

Report 14.460
Date 4 September 2014
File E/12/05/04

Committee Te Upoko Taiao - Natural Resource Management Committee
Author Jonathan Streat, Manager, Environmental Policy

Release of the draft Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region

1. Purpose

To seek agreement from Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Management Committee (the Committee) to publicly release the draft Natural Resource Plan for the Wellington region (draft Natural Resources Plan) on 22 September 2014.

This report follows on from the proposals to release the draft Natural Resources Plan in September 2014, which were presented to the Committee at February 2014 workshop (Regional Plan Review process: Working Document for Discussion to Draft, February 2014, refers).

This report also recommends a public and stakeholder consultation and engagement programme associated with the release of the draft Natural Resources Plan. Activities leading up to the draft are outlined and dates for upcoming public meetings are provided.

In addition, this report recommends the concurrent release of preliminary drafts of supporting material with the draft Natural Resources Plan, in order to support a wider discussion of the draft Natural Resources Plan.

2. Background

Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Management Committee was established in 2009 with the purpose of reviewing the region’s coastal and regional plans. Work on this review commenced in earnest from late 2010. Over the last 4 years a large number of people have been involved in the work to review these documents. These include iwi, the Kaitiaki Group, stakeholders, council staff and other interested parties.

Over the past 4 years the Committee has:

- undertaken extensive public and stakeholder consultation, in order to gain an understanding of the range of values attached to the region's natural resources and to identify concern about the current management approach used in managing our region's natural resources management (2010-2011)
- reflected on the effectiveness of current regional plans (2011-12)
- examined current policy, scientific and other information relating to the management of the region's natural resources (2011-12), and
- developed a preliminary set of objectives for managing the region's natural resources (2012), and held discussions with a range of stakeholders and other interested parties on policies and rule options which were put forward in the 'working document for discussion' (the working document) (2013).

Throughout 2014 a number of Committee workshops and stakeholder meetings have been held in an effort to bring together the past years' work into a 'Draft'. This forms the basis of continued consultation and engagement over the coming months which will lead to the notification of a 'proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region', under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), in 2015. This point will mark the commencement of the formal process under the First Schedule of the RMA.

The draft Natural Resource Plan for the Wellington region was couriered to Committee members on 9 September 2014.

3. Releasing the draft Natural Resource Plan for the Wellington region and moving to a proposed Natural Resource Plan in 2015

It is intended that the draft Natural Resources Plan be available for public comment from 22 September until 30 November 2014 (see **Attachment 1**). As part of the release of the draft Natural Resources Plan, public meetings across the region will be arranged, to encourage people to read and comment on the draft. These meetings will take place between 22 September and 3 October 2014.

Workshops/meetings with stakeholder groups, our iwi partners, consultants involved in RMA planning, and staff from the region's territorial authorities will also be arranged. Each of these will be based on the same material used in the public meetings outlined above.

Table 1: Public meetings schedule

Date	Time of meeting	Location
Monday 22 September	1.30pm to 3pm	Carterton Event Centre
Monday 22 September	7.30pm – 9pm	Masterton – Frank Cody Lounge
Wednesday 24 September	7.30pm to 9pm	Upper Hutt – Trentham Gardens at Racecourse
Thursday 25 September	1.30pm to 3pm	Te Papa – Rangimarie Room
Thursday 25 September	7.30pm to 9pm	Lower Hutt – Dowse Museum
Wednesday 1 October	7.30pm to 9pm (will be finished by 8.45pm as we have to be out by 9pm)	Porirua – Te Rauparaha Arena
Thursday 2 October	7.30pm to 9pm	Kapiti – Kapiti Coast Library room

After the comments period has closed GWRC staff will sort through the comments received. Staff will identify any immediate changes, along with areas for further consideration and discussion. Throughout the first half of 2015, GWRC staff will meet with stakeholders, iwi and interested parties regarding the comments submitted. Where considerable differences exist between particular groups or between the GWRC and particular groups, GWRC will set up a process to provide the parties involved with the opportunity to resolve any differences prior to the Plan being proposed. This will provide groups with differences an opportunity to work through these, prior to notification of the proposed Natural Resources Plan in 2015.

GWRC staff will then incorporate further changes, based on the Committee’s deliberations and stakeholder feedback, into the draft Natural Resources Plan. It will then take an additional 6-10 weeks to edit and format the document as a ‘proposed Natural Resource Plan for the Wellington region’, which is expected to be notified mid-2015 (see Attachment 1).

