



# Te Panonitanga o te Mahere Wai Māori Hukihuki: Kōrerotia mai o whakaaro

The draft Freshwater Plan Change:  
Have your say



# He mahere hukihuki mō te whakapai i te wai māori

## A draft blueprint for improving freshwater

### The draft Freshwater Plan Change is all about improving the health of freshwater – rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands and aquifers – in Te Taitokerau Northland.

We need to change our rules about freshwater because the Government's National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) sets national bottom lines for freshwater health that we must meet and directs us to significantly improve freshwater health.

Most of our streams, rivers and lakes are in a poor state. The strong message from tāngata whenua, communities and the government is that we must improve the health of freshwater to provide habitats for our native plants and animals, safeguard the health of our communities, and enhance our resilience to climate change.

The draft Freshwater Plan Change sets out what we think the new vision, outcomes, limits and rules should be. Alongside it is the draft Action Plan, which identifies other actions Northland Regional Council could take to help improve freshwater health.

We'd like your feedback. This document tells you about the draft Freshwater Plan Change and the draft Action Plan, and how to have your say.

*We all need clean, healthy waterways – so what's the best way to get there?*

### The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Have Your Say on Stock Exclusion

We'd particularly like your feedback on new rules for managing stock around waterways. The rules need to change to improve freshwater health. The more we do, the greater the environmental benefits – but the higher the costs to landowners. We need your input to make decisions that will work for our community as well as our waterways.

*The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Have Your Say on Stock Exclusion, provides more information and the questions we'd like your views on.*

The draft Freshwater Plan has no legal status. It is a draft for comment, and we need your feedback to finalise it.

### The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Targeted Water Allocation Policy

We'd particularly like your feedback on a new policy for water allocation that better provides for the wellbeing of the waterway and recognises the special relationship tāngata whenua have with water.

*The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Targeted Water Allocation Policy, provides more information and the questions we'd like your views on.*

#### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DRAFT FRESHWATER PLAN CHANGE AND THE THREE WATERS REFORMS?

The draft Freshwater Plan Change is different to the three waters reforms. Three waters is about our drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater services. The draft Freshwater Plan Change is about our rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands.

# Te rārangi wā o te Panonitanga Mahere Wai Māori

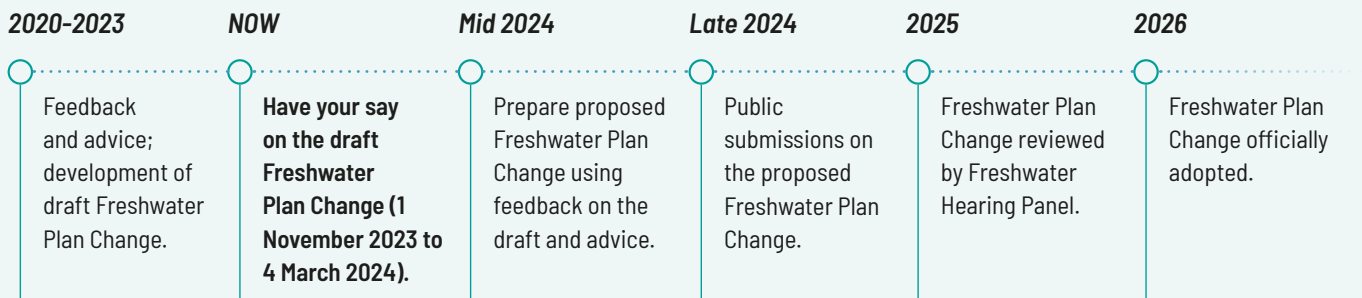
## The Freshwater Plan Change timeline

We're seeking feedback on the draft Freshwater Plan Change until 4 March 2024.

We aim to release (notify) the next version of the plan for public submissions in late 2024. This version will reflect feedback on the draft plan.

You'll be able to make a formal submission on the notified plan and present your views to the independent Freshwater Hearing Panel. Council will consider the recommendations from the Hearing Panel and decide whether to adopt the Freshwater Plan by 2026.

