

## Conclusions on the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the RPS

### Resource Process

On face value it appears that the section is reasonably effective in achieving integrated management, particularly in regard to cross boundary issues and effects which cross resource boundaries. However it is considered that much more could be done to integrate decision making, research and overall environmental management of physical resources and management between agencies. The RPS must require the four councils to actively address integrated resource management and work collectively for the benefit of the region.

Almost all of the provisions of the Community Involvement in Resource Management section have been implemented. However, in terms of actually involving the community in resource management, this section does not actually achieve anything greater than that which is required under the provisions of the RMA.

Overall, the section on the Involvement of Tangata Whenua is supported, particularly by Tangata Whenua, but is suffering from a lack of implementation. This section is heavily focused on the statutory requirements of consultation, which are effectively implemented; however the section should also be equally balanced with non-statutory consultation/interaction with Tangata Whenua along with seriously investigating opportunities for involvement in resource management. The concept of Iwi Management Plans has not been uptaken by Tangata Whenua. This has resulted in a lack of other work being undertaken, for example the identification of heritage sites, features, or archaeological sites.

Monitoring and review of the RPS and resource management plans has only been moderately effective, due to limited resourcing and a lack of implementation of the objectives and policies. A co-ordinated monitoring approach has not been achieved and has resulted in a limited ability to report on the state of the environment. Overall, this section has not been effective as it has generally repeated the requirements of the RMA and has not provided for integrated or co-ordinated monitoring specific to the Northland region.

### Resource Policy

Whilst air quality related incidents and issues continue to dominate the complaints received by the Regional Council, generally the Air Quality section is working well. Northland has a high standard of air quality. However, nuisance effects from smoke (particularly backyard burning), chicken manure, etcetera, are not currently captured within the Regional Air Quality Plan. This may need to be driven from the RPS.

In general, the provisions within the Water Quality and Water Quantity and Flows sections are not considered to adequately cover effects on the environment, particularly sewage systems in coastal communities, changes in landuse and minimum flows. These sections do not adequately address the increasing concern and pressure felt from the rate and scale of subdivision and development occurring throughout the region, particularly in regard to effluent disposal, stormwater management, and cumulative effects on the environment. Water allocation on an individual stream/catchment basis is a significant challenge for the region that urgently needs to be addressed.

Overall it is felt that the provisions of the Outstanding Natural Features and Outstanding Landscapes section are good but this section has not been effective because it has not been implemented.

While many methods are being implemented, there is a real need to increase co-ordination, communication and consistency with other agencies involved in managing Northland's land resource and its biodiversity and ecosystems. More resources are being developed – particularly in the areas of land care and providing technical expertise. There is a need for current information on soil loss rates on a catchment basis in order to identify priority areas. The provisions should be targeted towards appropriate land-use strategies, rather than just concentrating on versatile soils.

Clear policy direction is required in the Natural Hazards section, focusing on avoiding natural hazards, utilizing soft protection measures rather than engineered hard protection works, and setting clear direction on when the risk of natural hazards is too great and development should be declined.

There is ongoing discussion and significant areas of improvement to be made in regard to the integrated management of the coastal environment, particularly in relation to the line of mean high water springs and the landward coastal environment. There is an existing commitment to integrated management but it is also an area for significant improvement, particularly in regard to the effects of coastal subdivisions and landscape protection.

The Heritage Protection section is a mixed bag of effective protection and complete in-action across the region. The level of effort from Councils is minimal. The Heritage Protection section does not adequately reflect the new requirements under the RMA. Tangata Whenua involvement is happening at a basic level but there is significant room for improvement.

At present there is no real co-ordinated approach to waste minimisation. The Regional Council should take leadership role. A substantial percentage of the regions refuse is now transported and disposed of outside the region, which is not an efficient means of disposal. The cumulative effects of sewage disposal are increasingly of concern.

The hazardous substances spillage procedures are working well. Programs for the disposal of hazardous substances are also working very well. The contaminated sites database requires completion and distribution to district councils but otherwise the Hazardous Substances section is considered to be very effective. A lot of the methods are being taken over by the introduction of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act.

The scarcity of high quality aggregate compounded by increasing demand from population growth is resulting in more focus on the effectiveness of this section. Access to minerals is not well co-ordinated across Northland currently and exploration for new minerals is not addressed. The resource assessment of Northland that is now in progress will lead to the data on the known and potential resources of the region being much more accessible. This information could form the basis of a regional mineral information system.

There is very little energy production within Northland. Northland is dependent on a fragile network for its electricity supply and is prevented from expanding its own limited generation capacity due to the networks state within the region. There is currently very little promotion of energy efficient homes, alternative modes of transport, or alternative sources of energy. The Energy section is generally well written but needs active implementation.

Much of this section has been implemented. However there is an increasing need to promote, and at times require, a strategic and integrated approach to transport planning, both across the different agencies involved and across the different pieces of legislation that agencies work under. This includes the need to undertake a specific analysis of how the RPS and the Regional Land Transport Strategy can be more integrated documents, in order to allow for the most efficient and effective transport planning.

### **The Regional Policy Statement**

The RPS is reasonably effective in achieving integrated management. However it is considered that much more could be done to integrate decision making, research, and overall environmental management between agencies, interested parties, and Tangata Whenua.

The RPS is heavily focused on the statutory requirements such as those associated with consultation and monitoring. Generally speaking, the RPS does not achieve anything greater than that which is required under the RMA but has the potential to achieve efficient and effective 'integrated' resource management for the Northland Region.