



Changes to Freshwater NPS – 2017

Te Mana o te Wai

In August 2017 the Government announced a set of changes to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014 (Freshwater NPS). This fact sheet provides information about the changes to Te Mana o te Wai.

What does Te Mana o te Wai mean?

Each community will decide what Te Mana o te Wai means to them at a freshwater management unit scale, based on their unique relationship with fresh water in their area or rohe. The Statement of National Significance in the Freshwater NPS describes the concept of Te Mana o te Wai as the integrated and holistic well-being of the water. It is up to communities and councils to consider and recognise Te Mana o te Wai in their regions.

What's changed?

The changes clarify what Te Mana o te Wai means in the Freshwater NPS and how the concept applies in freshwater management. This is achieved through three changes.

Statement of national significance

The statement of national significance is expanded to better describe Te Mana o te Wai and how it relates to freshwater management. The statement is now in the body of the Freshwater NPS rather than in the Preamble.

The rewritten statement of national significance explains that regional councils and their communities, including tangata whenua, should work together to understand what values are held for fresh water in their area or rohe. All decisions about freshwater management should be made by putting the health and well-being of the water at the forefront of their discussions.

New objective and policy

There is a new objective and a new policy for Te Mana o te Wai. The new objective requires councils to consider and recognise Te Mana o te Wai in freshwater management. The new policy requires councils to make or change plans to achieve the objective, noting the connection between fresh water and the broader environment; and the role of community values when setting freshwater objectives and limits.

Amendments to existing objectives and policies

- A change to Policy CA2 clarifies that the national objectives framework process is underpinned by community engagement.

- A change to Policy C1 so that freshwater management recognises the interactions ki uta ki tai (from the mountains to the sea) between land use and water throughout a catchment.
- Amendments to two value descriptions. ‘Human health for recreation’ provides a clearer explanation of what a healthy water body means for human health and ‘natural form and character’ better aligns with Te Mana o te Wai.

Why has it changed?

Te Mana o te Wai was introduced to the Freshwater NPS in 2014. Te Mana o te Wai is a concept for fresh water that encompasses several different aspects of the integrated and holistic health and well-being of a water body. When Te Mana o te Wai is given effect, the water body will sustain the full range of environmental, social, cultural and economic values held by iwi and the community. The concept is expressed in te reo Maori, but applies to freshwater management for and on behalf of the whole community.

Following the 2014 amendments, councils, iwi/hapū, and interested stakeholders all felt that the meaning of and status of the statement about Te Mana o te Wai was unclear, and the direction provided to councils through the Freshwater NPS was uncertain.

What it means for communities

To meet the new obligations imposed by the changes for Te Mana o te Wai, councils and communities – including tangata whenua – will get together to discuss what values they hold for the freshwater bodies in their rohe, to set freshwater objectives and limits.

In upholding Te Mana o te Wai, these discussions should explore all values the community holds for fresh water; however, the health and well-being of fresh water should come first. This will ensure that when freshwater objectives and limits are set, the three healths of Te Mana o te Wai – Te Hauora o te Wai (the health and well-being of the water), Te Hauora o te Tangata (the health and well-being of people), and Te Hauora o te Taiao (the health and well-being of the environment) – are provided for.

Giving priority to the health and well-being of fresh water will help councils manage for the compulsory values of Appendix 1; supporting a healthy ecosystem that allows people to connect with the water through a range of activities.

Communities and councils will together decide what Te Mana o te Wai means in their rohe and how freshwater values will be balanced to provide for the health and well-being of the water.

For councils, it means the setting freshwater objectives and limits will be guided by this common understanding and by the values held by the community. The making and changing of regional policy statements and plans will consider and recognise Te Mana o te Wai.

Further information

How does Te Mana o te Wai relate to Part D: Tangata whenua roles and interests of the Freshwater NPS?

Part D requires councils to involve iwi/hapū in the management of fresh water, work with them to identify their values and interests, and reflect those values and interests in decision-making. The community engagement that councils will undertake to provide for Te Mana o te Wai in freshwater management will help councils meet these requirements of Part D of the Freshwater NPS.

Fact sheets in this series

This is one of a series of seven fact sheets providing an overview of the recent changes to National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management.

The full set of fact sheets is available on our website: www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/fresh-water/fact-sheets-changes-freshwater-nps-2017.

Find out more

Contact the Ministry for the Environment by emailing watercomments@mfe.govt.nz, or visit www.mfe.govt.nz/fresh-water.

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