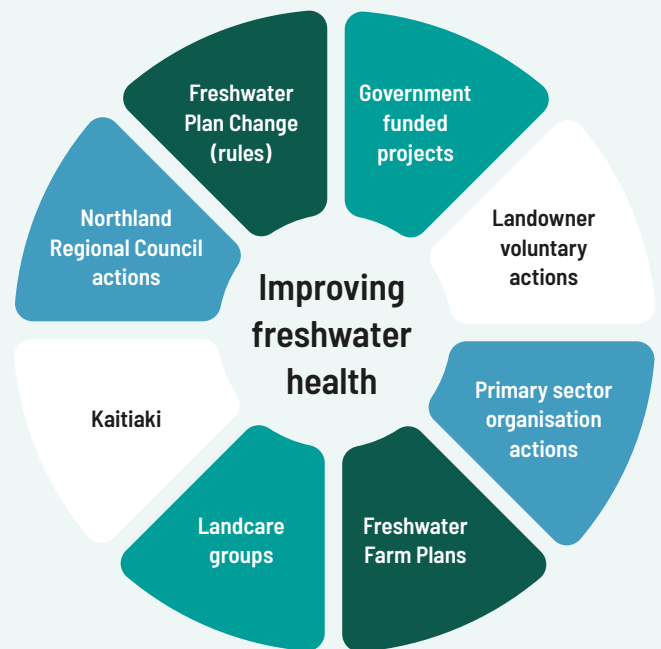
### Freshwater Plan Change timeline



### The Freshwater Plan Change – one piece of the puzzle

Once finalised, the Freshwater Plan Change will sit alongside other regulatory and voluntary initiatives for improving freshwater, including:

- the many tāngata whenua, community and industry-led projects
- Freshwater Farm Plans and other Government policy direction and regulations
- council support for landowners (e.g. the Kaipara Moana Remediation programme).



# Te whanaketanga o te mahere hukihuki

## How we developed the draft plan



For more than two years we have been getting feedback and advice from tāngata whenua, government, industry, environmental groups, and our communities on what the draft Freshwater Plan Change should cover.

Two groups in particular guided its development:

- **Tāngata Whenua Water Advisory Group.** This group of tāngata whenua technical experts from Te Taitokerau has a wide range of freshwater kaitiaki expertise and experience. They have provided detailed advice and recommendations for developing the draft Freshwater Plan.

Read their reports at [www.nrc.govt.nz/TWWAGreports](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/TWWAGreports)

- **Primary Sector Liaison Group.** Made up of representatives from primary sector industry organisations, this group provided a report outlining the issues facing the primary sector. The group developed a vision for the draft Freshwater Plan Change to help ensure:

- the importance of the primary sector to Northland's economy is recognised
- the industry can thrive, and
- appropriate land use is provided for.

They also provided advice on objectives and measures to improve freshwater.

Read their report at [www.nrc.govt.nz/PSLReport](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/PSLReport)

We acknowledge all those who have contributed to this draft plan, and we have listened carefully to all the views and recommendations put forward.

Now, we need to give everyone in Te Taitokerau an opportunity to help us refine the plan.

# Te tirohanga a te tāngata whenua ki te wai

## Tāngata whenua perspectives on water

*‘Ko wai mātou, ko wai tātou – We are water’*

As kaitiaki and rangatira, tāngata whenua have roles and responsibilities to protect freshwater.

Council is committed to improve how we involve tāngata whenua in looking after freshwater. The draft Freshwater Plan Change supports tāngata whenua involvement in managing freshwater and contributes to our obligations as a Te Tiriti partner. That means enabling tāngata whenua to participate actively in freshwater management and decision-making so whānau, marae, hapū and iwi can fulfil their roles and responsibilities through mātauranga Māori, kawa and tikanga.

Tāngata whenua have told us there has been huge loss to the mauri of wai māori (freshwater), ecosystems and taonga species that rely on wai.

## Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai

At the heart of Government’s National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) is the concept of Te Mana o Te Wai.

Te Mana o Te Wai is about protecting the mauri (life force) of the wai, and restoring the balance between water, our environment and our communities. It puts the health of the water first, providing for human health needs second, and other uses of water third. The kaupapa includes actively involving tāngata whenua in freshwater management and decision-making.

We have adopted this as Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai for Te Taitokerau.

## Te Hurihanga Wai

Te Hurihanga Wai (the water cycle) describes how through whakapapa Māori view freshwater “...as a living being that derives from ngā atua.”<sup>1</sup> The concept that freshwater should be treated as a living being with rights to be healthy and to flourish, and to be respected as an ancestor, underlies tāngata whenua perspectives of water.

The draft Freshwater Plan Change weaves together te ao Māori and western world views so the wellbeing of Te Hurihanga Wai is prioritised, respected and protected. This is fundamental to giving effect to Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai.

