource.

Decision sought

Mackenzie Guardians requests the Minister for the Environment include stronger safeguards for environmental protection through the RMA, and strengthen the proposed amendments to the NPS (FW).

Signed.

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