



DRAFT Freshwater Plan Change Vision, Values and Objectives Workshop Summary Report

Date: 31 October 2023

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Introduction

Purpose

This document provides a summary of material presented to councillors and Te Taitokerau Maori and Council (TTMAC) representatives throughout workshops undertaken to develop the Draft Freshwater Plan Change vision, values, and objectives in accordance with the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM), including:

- Draft objectives to be inserted into the Regional Policy Statement,
- Identification of freshwater values to be managed through this process, and
- Northland's approach to Freshwater Management Units.

The Draft Freshwater Plan Change incorporates a range of mandatory legal requirements into regional plans and policy statements across New Zealand. The requirements are set out in the NPS-FM, including the fundamental concept of Te Mana o te Wai and the need to develop long-term visions for freshwater management. These cover how Northland Regional Council will regulate and manage activities that affect our rivers, lakes, groundwater, and wetlands. How Northland is currently proposing to incorporate the concept of Te Mana o te Wai and set our long-term visions for freshwater are discussed below.

This document is one of the suite of materials prepared to support public feedback on the draft Freshwater Plan Change. It summarises what changes are being proposed to our Regional Plan and Policy Statement and the discussions Council had in adopting these draft changes.

This report should be read in conjunction with other supporting information and in particular the advice provided to council by:

- the Tāngata Whenua Water Advisory Group (TWWAG) endorsed by TTMAC on their proposed vision, values and objectives for freshwater (see [recommendation report here](#)), and
- the Primary Sector Liaison Group (PSLG) (see [recommendation report here](#)).

Background

NRC staff developed the draft Vision, Values, and Objectives with input from TWWAG and the PSLG, and through workshop with councillors and TTMAC representatives. These commenced in early 2022 and continued through to October 2023 when the draft changes were adopted by Council.

TWWAG members are all experts in freshwater and whakapapa to Te Taitokerau. Through numerous workshops and hui, and a [series of written reports](#) TTWAG and TTMAC have contributed perspectives from te āo Māori on freshwater management and assisted in developing and drafting the long-term vision and values for the draft Freshwater Plan Change. TWWAG has worked with council since 2020 to provide tangata whenua advice on the freshwater plan change and how to give effect to Te Mana o Te Wai in Te Taitokerau. TWWAG made 40 recommendations including that council undertake more detailed freshwater planning at community level with tangata whenua to define catchment specific vision, values and objectives for hāpori wai across Northland. They have recommended freshwater plan provisions for the draft freshwater plan change as a platform for whānau, hapu and iwi to add to.

The PSLG consists of representatives from the primary sector, including the dairy industry, beef and lamb, horticulture, forestry, and power generation. The PSLG has provided input and commentary on the Draft Freshwater Plan Change early in its development and more recently as we prepared for its public release. They have provided perspective from rural landowners and operators whose involvement in the implementation of the new vision and rules is crucial to success.

Objectives in the Regional Policy Statement

Two new draft objectives are proposed to amend the Northland Regional Policy Statement:

- **Draft Objective 3.16: *Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai***

In order to give effect to Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai, the spiritual wellbeing and whakapapa of Te Hurihanga Wai is prioritised, respected, protected and enhanced by 2040.

- **Draft Objective 3.17: *Long-term Vision for Freshwater***

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

The development and adoption of these objectives is described in the following sections.

Te Mana o te Wai (TMotW)

Te Mana o te Wai is defined in the NPS-FM 2020 as:

[...] a concept that refers to the fundamental importance of water and recognises that protecting the health of freshwater protects the health and well-being of the wider environment. It protects the mauri of the wai. Te Mana o te Wai is about restoring and preserving the balance between the water, the wider environment, and the community.

This concept introduces a new hierarchy of obligations that all regional councils must introduce into their regional plans. Since the introduction of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), activities have been managed in order to achieve the RMA's purpose, which in summary enables the use and development of natural resources to provide for social, economic, and cultural well-being provided that the activities:

- sustain those natural resources for the foreseeable needs of future generations,
- safeguard the life-supporting capacity of our environment, and
- avoid, remedy, or mitigate any adverse effects of the activities on the environment.