<sup>1</sup> Tāngata Whenua Water Advisory Group (2023) *Ngā Roimata o ngā Atua: The Tears of Ranginui and Papatūānuku – A Recommendation Report to support the Implementation of Te Mana o Te Wai in Te Taitokerau*. Kake, P. et al.

## Te Hurihanga Wai

The water cycle is an expression of love between the heavens and earth, and each stage is a critical component. The Atua who control these elements are in charge of condensation, evaporation, collection and precipitation.

TŪ KAPUA & TĀWHIRIMĀTEA  
Cloaking Ranginui | Condensation



TEIHORANGI = HURUTERANGI  
The heavens – Ngaroto Wakamaru  
Kāorangi | Hineteihorangi & Hinewai | Precipitation



HINEPŪKOHURANGI  
Mist & Fog | Evaporation



PARAWHENUAMEA  
Daughter of Tane Te Waiora and Hinetuparimaunga |  
Married Kiwa | Collection



# Te ora o ō tātou wai māori i tēnei wā

## The current state of our freshwater

Land development and freshwater management over generations has had an enormous impact on water quality and freshwater ecosystems in Te Taitokerau.

While modern land use and development practices have improved, we are still dealing with the legacy of

deforestation, loss of wetlands and land drainage.

Our biggest problems are the high levels of sediment and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*)<sup>2</sup> in our freshwater, and a lack of riparian vegetation to support healthy ecosystems.

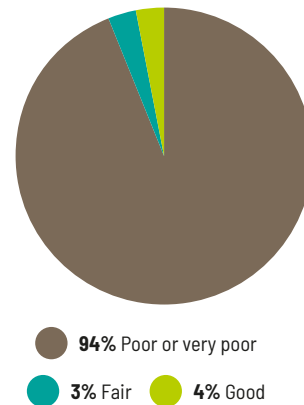
<p><b>Sediment</b></p> <p>High levels of sediment in our streams, rivers and lakes make our estuaries muddier, waterways less appealing to swim in, and make it harder for native plants and animals in the water to survive.</p>	<p><b><i>E. coli</i></b></p> <p><i>E. coli</i> is an indicator for bacteria and viruses in the water that can make us sick. The higher the levels of <i>E. coli</i>, the greater the risk of getting sick when swimming in or drinking untreated water.</p>	<p><b>Lack of riparian vegetation</b></p> <p>Plants and trees along the water margins and banks (riparian vegetation) are essential for healthy waters. They provide the cool, shady habitats freshwater ecosystems in Aotearoa New Zealand need.</p>
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## How does the health of our waterways measure up?

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) sets out bottom lines for the health of our waterways that we must meet. These cover different things, such as contamination with *E. coli*, nutrient levels, and insect life.

Our waterways fail to meet many of the national bottom lines. For example, the NPS-FM requires us to improve waterways with poor or very poor *E. coli* levels. The chart shows what a big job this will be.<sup>3</sup>

***E. coli* condition of Northland rivers**



Measuring the insects<sup>4</sup> that live in our rivers, which are indicators of biodiversity health, also shows we have a lot of work to do.<sup>5</sup>

2 *E. coli* is a bacteria used to measure faecal contamination in waterways. Although there are very low levels of naturalised *E. coli* in our waterways that are not associated with animal or human faeces, these have little effect on *E. coli* measures (Moinet M., et al. (2021). *Faecal source tracking and the identification of naturalised Escherichia coli to assist with establishing water quality and faecal contamination levels*. AgResearch, Palmerston North. Available from: <https://ourlandandwater.nz>; and Muirhead R, Hudson R, & Cookson A. (2023). *A review of river microbial water quality data in the Northern Region*. AgResearch. Available from: <https://www.nrc.govt.nz>).

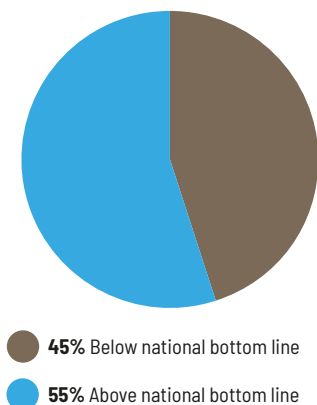
3 Chakraborty M, et al. (2023). *Northland Regional Council Freshwater Plan Change – Freshwater Baseline State Evaluation*. Northland Regional Council, Whangārei. Available from: <https://www.nrc.govt.nz>

