

Attachment 1: proposed Regional Policy Statement provisions

Policy 11: Maintaining and enhancing aquatic ecosystem health in water bodies – regional plans

Regional plans shall include policies, rules and/or methods that:

- (a) require, as a minimum, that water quality, flows and water levels, and the aquatic habitat of all surface water bodies are to be managed for the purpose of maintaining and ~~or~~ enhancing aquatic ecosystem health; and
- (b) manage water bodies for other ~~identified~~ purposes identified in regional plans.

Explanation

Regional plans will establish ~~limits for water quality, flows and water levels that safeguard aquatic habitats and ecosystems in water bodies.~~ management purposes for water bodies in the region and identify limits for water quality, flows and water levels, and/or aquatic habitat appropriate to the management purposes identified.

Clause (a) requires the management purpose of aquatic ecosystem health to apply to all surface water bodies in the region. The narrative standard for aquatic *ecosystems* in the Third Schedule to the Resource Management Act will be used as a guide to the basis for safeguarding what is needed for aquatic *ecosystem* protection in terms of water quality. The flows and water levels required for aquatic *ecosystems* will be guided by the “Guidelines for the selection of methods to determine ecological flows and water levels” (Ministry for the Environment, 2008).

Clause (b) provides for some water bodies may to also be managed for other purposes – ~~such as~~ examples are trout fishery, *contact recreation*, water supply, *groundwater* protection, or cultural purposes. Where they are identified in regional plans, management purposes will establish limits and guide decisions on water quality, flows and water levels, and managing aquatic *habitat*.

Where a water body is assigned more than one management purpose in a regional plan, the limits associated with the most stringent water quality, river flows and water levels shall apply not be less than the limits established for aquatic ecosystem health.

Water quality, flows and water levels, and/or aquatic habitat established for management purposes identified in regional plans are suitable for uses associated with those purposes. Water is also available for other uses subject to any limits established in the regional plan.

Policy 15: Promoting discharges to land – regional plans

Regional plans shall include policies, rules and/or methods that promote:

- (a) ~~promote~~ discharges of human and/or animal waste to land rather than water, particularly discharges of sewage, while maintaining groundwater quality and soil health; and
- (b) ~~promote~~ the use of collective sewage treatment systems that discharge to land where it is likely that individual treatment systems will not maintain groundwater quality and soil health.;

~~while maintaining groundwater quality and soil health.~~

Explanation

Well managed land-based discharges can avoid adverse effects on *water bodies*, including degradation of the *mauri* of *water bodies*, that results from waste, particularly human waste (however well treated), being put into surface water instead of being returned to the land. Collective and individual land based treatment systems need to be appropriately designed and managed so that the quantity and quality of discharges maintain ground water quality and soil health.

~~Collective sewage treatment systems can service groups of houses, removing the need for each of them to accommodate effluent treatment and disposal on site.~~ Collective or individual sewage treatment systems can both be viable options in many places for the treatment of sewage before it is disposed of to land. Collective treatment systems are promoted in circumstances where it is unlikely that individual treatment and disposal systems will maintain groundwater quality and soil health.

The quality at which *groundwater* is maintained will be determined by water quality standards in *regional plans*, as directed by policy 11. Soil health in the context of this policy refers to the ability of soil to function so that plant and animal productivity is sustained, *groundwater* flows and quality are maintained and human health and habitation is supported. Public health risk will need to be considered when rules are developed in *regional plans*.

Policy 16: Protecting aquatic ecological function of water bodies – regional plans

Regional plans shall include policies, rules and/or methods that:

- (a) promote the retention of in-stream habitat diversity by retaining natural features - such as pools, runs, riffles, and the river's natural form;
- (b) promote the retention of natural flow regimes - such as flushing flows;
- (c) promote the protection and reinstatement of riparian habitat;
- (d) promote the installation of off-line water storage over dams in river beds;
- (e) discourage the reclamation, piping, straightening or concrete lining of rivers;
- (f) ~~prevent~~ discourage stock access to rivers, lakes and wetlands;
- (g) discourage the diversion of water into or from wetlands - unless the diversion is necessary to restore the hydrological variation to the wetland;
- (h) prevent the removal or destruction of indigenous plants in wetlands and lakes; and
- (i) maintain fish passage.

Explanation

Habitat diversity, which is described in clauses (a), (b) and (c), is essential for aquatic *ecosystems* to survive and be self-sustaining. When areas of habitat in one part of the *river, lake* or *wetland* are degraded or destroyed by activities described in clauses (e), (f), (g) and (h), critical parts of the ecosystem may be permanently affected with consequent effects elsewhere in the ecosystem. Specific policies and regional rules can set out where it is important to retain habitat for ecological function.

Off-line water storage are constructed out of the river and do not cause adverse effects such as barriers to fish that in-stream dams can.

~~*Riparian* means land areas beside and connected to streams, rivers and lakes.~~

Policy 17: Protecting significant values of rivers and lakes – regional plans

Regional plans shall include policies, ~~and~~ rules and/or methods that protect:

- (a) Maintain or enhance the significant amenity and recreational values of associated with the rivers and lakes, including significant amenity and recreational values of rivers and lakes listed in Table 15 of Appendix 1; and
- (b) Protect the significant indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values of associated with the rivers and lakes, including rivers and lakes listed in Table 16 of Appendix 1.

Explanation

The *rivers and lakes* with significant *amenity* and recreational values listed in Appendix 1 were identified by the community as places that are regularly used for fishing, swimming, picnicking and other recreational activities. These rivers and lakes are listed in Table 15 of Appendix 1.

The rivers and lakes with significant *indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values* were selected using indicators of aquatic invertebrate community health, the diversity of *indigenous* migratory fish species, the presence of nationally threatened fish species and the location of inanga spawning habitat. The criteria used to assess rivers and lakes with significant *indigenous ecosystems* are explained underneath Table 16 in Appendix 1.

Policy 61: Allocation of responsibilities for land use controls for indigenous biodiversity

Regional and district plans shall recognise and provide for the responsibilities below, when developing objectives, policies and methods, including rules, to maintain indigenous biodiversity:

- (a) Wellington Regional Council shall be responsible for developing objectives, policies, and methods in the regional policy statement for the control of the use of land to maintain indigenous biological diversity;
- (b) Wellington Regional Council shall be responsible for developing objectives, policies, rules and/or methods in regional plans for the control of the use of land to maintain and enhance ecosystems in water bodies and coastal water. This includes

land the coastal marine area, wetlands and the beds of lakes and rivers; and

- (c) City and district councils shall be responsible for developing objectives, policies, rules and/or methods in district plans for the control of the use of land for the maintenance of indigenous biological diversity. This excludes land within the coastal marine area and the beds of lakes and rivers.

Explanation

In accordance with section 62 of the Resource Management Act, policy 61 sets out the local authorities in the Wellington region responsible for specifying the objectives, policies and methods for the control of the use of land to maintain *indigenous biological diversity*.

District and city councils in the Wellington region have primary responsibility for controlling the use of land to maintain indigenous biological diversity (other than in the coastal marine area and the beds of lakes and rivers) through the creation of objectives, policies and rules in their district plans.

Wellington Regional Council has the primary responsibility for the control of the use of land to maintain and enhance indigenous ecosystems in water bodies (including wetlands) and coastal water.