The purpose of the RMA placed our social, economic, and cultural well-being on equal footing with the needs of the environment, provided we balance everything equally as far as practicable. With amendments to the RMA and the NPS-FM, Te Mana o te Wai creates a new hierarchy which prioritises:

- *first, the health and well-being of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems,*
- *second, the health needs of people (such as drinking water), and*
- *third, the ability of people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being, now and in the future.*

As this is a fundamental shift in our resource management approach in New Zealand, the Regional Plan must fundamentally change to achieve Te Mana o te Wai. To help us achieve this within Northland's context, TWWAG has further articulated what Te Mana o te Wai means for Te Taitokerau and their advice is that this is most appropriately expressed as *Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai*, which makes clear that it is the mauri of wai that is the critical element.

TWWAG describe the whakapapa of wai in both their [Stage 1 Report](#) and in their [Stage 2 Recommendations Report](#):

[...]as a living being that derives from ngā atua, and outside of this world. These waterways traditionally had abundant species that lived in harmony and were interconnected as a whole. When a part of the water cycle is broken, that harmony and interconnectedness is broken. Thus, the Te Hurihanga Wai or cycle of water is broken as well, resulting in severe consequences for tāngata whenua and species that rely on those ecosystems to survive and thrive.”

TWWAG recommended the following objective:

“In order to give effect to Te Mana Me te Mauri o te Wai, the spiritual wellbeing and whakapapa of Te Hurihanga Wai is prioritised, respected, protected and enhanced by 2040.”

The year 2040 was recommended for multiple reasons, including being within a tangible span of time to recognise the urgency required to implement change (*i.e.* within a single generation), as well as being the 200-year anniversary of the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Feedback on this objective was also sought from the PSLG. The PSLG recognised the need for fundamental changes in freshwater management and agreed with the overarching objectives; however, the timeframe to achieve these changes were challenged and PSLG recommended that a longer period of time would be necessary.

Further workshops were held around this objective, including discussions around extending the timeframe for achieving the objective out to 2080. Through the development of other parts of the Freshwater Plan Change, it became clear that some aspects may be incredibly difficult to achieve by 2040 – suspended sediment in waterways, for example. Council and TTMAC members further refined and agreed on the following draft objective:

In order to give effect to Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai, the spiritual wellbeing and whakapapa of Te Hurihanga Wai is prioritised, respected, protected and enhanced by 2040.

This is the current version in the Draft Freshwater Plan Change.

Long-Term Vision for Freshwater

The NPS-FM requires that we have a long-term vision for freshwater.

Regional Plans are generally reviewed on a 10-yearly cycle in order to stay relevant with current knowledge and current best practices for resource management. Setting a long-term vision that extends beyond this 10-year window is critical to achieving the outcomes and aspirations required by the NPS-FM.

Various options for long-term visions were considered including:

In order to give effect to Te Mana Me te Mauri o te Wai, the spiritual wellbeing and whakapapa of Te Hurihanga Wai <the natural hydrological cycle> is prioritised, protected, respected and enhanced by 2040.

By 2050 freshwater supports the health and wellbeing of our people and communities while maintaining Te Mana Me te Mauri o te Wai.

By 2060 clean and abundant freshwater supplies support the ability of people and communities to provide for their social and economic wellbeing while maintaining Te Mana Me te Mauri o te Wai.

PSLG, noted that timeframes should reflect community aspirations, but also take into account the social, economic, and cultural implications and recognise the significant time and resources required

to implement improvements, as well as the diversity of Northland's soil types and catchment characteristics. They proposed an amendment to the long-term vision:

Within two generations, Northland's freshwater ecosystems are healthy, the mauri of the water is protected, and our water supports resilient and thriving communities, and a strong economy.

Council staff and TWWAG representatives worked together, and additional workshops were held with councillors and TTMAC representatives, to refine the long-term vision for freshwater that best incorporates the recommendations from TWWAG and PSLG and balance the urgency of action with the expected length of time to achieve the desired outcomes. Council adopted the following vision that is now in the Draft Freshwater Plan Change:

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

We will know if we're on track to achieve the vision if by 2040:

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

Freshwater Values

NPS-FM Freshwater Values

There are four compulsory values in the NPS-FM 2020, including the ecosystem health value that includes five biophysical components. The NPS-FM also lists nine other values (Table 1) and we must consider whether they apply as well (NPS-FM 3.9(2)). Feedback from our initial engagement with TWWAG and PSLG and the wider community (see below) indicates that all of these other NPS-FM values apply somewhere in the region, and hence should be retained in the wider consultation process with tāngata whenua and communities.