4 Macroinvertebrates (wadeable rivers – MCI)

5 Chakraborty M, et al. *Op cit*.

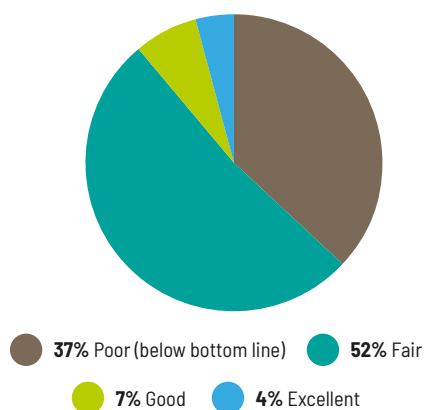


### Insects<sup>6</sup> in Northland rivers



We have also set some regional bottom lines in response to what our community told us was important. The trophic level index of our lakes (a combined measure of nutrient levels, water clarity, and algae) is a key regional measure. Many of our lakes fall below the bottom line.<sup>7</sup>

### Trophic level index of Northland lakes



It's not all bad news. In some areas, Northland is doing better than other parts of the country. For example, levels of nitrate and ammonia toxicity for fish and insects in our rivers are generally very good.<sup>8</sup>

## Freshwater and climate change

The effects of climate change make healing our freshwater ecosystems more urgent.

Flooding, higher water temperatures, and sediment washed down from erodible land during extreme weather events increase the pressure on our waterways.

Droughts also put greater pressure on water resources. There is a limit to how much water can be taken from a waterbody without affecting its health, and there are already areas in Te Taitokerau where no more water can be allocated.

Healthy freshwater environments help to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Riparian vegetation filters sediment, resists erosion along banks, and lowers and stabilises water temperatures, allowing natives species to thrive. Wetlands slow water flows during floods, release water during droughts, and trap contaminants. Planting in catchment areas reduces erosion and slows the rise of floodwaters.

Find out more about the state of freshwater in Te Taitokerau at [www.nrc.govt.nz/baselinestates](https://www.nrc.govt.nz/baselinestates)

6. Macroinvertebrates (wadeable rivers - MCI)

7, 8 Chakraborty, M. et al. (2023). *Northland Regional Council Freshwater Plan Change - Freshwater Baseline State Evaluation*. Northland Regional Council, Whangārei. Available from: <https://www.nrc.govt.nz>

# Te wai māori o te anamata

## The freshwater of the future

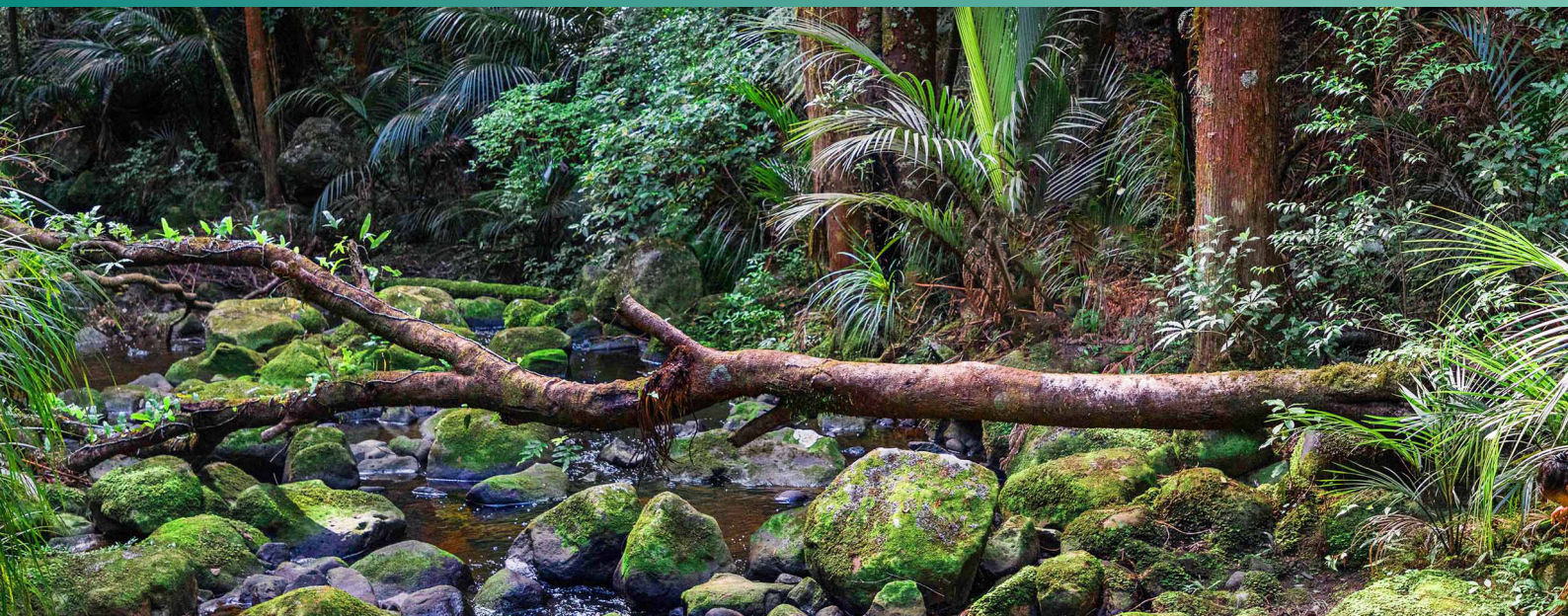
**The draft Freshwater Plan Change sets out our vision, objectives, and specific targets for the future we want for our freshwater.**

