

Memo – Future scenarios

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To: Chair Technical Leadership Group, CSG Chair and Facilitator, project manager and workstream leads for technical and engagement

From: Justine Young

Subject: Assisting CSG decide which future scenarios they want assessed in s32 and economic models

Purpose of memo

To suggest a pathway for assisting CSG to decide which future scenarios they want to investigate (scenarios are sometimes referred to as ‘a range of plausible futures for land and water’).

Why scenarios are helpful in policy processes

At the early stages of a policy development process, scenarios are a way of simplifying all the possible combinations of individual behaviour that make up different futures. In order for a collaborative group to make sense of the job ahead for them, and for them to acknowledge everyone’s aspirations, they must be able to describe, in plain English, a range of alternative futures. This is an essential step in guiding the biophysical and economic modelling for each scenario that results in possible numerical limits and targets in water bodies, as well as the associated overall cost.

Once an overall cost of each scenario is gained, further detail can be investigated: who can change, when by, and how should costs be distributed, to achieve the different futures.

Describing and modelling future scenarios is particularly important when the change from current state in the water body is likely to be large, with many landowners directly affected. If this is the case, **scenarios range from one end of the spectrum being a water body target which is achieved over decades, and the remainder of the scenarios are essentially ‘stages along the way’**. In fact, some regional plans¹ have long term objectives, and achievement requires several staged changes by landowners set out in policies and rules that come into force over several years or decades.

The Healthy Rivers Wai Ora HRWO project is one of a number of projects that seek to implement the Vision and Strategy. Many of the objectives and strategies contained in the Vision and Strategy have directive language² that sets a high bar for future water quality in

¹ For instance Variation 1 for Selwyn Waihora Catchment Canterbury Regional Plan takes this approach to restoring the health of Te Waihora.

² For instance Objective A of the Vision and Strategy is “The restoration and protection of the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River.”

the rivers. While there are legal opinions³ about the requirement to implement the Vision and Strategy in Resource Management Act documents, River iwi staff and governance of the HRWO project have yet to give guidance on important matters such as whether some future scenarios are ruled out because of the language of some parts of the Vision and Strategy. For instance, whether it is acceptable to take a staged approach to achieving Objective K of the Vision and Strategy “The restoration of water quality within the Waikato River so that it is safe for people to swim in and take food from over its entire length”.

TLG Scenarios as at December 2014

The Technical Leaders Group (TLG) had a short workshop session and came up with a ‘first cut’ of scenarios on 8 December 2014, listed below:

1. Swimmable over the entire length of the River all of the time

(Swimmable means E.coli levels, cyanoobacteria and clarity do not pose more than x% risk)
2. Swimmable over all sites in summer
3. Swimmable in the main stem in summer
4. No further decline from current state – Swimmable in upper Waikato and Waipa

Making scenarios as useful as possible to CSG

At the TLG meeting on 8 December 2014, Liz Wedderburn described scenarios as ‘plausible futures’ and the discussion was around the need to:

- Not pre-judge which one will be chosen by decision-makers, and therefore overly restrict what is put up
- At the same time, being aware that the scenarios must stay within the (very wide) bounds of the CSG value set for the Rivers and catchment
- Have few enough scenarios so that people can hold all the choices in their heads at one time

There are a few aspects that we need to consider

1. In Canterbury, **scenarios are a combination of impacts of ‘future land use’ and ‘future water quality’** on the community outcomes sought. Canterbury Regional Council has experience in collaborative limit-setting process processes, which some members of TLG have been involved in. It is useful to look at how scenarios are described in the s32 analysis that was publically notified alongside the Regional Plan Variation for Selwyn Waihora in 2014.
2. At the TLG meeting in December, I noted that a **baseline ‘do nothing’ must be part of the section 32 evaluation**. ‘Do nothing’ is a description of the implications of people and organisations continuing as they are. For instance, dairy farmers continue to implement the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord and WRC continues to implement existing provisions of the Regional Plan, including consenting requirements and extension, education and incentives.

³ Buddle Finlay legal opinion for WRA on the meaning of “give effect to” in the Vision and Strategy and Draft WRC legal opinion on the same subject.

3. The section 32 analysis of objectives can only occur once the CSG has defined some possible outcomes. Policy staff would like to get on to this before the detailed policy options work with CSG occurs when they get some overall costs from the economic modelling.
4. Ideally, April CSG meeting is the time to put up a simple report on future scenarios that the CSG could workshop, much as they did for the FMUs in February, using maps and bands.

Actions

Taking the above points into consideration, we (Bill and Helen and Jo) could:

1. Put up a report to CSG for April meeting that CSG could workshop and confirm which scenarios they would like Graeme Doole and policy staff to base their modelling work and section 32 objectives analysis respectively. The report would:
 - a. Describe why scenarios are important in policy processes
 - b. Set out the timeline for the next 4-5 months that shows the CSG that the policy Section 32 analysis of objectives, and the economic modelling work both rely on CSG scenarios
 - c. Suggest a facilitated workshop session in April CSG, ideally with staff from iwi partners, that would give members a good go at deciding some scenarios on the day.
2. Put this topic up for discussion to TRH so they get some context about how the discussions and guidance from them and their governance people on the Vision and Strategy, will fit in with the current work of the CSG. (a TRH workshop just confirmed for 31 March on topic of Vision and Strategy).