Table 1. Compulsory freshwater values under the NPS-FM 2020.

NPS-FM compulsory values
Ecosystem Health (5 biophysical components: water quality, water quantity, habitat, aquatic life, ecological processes)
Human contact
Threatened species
Mahinga Kai
NPS-FM Other values that must be considered
Natural form and character
Drinking water supply
Wai tapu
Transport and Tauranga waka
Fishing
Hydro-electric power generation
Animal drinking water
Irrigation, cultivation, and production of food beverage
Commercial and industrial use

Regional councils may identify other values and must engage with tāngata whenua and communities to identify freshwater values. From initial engagement TWWAG and PSLG, a range of additional values were identified, as set out below:

Māori freshwater values

- Mauri
- Atuatanga
- Wairuatanga
- Ki uta ki tai
- Rahui
- Tapu
- Mana
- Rangatiratanga
- Kaitiakitanga
- Aroha
- Kotahitanga
- Manaakitanga
- Whanaungatanga
- Whakapapa
- Kai-ngaki
- Wahi wai rongoi
- **Mahinga kai***
- Wai tapu
- Tauranga Waka

Other values

- **Ecosystem health***
- **Threatened species***
- **Human contact***
- Drinking water supply
- Natural form and character
- Transport
- Fishing
- Hydro-electric power generation
- Animal drinking water
- Irrigation, cultivation, and production of food and beverages
- Commercial and industrial use
- Domestic food supply

***compulsory values in the NPS-FM**

An online public survey conducted between December 2022 and February 2023, sought views on freshwater values and sites of interest. 124 people provided responses identifying:

- Key values for freshwater and their #1 value at each location,
- Key impacts at the site and their #1 impact of concern, and
- Key improvements sought for each site.

