

### CONCEPT SHEET **2**

# Bottom lines – the National Objectives Framework

*This is one of two concept sheets discussing how Taranaki waterways can be managed to meet the requirements of the Government's 2014 National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management. See also Concept Sheet 1 on Freshwater Management Units.*

The Government has set out a 'National Objectives Framework' (NOF) directing how Councils should set objectives, policies and rules about fresh water in their regional plans.

Essentially, Councils need to understand the current state of their waterways, how communities value these waterways and what goals should be set for the future, based on economic, social, cultural and environmental factors.

### Defining the bottom line

As a starting point, the Government has set 'ecosystem health' and 'human health for recreation' as compulsory national values that must be provided for everywhere. To meet these two values, the Government has outlined minimum acceptable physical states. These are known as the national bottom lines.

The Government has set quality bands for the physical attributes of waterways. For the compulsory 'human health for recreation' value, these bands are: A – suitable for swimming; B – generally suitable for swimming; C – suitable for boating and wading; D – unacceptable risk to human health.

Band D is unacceptable. That's the national bottom line. Councils can maintain waterways at bands A-C, or seek to improve them. But they can't go backwards and they can't choose D unless there are exceptional circumstances.

*Note: It's important not to confuse the quality bands A-D with Taranaki's Freshwater Management Units A-D. See the separate concept sheet on Freshwater Management Units.*

### The Taranaki situation

Taranaki has 286 main river catchments and 530 named rivers. The Council's monitoring shows that freshwater quality is good to excellent, with rivers falling within quality bands A to B as set out in the NOF. The region's small number of lakes largely fall within the bands A to C.

Where the A to C grading is not achieved, the causes are generally natural and thus exempt from national bottom line requirements.

In many cases, the Taranaki Regional Council already monitors waterway health more intensively than is required under the NOF, and has a very detailed picture of the state of the freshwater resource and how this varies within and between catchments.

The table overleaf shows the different attributes measured to assess water values under the NOF, and average quality bands achieved in Taranaki's four Freshwater Management Units. The 'D' gradings reflect naturally occurring phosphorus and planktonic cyanobacteria in Lake Rotokare.

While the Council's monitoring shows that water quality across the region is either improving or showing no significant change, instream health does decline in the mid and lower

Compulsory value		How it's measured	How Taranaki's water bodies rate			
			Unit A (Stony, Maketawa, Rotokare)	Unit B (Mountain & ringplain)	Unit C (Coastal terraces)	Unit D (eastern hillcountry)
Rivers	Ecosystem health	Nitrate toxicity	A	B	B	A
		Ammonia toxicity (two measures)	A	A	B	A
			A	B	B	B
		Dissolved oxygen	A	A	A	A
	Periphyton	A	B	B	B	
	Recreation suitability	Bacteria levels	B	B	A	A
Lakes	Ecosystem health	Total phosphorus	D	C	C	C
		Total nitrogen	C	C	C	C
		Ammonia toxicity (two measures)	A	B	B	A
			B	B	B	B
	Phyto-plankton	B	B	B	B	
	Recreation suitability	Bacteria levels	A	A	A	A
Planktonic cyanobacteria		D	A	A	A	

reaches of streams. In part this is natural, but it also reflects pressure from human activity, especially intensive farming. Lowland lakes and wetlands, as well as waterways, are most under pressure.

The Council's overall aim is to maintain and enhance freshwater quality throughout the region.

### How the Plan would ensure requirements are met

The Plan's policies and rules set the boundaries for freshwater quality and water takes to ensure that Government requirements and the Plan's own objectives are met. This is achieved by setting maximum amounts that can be allocated to freshwater users in each catchment, and controlling other impacts on waterways by:

- Allowing activities to take place without a resource consent if there is minimal or no environmental impact.
- Requiring resource consents for activities whose impact is more than minor and for which a case-by-case assessment is required.
- Prohibiting activities which conflict with the objectives and freshwater outcomes sought by the Plan.

### Options and future changes

The National Objectives Framework is a work in progress. The Government plans to add more requirements covering different values and different water body types over time as information becomes available. The framework may also change over time as science evolves and our understanding improves. Besides the current nationally compulsory values of ecosystem health and human health for recreation, councils can opt to add a range of optional values covering things like electricity generation, irrigation, stock watering, fisheries, boating and navigation, natural form and character, food gathering and food production, swimming and drinking.

### Feedback and more information

Go to [www.trc.govt.nz/draft-plan](http://www.trc.govt.nz/draft-plan) to find:

- The Draft Freshwater and Land Plan in full.
- A summary and background document.
- Info sheets and background papers.
- An online form for giving us feedback.

You can also send us your feedback by emailing [info@trc.govt.nz](mailto:info@trc.govt.nz) or writing to the Council at Private Bag 713, Stratford 4352. Or contact the Council's freshwater planning team directly by calling 0800 736 222. We can give you more information, take your feedback or arrange a meeting.

Our deadline for feedback is Friday 26 June.

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