In line with the Government's National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM), our draft Freshwater Plan Change sets out our long-term vision for our region's freshwater:

***"The wairua and whakapapa of Te Hurihanga Wai is prioritised, respected, protected and enhanced.***

*We will know if we are on track to achieve the vision if by 2040:*

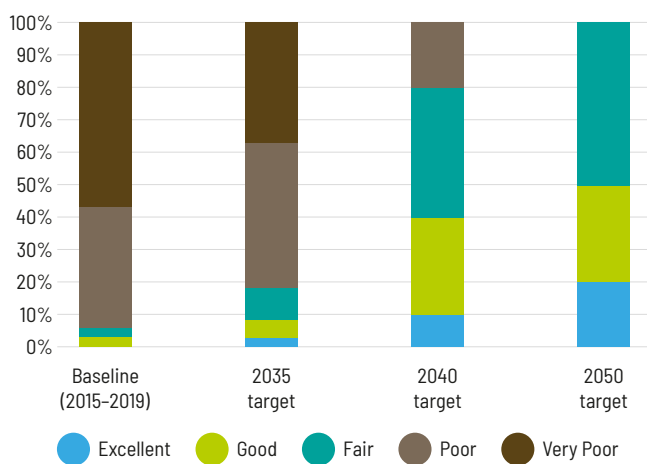
- Tāngata whenua values and mātauranga Māori are identified and are embedded in freshwater management; and*
- Tāngata whenua are actively leading freshwater decision making, monitoring, policy and plan changes, and resource consent processes; and*
- The mauri and health of freshwater is significantly enhanced; and*
- The habitat health of freshwater and coastal receiving environments is improving; and*
- The range, diversity and numbers of freshwater native species is improving; and*
- Freshwater is safe for people to interact with (such as practicing mahinga kai or swimming) at most sites; and*
- Freshwater ecosystems are more resilient to the impacts of climate change; and*
- Sources of drinking water supplies are clean and reliable, and resilient to the impacts of climate change; and*
- Freshwater is used sustainably to support resilient and thriving communities, and sustainable livelihoods."*



Alongside the vision are objectives and specific, measurable targets. Many of these targets are 'bottom lines' set by the Government in the NPS-FM. Others are based on advice from tāngata whenua and what our communities have told us they value.

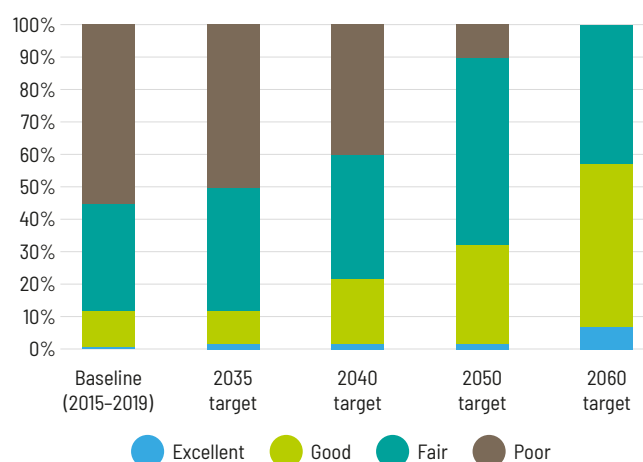
For example, we need to reduce the number of river and lake sites that have poor or very poor *E. coli* levels and lift the number that are in excellent or good condition.

### E. coli in our rivers and lakes



We also need to improve the biodiversity of our waterways over time. The insects<sup>9</sup> that live in our waterways are a measure of biodiversity health.