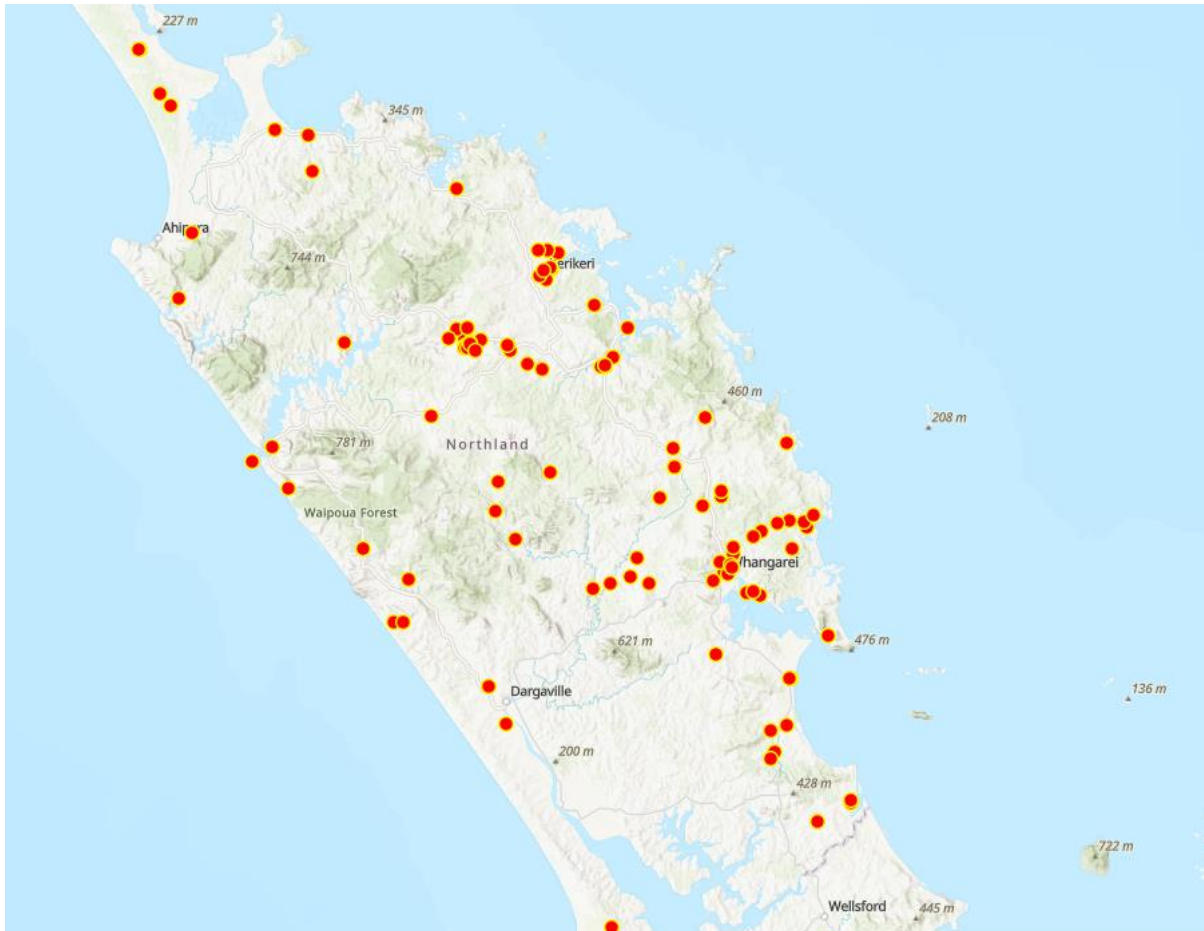


Figure 1. Geographical distribution of freshwater sites identified in the public online survey.

The results showed that biodiversity, cultural, naturalness and recreational values were the most important. In terms of impacts, sediment and pollution were of most concern. A few responses identified 'other' values for freshwater including flood attenuation, carbon sinks (wetlands), habitat for threatened species, and spiritual values. This suggests the values identified to date are a reasonably accurate reflection of what Northlanders care about in relation to freshwater.

The already identified values above sufficiently cover the values highlighted in the survey. Adding 'carbon sinks' as a stand-alone value for wetlands would be problematic, given that carbon sequestration is highly variable depending on wetland type and condition. It is also indirectly managed by ecosystem health and natural character values, as protecting these values also maintains the carbon sequestration function of wetlands. Spiritual values are also covered by the TWWAG values identified by (*e.g.*, tapu and wai tapu). While there may be other forms of spiritual value, at this stage there is insufficient information available to form specific policy.

Objectives

Under the NPS-FM, the regional council must identify an environmental outcome for every value that applies to an FMU or part of an FMU, and must include the environmental outcomes as an objective, or multiple objectives, in its regional plan (NPS-FM 2020 Clause 3.9). The objectives must jointly fulfil the long-term vision.

Draft objectives F.1A.1 – F.1A.8 in the [draft Freshwater Plan Change](#) set out the objectives to achieve freshwater environmental outcomes. These were developed for the four compulsory and nine additional freshwater values in the NPS-FM, taking into consideration the [feedback from the PSLG](#), as well as the [tāngata whenua values and objectives proposed by TWWAG](#).

Based on feedback from TWWAG, we grouped the tāngata whenua values with the other objectives in the draft plan change, acknowledging the interrelationship between tāngata whenua values.

Applying the TMotW hierarchy to the proposed objectives

As part of involving the two advisory groups views in developing the objectives, NRC proposed applying the TMotW hierarchy to the values and associated draft freshwater objectives to reflect the TMotW prioritisation. PSLG did not support grouping the values according to the TMotW hierarchy as they thought it would likely lead to unnecessary discussion. TWWAG was also not supportive, as all the tāngata whenua values and objectives are interrelated and were presented as a package.

However, staff saw merit in the hierarchy as this would assist decision makers on what objectives take precedence (for example in consent decisions). This prioritisation of objectives is not a requirement in the NPS-FM and in some cases may create debate about where a particular objective sits in the hierarchy.

The current draft objectives have the TMotW hierarchy applied.

Application of Objectives to FMUs

The development of the draft objectives has been undertaken taking a regional approach. Due to the magnitude of data held and analysed, monitoring yet to be undertaken, and consultation that is underway, there are information gaps that do not enable NRC to set specific targets for individual FMUs at this stage.

