

# ABOUT PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE 1

## Q. WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEALTHY RIVERS PROJECT FOR THE WAIKATO AND WAIPĀ RIVER CATCHMENTS?

**A.** Waikato Regional Council is partnering with Waikato and Waipā River iwi. This is a requirement under co-management legislation. The Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Committee is made up of members of Waikato Regional Council and iwi partners Ngāti Maniapoto, Raukawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Te Arawa River Iwi and Waikato-Tainui.

The proposed plan change was developed by a Collaborative Stakeholder Group (CSG). The CSG was made of 24 delegates from industry, community and iwi groups who developed the policy. This approach meant that those most affected by the changes were at the tables. The CSG existed as a group up until the proposed plan change was notified. After notification of Proposed Plan Change 1 Hauraki iwi were consulted. For more information on the latter, read the FAQ on Variation 1 to Proposed Plan Change 1.

## Q. WHAT AREA WILL THE PLAN CHANGE AFFECT?

**A.** This plan change is for the Waikato and Waipā catchments. To see a detailed map of the areas affected by the proposed plan change, visit [waikatoregion.govt.nz/healthyrivers](http://waikatoregion.govt.nz/healthyrivers).

## Q. HOW WILL THE VARIATION 1 AND PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE 1 IMPROVE THE RIVERS' WATER QUALITY?

**A.** This plan change is just one step towards the long-term restoration and protection of the health and wellbeing of the Waikato and Waipā rivers, which will take many years.

The proposed plan change sets limits and targets for different water bodies including:

- limits and targets on contaminants entering water directly or via land
- specific outcomes for water for ecological health and recreation, fisheries and mahinga kai (food gathering).

The contaminants that will be addressed will include both point and non-point sources of bacteria, sediment, and nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus).

Together with stakeholders, we will consider a range of method types, such as rules, education, support and incentives.

## Q. WHAT ARE LIMITS AND TARGETS?

**A.** A limit defines the loads allowed to be placed on water quality from inputs like nutrients, or the amount of water permitted to be taken.

A target simply puts a timeframe on achieving a limit.

## Q. WILL ALL FARMERS HAVE TO APPLY FOR A RESOURCE CONSENT?

**A.** Not all farmers will have to apply for a resource consent. In some cases for small and low intensity farming activities and properties with low risk factors (identified in the proposed plan), those landowners will need to register their enterprise with the regional council and exclude all stock from waterways, but are unlikely to have to take any further action.

It's also important to note that farmers who are part of a Certified Industry Scheme (CIS) will not have to apply for a resource consent. Farmers that fall under this will work with their CIS provider to meet the requirements of the proposed plan change.

## Q. WILL STOCK BE ALLOWED ON STEEP LAND?

**A.** The plan change does not prohibit farming based on the slope of land. However slope is one factor that determines which rule/s will apply to a particular property. For small, low intensity, and low risk properties they are unlikely to need a Farm Environment Plan (FEP). If a property is over 20ha however, and has more than 6 stock units per ha, any land over a 15 degree slope may not be cultivated or grazed unless there is a FEP detailing appropriate mitigation measures.

For slopes over 25 degrees where stream fencing is not practicable, an FEP also needs to describe alternative mitigation measures. For land with a slope between 15 and 25 degrees, stream fencing also needs to achieve a grazing setback of 3m from any waterways.

## Q. WHAT ABOUT THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS?

**A.** Because of the significant change and costs involved, the Collaborative Stakeholder Group recommends a staged approach over 80 years to achieve Waikato and Waipā rivers that are swimmable and safe for food collection. This gives people time to make changes and adapt. Modelling has indicated overall catchment profit could reduce by around 4 per cent, or \$40 million, in the short term.

## Q. WHAT ABOUT OTHER PARTS OF THE REGION?

**A.** In the rest of the region, Waikato Regional Council has started a wider review of the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan and is expecting to start a review of the Waikato Regional Plan in 2018. This will include incorporating stakeholders and the community in the setting of objectives, limits and targets for all water bodies, as required by the Government's National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014.

Waikato Regional Council, informed by both legislative requirements and community input, prioritised its approach to managing water quality throughout the region. The Waikato and Waipā River catchments are the first priority, followed by the Waihou-Piako and Coromandel catchments, then the West Coast. The timing and approach taken for each catchment will be determined by legislation and supported by community input to get the best representation outcomes for the particular and unique catchment communities.

The approach to be taken for the Waihou-Piako and Coromandel catchments is yet to be determined, and depends on completion of the Hauraki Treaty settlement.

## Q. WILL IT AFFECT MY RATES?

**A.** There is no immediate effect on rates. The plan change has been budgeted for in the council's Long Term Plan.

## Q. WHAT ABOUT ALL OF THE GOOD WORK ALREADY DONE BY LANDOWNERS?

**A.** Landowners who have already taken steps to reduce their impact on water quality should be better positioned to comply with the rules in the proposed plan change. For example those who have:

- taken actions to reduce nitrogen discharges may have to do less in the next ten years
- developed farm plans and best management practices are well prepared to meet the proposed rules

## Q. WHAT WILL URBAN AREAS HAVE TO DO?

**A.** With regard to point source discharges (e.g. from industry and urban areas), these are currently, and will continue to be, subject to regional rules under the Plan. For this reason, the proposed plan change introduces no new rules for point source discharges.

However, the proposed plan change includes water quality objectives that are all relevant to point source discharges and the plan change also includes specific policies (Policies 10-13) that relate to point source discharges. These will need to be applied (over and above relevant, existing Plan policies) when any existing or proposed discharges are consented. These

policies require consideration of whether the current discharge treatment reflects the "best practicable option" and whether the degree to which any adverse effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated is appropriate having regard to its contribution to contaminant loads in the particular sub-catchment concerned.

## Q. IS THE COUNCIL DOING ANYTHING ELSE TO HELP THE RIVERS' WATER QUALITY?

**A.** The council's other work that helps the rivers' water quality includes:

- Waipa Catchment Plan
- Variation 5 to protect Lake Taupō Variation 6 water allocation
- Healthy Farms, Healthy Rivers
- Current monitoring of permitted activities on farm
- Farmer and industry education
- Soil conservation programmes
- River and catchment management

More information about these projects can be found on the council website.

*This information has been provided based on Waikato Regional Council's interpretation of the proposed plan. The proposed plan is subject to change through the hearings process.*