### Insects in our rivers



These are just examples – there are more targets in our draft plan.

You can find out more about our draft objectives and targets in Section F: Objectives/Ngā whāinga and Appendices H.11 and H.12 of our draft Freshwater Plan Change at [wai-it-matters.nz](http://wai-it-matters.nz)

9 Macroinvertebrates (wadeable rivers - MCI)

# Ngā ture hukihuki hōu me ngā mahi hukihuki hei whai

## The draft new rules and actions

The draft Freshwater Plan Change includes draft rules for improving freshwater. Alongside the draft Freshwater Plan Change is a draft Action Plan that sets out what Northland Regional Council could do to support efforts to improve freshwater.

### Key draft new rules

The tool	Why it's important	Key draft rule changes	More information
<b>Protect highly erodible land</b>	<p>Te Taitokerau has a lot of steep and erodible soils, which are a big source of sediment entering streams and rivers. Removing vegetation and land disturbance from earthworks can increase erosion.</p> <p>We already have rules about earthworks and land preparation on erosion-prone land, but they don't cover vegetation clearance or access by stock animals.</p>	<p>We are looking at options to update maps of land vulnerable to erosion. We've developed two new draft maps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land at <b>high</b> risk of erosion (25°-35° slope)</li> <li>Land at <b>severe</b> risk of erosion (&gt;35° slope).</li> </ul>	<p>To view the updated draft maps, see <a href="http://www.nrc.govt.nz/mapviewer">www.nrc.govt.nz/mapviewer</a></p>
		<p>We are considering new rules limiting vegetation clearance, land preparation and earthworks in areas of <b>high</b> erosion risk, with tighter controls applied to these activities in areas with <b>severe</b> erosion risk.</p> <p>We're also considering new rules requiring stock to be excluded from areas of both <b>high</b> and <b>severe</b> erosion risk.</p>	<p>See draft Freshwater Plan Change, Sections C.8.2 Land preparation, C.8.3 Earthworks, and C.8.4 Vegetation clearance in riparian areas and foredune management areas.</p> <p>Find out more in <i>The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Have Your Say on Stock Exclusion</i>.</p>
<b>Keep stock out of waterways</b>	<p>We need to look at options for how far away from waterways stock should be kept.</p> <p>There are already rules for keeping stock out of waterways, but they don't cover many streams in steeper areas, which contribute a lot of sediment and <i>E. coli</i>. These streams are also important habitats for native species.</p>	<p>We are considering new rules about keeping stock away from waterways, and we'd like your views.</p>	<p>Find out more in <i>The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Have Your Say on Stock Exclusion</i>.</p>

The tool	Why it's important	Key draft rule changes	More information
	Furthermore, the existing rules do not provide enough space for riparian vegetation to establish around waterways.		
<b>Eliminate or reduce discharges</b>	Discharges to freshwater, such as stormwater runoff and dairy farm effluent, contaminate waterways. We can put greater controls on discharges to avoid them altogether or to ensure they get the best treatment possible before reaching waterways.	All dairy effluent <b>discharges to land</b> would need resource consent.	See draft Freshwater Plan Change Section C.6.3 Production land discharges.
		Dairy effluent <b>discharges to water:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>prohibiting new discharges of treated farm dairy effluent to water and</li> <li>stricter requirements for renewal of existing consents</li> <li>renewed consents to expire by January 2030, with no consented discharges to water after this date.</li> </ul>	See draft Freshwater Plan Change Section C.6.3 Production land discharges.
		Wastewater treatment plant discharge to water – prohibiting new discharges to water and stricter requirements for renewal of existing consents.	See draft Freshwater Plan Change, Section C.6.2 Wastewater Network and Treatment Plant Discharges.
		Prohibiting discharges of treated domestic wastewater to waterways.	See draft Freshwater Plan Change, Section C.6.1. On-site Domestic Wastewater Discharges.
<b>Protect wetlands</b>	Wetlands trap sediment and contaminants before they reach streams and rivers. They soak up water during floods and provide water during droughts, and they are important habitats for many native species. Northland has lost nearly all our natural wetlands (94.5%). <sup>10</sup>	We are considering additional rules for keeping stock out of wetlands, and we'd like your views.	Find out more in <i>The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Have Your Say on Stock Exclusion</i> .