TWWAG and TTMAC have also recommended that council undertake future freshwater planning to work with tangata whenua and communities at a local level to define hapori wai or rohe awa. This recommendation has been included as an action in the Draft Freshwater Action Plan as it will involve significant resources and funding commitment from council if it is to be done appropriately.

Freshwater Management Units (FMUs)

The key purpose of FMUs is to provide for different approaches for managing freshwater because values for freshwater and outcomes and approaches to managing freshwater may differ across Te Taitokerau. A FMU is defined in the NPS-FM Clause 1.4:

freshwater management unit, or FMU, means all or any part of a water body or water bodies, and their related catchments, that a regional council determines under clause 3.8 is an appropriate unit for freshwater management and accounting purposes; and part of an FMU means any part of an FMU including, but not limited to, a specific site, river reach, water body, or part of a water body.

Detailed requirements for FMUs are in the NPS-FM Clause 3.8.

FMUs must be identified as a prerequisite to all other steps in the National Objectives Framework (NOF) and the council must actively involve tāngata whenua and engage with communities when doing this. The definition of FMUs is intentionally flexible so councils can determine the spatial scale best suited to their region.

Water Quality FMUs

NRC's initial 13 FMUs (Figure 2) for water quality were developed and signed off by Council in August 2019 under the 2017 version of the NPS-FM and supporting guidance (MfE 2016).

The rationale for their development was influenced by the strong link between catchment surface water quality and receiving environments such as estuaries/harbours, hence the majority of FMU boundaries are defined by major harbour catchments.

<https://www.nrc.govt.nz/environment/new-freshwater-rules/the-freshwater-plan/freshwater-management-units/>

The water quality FMUs were developed in 2019 prior to the release of the 2020 NPS-FM. Since then, the water quality FMUs developed by NRC have been used in the recent revision of the State of the Environment (SOE) monitoring network, and for freshwater modelling and reporting purposes. However, for the freshwater plan change process, an initial region-wide approach has been used. This is because most freshwater issues in Northland are region-wide or vary in severity and importance according to a range of biophysical characteristics etc, rather than by FMU catchments.

Compulsory values for freshwater in the NPS-FM also must be applied across the region, but their relative importance for tāngata whenua and communities may vary with location. At this stage of the freshwater plan change process, a regional approach has been adopted and a need for different management approaches for each of the 13 FMUs has not been identified. It is expected that the need for bespoke management by FMU (and potential changes to FMUs) will become clearer as we engage further on the freshwater plan change (e.g., as we receive feedback on the draft freshwater plan change).

There has not been any public consultation on the water quality FMUs to date. The NPS-FM 2020 requires that FMUs be developed in consultation with communities and tāngata whenua – it is therefore recommended that the current FMUs be treated as drafts to be tested with tāngata whenua and communities through the consultation document associated with the draft freshwater plan change.

TWWAG has also provided recommendations for council to undertake further work at community level with tangata whenua to define hapori wai and associated vision, values and objectives.



Figure 2. Map of the Northland Water Quality Freshwater Management Units developed in 2019 under the then operative NPS-FM 2017.

Water Quantity FMUs

Water quantity FMUs for rivers, lakes, and aquifers (Figure 3) have been identified in the Proposed Regional Plan. Rather than being ‘harbour’-based catchment boundaries, they are based on water body type and ‘sensitivity’ to changes in flow / level – water quantity limits (minimum flows and allocation limits) are set for each FMU to protect ecosystem health and reliability of supply.

The water quantity FMUs in the Proposed Regional Plan were developed prior to the 2020 version of the NPS-FM. They were subject to consultation during the development of the Proposed Regional Plan and at this stage staff do not have evidence to suggest that they and the associated water quantity management regimes are inappropriate – it is, however, recommended that the consultation document seeks feedback on this.