Once ‘proposed,’ the Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region passes into the statutory process outlined in Schedule 1 of the RMA, incorporating submissions, hearings, decisions and appeals. Formal hearings will take place after submissions and further submissions have been received. A regional plan becomes operative when all submissions and any appeals have been resolved and when the regional council publicly notifies the date on which it will become operative (Schedule 1, clause 20, RMA).

Whaitua Implementation Programmes

It should be noted that upon completion of each Whaitua Implementation Programme (WIP), the approved recommendations will be developed into provisions for inclusion in the Regional Plan. The insertion of these provisions in the Regional Plan will be done through a standard plan change process and does not form part of this round of consultation and engagement.

3.1 Considerations, trade-offs and risks

Releasing a draft Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region and providing an engagement programme offering caucusing/informal mediation requires a number trade-offs and risks to be considered.

- The draft Natural Resources Plan, after wider comment, may be seen as containing a number of policy and/or rule options that are regarded as insufficiently developed or unnecessary, thus potentially reflecting negatively on the earlier work. The trade-off is that the draft Natural Resources Plan is a step along the way to a final version (the proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region) and the very asking for wider public input is part of the review and refinement process. It is expected that there will be changes to the objectives, policies and rules prior to a final set of plan provisions being advanced to the RMA Schedule 1 process.
- The relatively long consultation period put forward, and efforts to provide processes of informal mediation prior to entering the statutory processes, may be seen as unnecessary, inefficient, or leading to community and stakeholder ‘burn-out’. The trade-off is that this approach provides a sufficient length of time and structures for issues to be resolved without the expenses or formality associated with statutory processes, which can serve to widen participation in the planning process and reduce the overall cost of the process.
- Risks associated with offering an informal mediation process as part of an extensive draft include maintaining momentum of staff, stakeholders and the community and providing a clear limit/timeline for the informal processes. These are mitigated by all parties involved having clear expectations and by setting a date at which the informal processes will cease.

4. Release of preliminary drafts of supporting material

It is proposed that preliminary drafts of supporting material covering issues, rationale and policy analysis reports (‘section 32 reports’) be released concurrently with the draft Natural Resources Plan. These section 32 reports will form the basis of material used to address requirements under section 32 of the RMA when finalised. However at this stage, a number of the analyses are not yet finalised.

4.1 Considerations, trade-offs and risks

By making preliminary drafts of supporting information available concurrently with the draft Natural Resources Plan a number trade-off and risks need to be considered.

- The volume of material contained in the preliminary drafts of the section 32 reports may act as distraction from a focus on the policies and rules in the draft Natural Resources Plan. The trade-off is that these documents form a valuable element in the discussion around the draft Plan; in particular they contain analyses of the issues, objectives and policies which are absent from the text of draft Plan because of the decision to produce as concise a document as possible.
- providing preliminary drafts of the supporting material concurrently with the draft Natural Resources Plan will enable comments on this material to be gathered and incorporated into the final section 32 reports that will accompany the proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region.
- A risk associated with the release of preliminary drafts of the section 32 reports is that the documents will be seen as inadequate assessments and, as such, will be critiqued as being insufficient for meeting the requirements of the RMA. This risk is mitigated by the realisation that these documents are not expected to meet the requirements of the RMA at this stage. They are preliminary drafts and are being circulated, in part, to allow comment on their content.
- GWRC has also asked a number of key stakeholder groups, including the region's territorial authorities and some industry groups, to work with it on the continued development of the section 32 reports as feedback about the draft Natural Resource Plan is received.
- Finally, the release of these documents as a preliminary draft is consistent with the principle of partnership that has been applied by the Committee to the Plan review process.

5. The decision-making process and significance

The subject matter of this report is part of a decision-making process that will lead to the Committee making a decision of medium significance within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2002. The decision this leads to will follow a process explicitly prescribed for by the Schedule 1 of the Resource Management Act 1991 which will include consultation with a range of affected parties.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

3. *Agrees to release the draft Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region, provided as a separate document, for the purpose of seeking public comment.*
4. *Agrees to the proposed engagement schedule and process supporting the release of the draft Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region, as outlined in Attachment 1; and*
5. *Agrees to Greater Wellington Regional Council staff making available preliminary drafts of supporting issues, rational and policy analysis reports ('section 32 reports') as part of the wider engagement surrounding the draft Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region.*

Report prepared by:

Jonathan Streat
Manager, Environmental Policy

Report approved by:

Nigel Corry
General Manager, Environment
Management

Attachment 1: Figure 1. Stages in the public engagement supporting the draft Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region