



Report 08.599
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Committee Regulatory Committee
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Proposed National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of the proposed National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management.

2. Background

The Minister for the Environment can make national policy statements under the Resource Management Act. Local authorities must give effect to national policy statements through regional policy statements, and regional and district plans. A local authority must also take any other action that is specified in a national policy statement, for example, they may directly influence the processing of resource consents.

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management will have significant implications for Greater Wellington as the management of freshwater is a “control” function for regional councils under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). This means that we make decisions on all resource consent applications for discharges to water; taking, use, damming and diverting water; and activities in river and lake beds.

The National Policy Statement is a key part of central government’s Water Programme of Action, which began in 2003. The intention to prepare this National Policy Statement was signalled in 2006. In December 2007, the Ministry for the Environment sought comment from regional councils and other interested people on what issues should be addressed in a national policy statement on freshwater management. Greater Wellington’s comments were made in March 2008 following approval by the Regulatory Committee (Report 08.26).

Other regulatory elements of the National Water Programme of Action include a standard for drinking water-sources that is already in place, a proposed standard for water measuring devices that has been through the submission process and is close to being gazetted, and a proposed standard for ecological flows and water levels that Greater Wellington submitted on in August 2008.

The proposed National Policy Statement was released in July 2008, and a four person Board of Inquiry has been appointed to inquire into and report on it. The Board of Inquiry has not yet called for submissions or set a date for the close of submissions.

3. The proposed national policy statement for freshwater management

The proposed National Policy Statement outlines objectives and policies for the management of fresh water, which are intended to help inform immediate decisions as well as longer-term thinking and planning. The stated intention is to enhance management of New Zealand's freshwater resources so that, by 2035, these meet the needs and aspirations of all New Zealanders. The following goals are set out in the preamble:

- address existing and future constraints on the availability of freshwater resources
- address the effects of existing and future discharges of contaminants to freshwater resources
- provide more certainty in respect of competing demands on New Zealand's freshwater resources and facilitate opportunities to increase benefits from the use of freshwater resources, within the above constraints on availability and effects of discharges
- meet the recreational aspirations of New Zealanders, including that freshwater resources are swimmable
- address matters of national significance relating to the sustainable management of freshwater resources
- improve the integrated management of freshwater resources by territorial authorities, regional councils, and others whose activities affect freshwater resources.

A copy of the proposed National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management is appended as **Attachment 1**.

4. What happens next

The next step is for the Board of Inquiry to call for submissions and provide more information on the processes it establishes. Greater Wellington staff will prepare a submission for consideration at a future Regulatory Committee prior to the closing date for submissions. At "first glance", it's likely we will be seeking changes.

The proposed National Policy Statement includes policies that must be given effect to when regional policy statements are prepared. Greater Wellington is currently reviewing the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region, and the intention is to notify it at the beginning of 2009. The proposed National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management will receive no statutory recognition until it is completed and gazetted, and it's very unlikely this will occur before the Regional Policy Statement is notified.

5. **Communication**

No external communication is necessary at this time.

6. **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report; and***
2. ***Notes the contents.***

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