

Managing fresh water quality in your community



What is the Issue?

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) needs to meet the requirements of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014 (NPS). This means GWRC's Wellington Natural Resources Plan (NRP) has to contain objectives and policies for managing freshwater quality and quantity, and that the connections between fresh and coastal water are considered.

Historically, each council in the Wellington region managed the water infrastructure within their boundaries. However there are rivers, streams and pipes that cross over these boundaries and impact on the receiving water quality in another district.

To tackle this issue, GWRC wants to look at receiving water quality from a catchment point of view, and has introduced a catchment approach for the management of land and water known as the whitua process.

Five whitua committees will be set up in the region; two have been established (the Ruamāhanga in Wairarapa and Te Awarua o Porirua), and the third (Wellington/ Hutt Valley) will be established later this year. Whitua committees are made up of local iwi, council and community members. They will work collaboratively to recommend water quality objectives, standards and limits for fresh and coastal water, and identify the methods and timeframes needed to achieve them. GWRC will take these recommendations into consideration when preparing a change to the NRP.

Under the whitua process, bodies of water that receive stormwater runoff or wastewater discharges, such as rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries, and ground water will have their own water quality objectives aligned with the NPS. Meeting these 'receiving waters' objectives within specific timeframes will likely mean that

infrastructure upgrades are needed, or new infrastructure will have to be built and paid for by the councils. Any objectives, limits and timelines recommended by the whitua committees need to be developed with this in mind.

What does Wellington Water want to achieve?

Wellington Water is in the unique position of representing their councils' interests in the Whitua process. We can help whitua committees make informed decisions when recommending receiving water quality objectives, limits and the timeframes.

The whitua process supports one of our three company outcomes, respect for people and the environment. Stormwater and wastewater discharging into our fresh and coastal waters affects water quality which has impacts on the environment and human health. In managing these discharges, Wellington Water wants to make sure that the whitua committees are well informed about all of the implications when the committees make recommendations on receiving water quality objectives, limits and timeframes. In this way we hope that the limits and timeframes are affordable and achievable for councils and gain community support. This means we've got to have a good understanding of our networks and discharges and their impact on the receiving environment.

How do we intend to achieve this?

Wellington Water will be advising each Whitua committee on:

- The current state of our client councils' stormwater and wastewater networks, how these networks function and their discharges into the receiving environment
- The infrastructure management options for improving the quality of the stormwater and wastewater discharges, and
- The expected costs and timeframes.



We already have some of this information. To comply with Wellington City Council's stormwater discharge consents we already carry out monitoring. We're currently preparing an Integrated Catchment Management Plan. Some freshwater monitoring is also underway in Hutt City, Upper Hutt, Wellington and Porirua catchments. The monitoring enables us to identify where we need to improve water quality. We're also monitoring beach water quality in Wellington, Hutt and Porirua catchments. In addition, monitoring of sediment in the Wellington Harbour is being done every five years to gather information on the state of receiving environment. All of this monitoring is done in collaboration with the Wellington City, Hutt City and Greater Wellington Regional councils.

More work is required to improve our understanding of our councils' stormwater networks and the existing receiving water quality (both harbours and rivers). Our priorities are:

1. To establish consistent monitoring of all the catchments
2. To continue gathering information about the catchments that is relevant for assessing the infrastructure options.
3. Collaboratively assessing the costs and expected benefits of the management and infrastructure upgrade options for improving water quality

4. To identify a strategic approach for completing improvements, so that we can monitor the effectiveness and adjust our approach if things don't work out as we expect. This will involve searching for the options that will deliver the greatest benefits, and regularly communicating any findings back to the infrastructure managers and Greater Wellington Regional Council.
5. To make sure that there is funding in councils' Long Term Plans for:
 - monitoring programmes
 - meeting proposed consenting requirements in the NRP which is expected to be unveiled in mid-2015 and
 - carrying out infrastructure upgrades and management options that are compatible with the whitua-specific objectives and limits.

What does this mean for our communities?

Communities will have the opportunity, through the whitua process, to identify the water quality objectives that reflect their community values and priorities. In the process community members will understand all the implications of meeting any objectives and limits being considered.