<sup>10</sup> Forest & Bird (2018). World Wetlands Day: Forest & Bird release maps showing extent of wetlands crisis. <https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/resources/world-wetlands-day-forest-bird-release-maps-showing-extent-wetlands-crisis>

The tool	Why it's important	Key draft rule changes	More information
<b>Control exotic forests</b>	Exotic forests can affect sensitive waterbodies such as high-value dune lakes by reducing the amount of water they receive. The harvest of plantation forests can lead to increased sediment run-off into waterways.	Require larger setbacks for exotic carbon and plantation forestry from waterways.	See draft Freshwater Plan Change, Section C.8.4.4. Afforestation and replanting plantation forestry – permitted activity.
		Require resource consent for plantation forestry and exotic carbon forests in high-value dune lake catchments.	See draft Freshwater Plan Change, Section C.8.4.4. Afforestation and replanting plantation forestry – permitted activity.
<b>Expand requirements for assessing impacts on tāngata whenua values</b>	In line with the NPS-FM, we've committed to improving the way we involve and support Tāngata Whenua in looking after freshwater, and to recognising Tāngata Whenua values in our decision-making about water.	Add requirements for resource consent applicants to assess the potential for impacts on Tāngata Whenua values for freshwater.	See draft Freshwater Plan Change, Section D.1. Tāngata Whenua.
<b>Allocate water for environmental enhancement and to recognise the tāngata whenua relationship with wai</b>	When we allocate water, we need to provide for the wellbeing of the waterway and recognise the special relationship tāngata whenua have with water.	We are considering setting aside 20% of water available for allocation to be used for environmental enhancement, marae and papakainga, or developing Māori land. The water could be used for other purposes with a contribution to a fund supporting Māori wellbeing.	Find out more in <i>The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Targeted Water Allocation Policy</i> .

You can find more information about the draft rule changes online at [wai-it-matters.nz](http://wai-it-matters.nz). The draft Freshwater Plan Change is also supported by maps – these are available at [www.nrc.govt.nz/mapviewer](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/mapviewer)

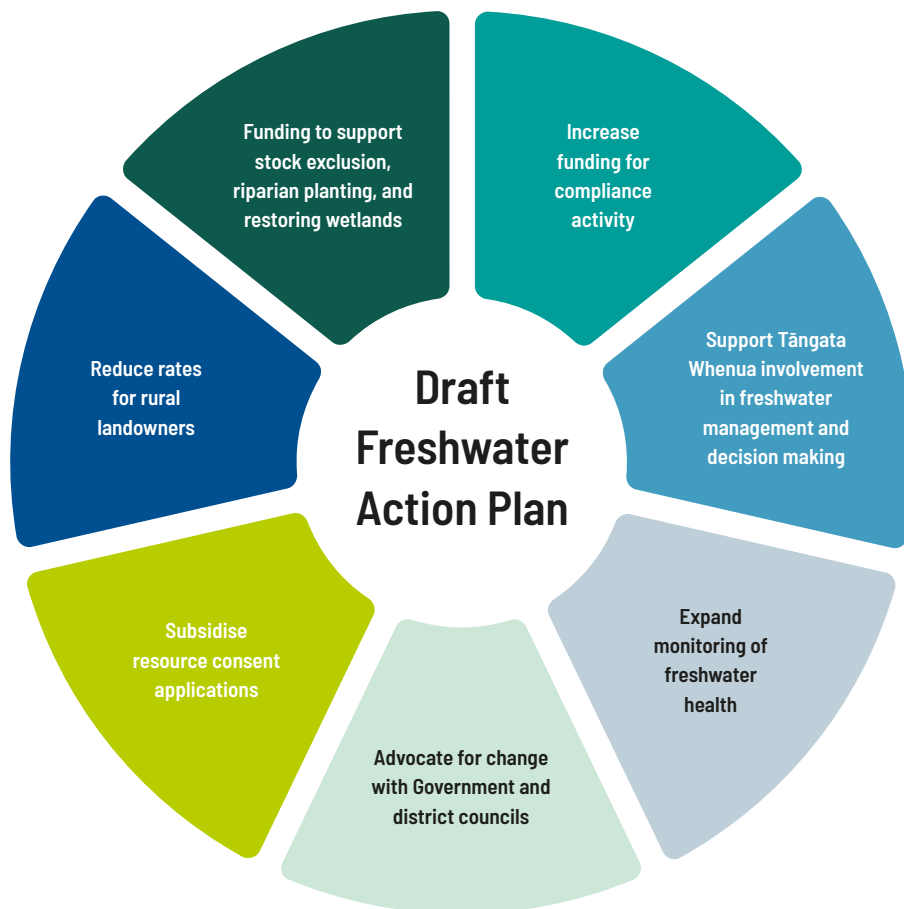
## The draft Action Plan

The draft Action Plan sits alongside the draft Freshwater Plan Change. It sets out other actions Northland Regional Council could do to support efforts to improve freshwater.

