



Report 11.3
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Committee Te Upoko Taiao - Natural Resource Management
Committee
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Guiding principles document

1. Purpose

This paper puts forward a number of ideas intended to aid the establishment of a set of guiding principles, to direct work streams and assist in decision-making during the review of Greater Wellington's regional plans. The paper aims to:

- Provide reasons for documenting a set of guiding principles
- Set out examples of the types of principles that may be of value, and
- Provide some examples of guiding principles

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Guiding principles are used as statements outlining how a group of people intend to relate to each other and others involved in their activities. In effect, guiding principles establish the working values and culture of the organisation. In this regard the principles would act as a practice guide for both the committee and staff, when considering and developing policy options across the wide range of issues covered in the Natural Resource Plan Review programme.

A set of guiding principles has the advantage of providing for better, more consistent and efficient decisions making, by acting as a set of benchmarks or tests of how ideas and policy options are considered. Further, guiding principles can act to reflect the aspirations of the committee, both in terms of how it wishes to operate and what it aims to achieve.

At the 24 November 2010 meeting of Te Upoko Taiao - Natural Resource Management Committee a working group was established to work closely with staff for the purpose of finalising a detailed project plan to the review of Greater Wellington's regional plans. The guiding principles are an important component of the draft project plan. The working group meet on Monday 13 December and progressed the guiding principles, the work schedule for Te Upoko Taiao for the coming year (linking key resource topic areas which need to be covered with scheduled meeting dates), and an approach for how all of the relevant information across the many workstreams should be brought together for Te Upoko Taiao to discuss. The progress of the working group is reported here, and in the accompanying report entitled 'Project Plan', agenda item 11.2.

4. Comment

The review of the Greater Wellington's regional plans presents decision-makers with a large number of complex issues. Across these issues decision-makers must balance the different needs and rights surrounding the use, protection and management of the regions natural resources. Guiding principles are of benefit because they serve to assist decision-makers by providing clear statements of the values intended to guide deliberations. Guiding principles are also useful for communication and community engagement work, as they provide a concise record of values. The principles, once established, will provide a clear statement of the committee's values, as they are informed by and interact with the wider community.

The complex nature and scope of the plan review means that any set of guiding principles can act only to guide decision-making. In this case, the principles developed may be considered as not being prescriptive but rather acting as a set of tests for ideas and options. Further, given the nature of the plan review process requirements for additional principles may emerge as new issues are addressed and the scope of work grows.

In considering such principles it is important to recall that the regional plans are subordinate to national instruments such as the Resource Management Act 1991, National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards. The plans must also give effect to Greater Wellington's Regional Policy Statement. Of themselves these documents provide the statutorily required values that must guide the committee and staff. While these may be well understood, documenting them provides an unambiguous statement of the committee's recognition of the role of the regional plan in relation to other governance structures shaping natural resource management.

In addition to statutory and organisational tests which plan review ideas and options must pass, the committee has considerable scope to document additional values which it sees as reflecting its own and the communities' expectations. Establishing such 'working principles' would allow the committee to clearly express its own values in the context of statutory and organisational obligations.

A set of guiding principles are therefore usefully considered in two parts, those covering the already established statutory and organisational requirements and a set of working principles capturing the committee's intentions. Examples to stimulate discussion can be found at 3.1.2 and 3.1.3.

4.1 Example vision/mission statement, to stimulate discussion

Finally, as part of any document guiding the review of the regional plans a vision or mission statement can act to succinctly communicate the overall aims of the review. Some examples to stimulate discussion are provided below.

While the Committee will no doubt wish to discuss the issue of a vision statement, an example of a vision statement could be:

“The regional plan review aims to establish both regulations and non-regulatory programmes that ensure the region’s natural resources are protected, while efficiently meeting the economic, cultural and social needs of present and future generations, in partnerships with the community. ”

4.2 Examples of statutory and organisational tests that policy options must meet¹

- Meets the functions of Regional Councils and of Regional Plans as set out in section 30 of the RMA
- The purposes of the Resource Management Act are achieved in the most efficient and effective way possible
- Policies, rules and other methods used are consistent with part 2 of the RMA
- Policies, rules and other methods used give effect to the Regional Policy Statement
- Policies, rules and other methods used give effect to relevant National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards
- The activity status of rules needs to be appropriate to the issue being addressed
- All provisions of the plan need to be intra vires (meet legal requirements)

¹ Examples are not hierarchical

4.3 Examples of working principles that policy options must meet²

- Those unfamiliar with the RMA should be able to readily interpret the plan
- A tangata whenua perspective is sought in the development of all provisions and where appropriate incorporated into policies, rules and methods
- Policy options shall be considered in the context of the best available science
- Policy options are clearly justified, either in the context of addressing specific local requirements or bringing benefit to a wider community
- Where possible, the environmental economics is considered when weighing the advantages and disadvantages of a particular policy
- The cost of doing nothing (both positive and negative) be considered when developing policies
- Policy options address both contemporary natural resource issues and provide for likely future use demands and impacts
- Polluter pays – resource pollution and uses giving rise to substantial private benefits are paid for by the beneficiaries
- A principle of no-net-adverse effect is applied to provisions and activities controlled by the plan
- The plan should focus on facilitating on-ground outcomes
- Partnerships between the different sectors in our community can bring a greater understanding and potentially longer lasting natural resource management outcomes
- That the decision making process remains transparent

² Examples are not hierarchical

5. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Endorses the guiding principles as developed by the Te Upoko Taiao - Natural Resource Management Committee working party.***

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