We are considering seven new actions. Once adopted through the Long Term Plan process, these new actions would sit alongside existing actions council is taking.

### Suggested new actions in the draft Freshwater Plan

You can find more information about our draft *Freshwater Action Plan* online at [wai-it-matters.nz](http://wai-it-matters.nz)



# Whakamōhiotia mai o whakaaro

## Tell us what you think

**Big changes are needed to meet the significant improvements needed to freshwater in Northland.**

**People will have many different views.**

The decisions we make now will determine the state of freshwater for future generations and the resilience of our communities to the impacts of climate change.

Now is your opportunity to share your feedback on our draft Freshwater Plan Change and draft Action Plan. The more feedback we get, the better informed our decisions will be.

## What do you think of our draft Freshwater Plan Change and draft Action Plan?

We welcome your feedback on anything in our draft Freshwater Plan Change and draft Action Plan.

To have your say on:

- keeping stock away from waterways, wetlands, and off highly-erodible land, please see *The Draft Freshwater Plan: Have Your Say on Stock Exclusion*
- reserving a portion of allocable water for environmental enhancement or tāngata whenua, please see *The Draft Freshwater Plan Change: Targeted Water Allocation Policy*.

## What timeframes are feasible to improve freshwater?

We need your feedback on how long we should give ourselves to make changes. The longer the timeframe, the more time for people to make the changes needed – but the longer it will take for the health of freshwater to improve.

Even if we go hard early, it will take a long time to see a change in our freshwater for some things. While *E. coli* levels are fairly quick to respond, sediment can take a long time – 50 years or more. Climate change increases the pressure on our freshwater and the urgency of acting as we seek to mitigate climate change impacts, such as flooding and droughts.

The costs of changes to individual landowners need to be balanced with the costs on the environment and future generations of not changing and our obligations to give effect to te Mana me te Mauri o Te Wai. We also know there are other benefits which are hard to put a monetary value on, such as biodiversity, human health, and recreational use of waterways and harbours.

When we consider an appropriate timeframe, we must bear in mind that the changes we make now are going to affect our freshwater for future generations. We also want to bring about change in a way that enables, not excludes, as many people as possible to play their part in healing our waterways.



# Te kimi mōhiotanga anō

## How to find out more



### Find information online

Read more about the draft Freshwater Plan Change online at [wai-it-matters.nz](http://wai-it-matters.nz)

Read about the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management at <https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/national-policy-statements/national-policy-statement-freshwater-management/>

### Come to a hui/meeting

We are holding a series of hui to kōrero about the draft Freshwater Plan and answer your questions. Visit [wai-it-matters.nz](http://wai-it-matters.nz) for details, or contact:

**Northland Regional Council**

**0800 002 004**

# Te tono kōrero mai

## How to have your say

Whether you prefer online, print, or kanohi ki te kanohi, there are several ways to tell us what you think.

You can share your views in te reo, English or New Zealand sign language (let us know if you might need an interpreter).

### Online

Visit [wai-it-matters.nz](http://wai-it-matters.nz) to give us your feedback online, or email [freshwater@nrc.govt.nz](mailto:freshwater@nrc.govt.nz)

### Print and in-person

Fill out our printed feedback form. If you need a printed form or you would like to speak to someone in person at one of our offices, please contact us at:

#### Northland Regional Council

Private Bag 9021  
Te Mai, Whangārei 0143  
0800 002 004  
[freshwater@nrc.govt.nz](mailto:freshwater@nrc.govt.nz)

Or drop by one of our offices:

#### Whangārei

36 Water Street  
8am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday

#### Dargaville

Ground Floor  
32 Hokianga Road  
9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday

#### Kaitia

192 Commerce Street  
8:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday

#### Waipapa

Shop 9, 12 Klinac Lane  
Waipapa  
8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday

We all need clean, healthy  
waterways – so what's the  
best way to get there?

Share your whakaaro  
(thoughts) by  
4 March 2024.



**Northland Regional Council**

P 0800 002 004

E [info@nrc.govt.nz](mailto:info@nrc.govt.nz)

W [www.nrc.govt.nz](http://www.nrc.govt.nz)