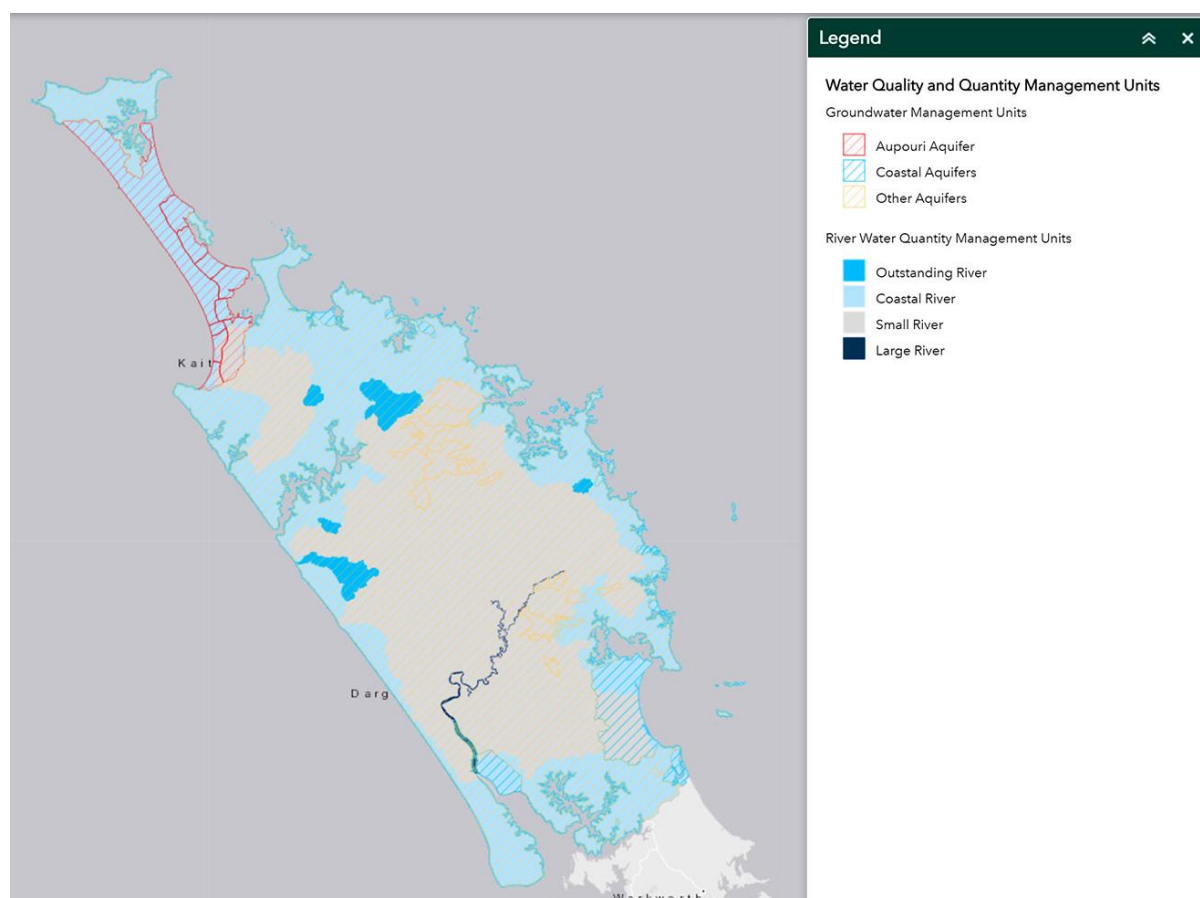


Figure 3. Map of the Northland Water Quantity Management Units developed in 2020 under the then operative NPS-FM 2017.

Table 2. Water quantity FMU as currently in the Proposed Northland Regional Plan.

Rivers	Lakes / wetlands	Aquifers
Outstanding rivers	Deep lakes (> 10 metres in depth)	Aupōuri aquifer
Coastal rivers	Shallow lakes (≤ 10 metres in depth)	Coastal aquifers
Small rivers	Dune lakes	Other aquifers
Large rivers	Natural wetlands	

Review of FMUs

As the existing FMUs have not been developed with input from communities or tāngata whenua, these will eventually be reviewed and will specifically include, as per recommendations from TWWAG, the involvement of tāngata whenua with existing relationships and/or are mana whakahaere over those FMUs.

Table 8: TWWAG Recommendations for FMUs
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All existing FMUs in the region should be reviewed in a process agreed to by tangata whenua.2. In partnership with tangata whenua, NRC should identify specific values, environmental outcomes (objectives), policies, environmental flows, levels and limits, for each FMU, where necessary at a sub-catchment level, and be read and considered together with the Regionwide objectives and policies in the FPI. In doing so, the NRC should:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Give effect to Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai provisions developed by tangata whenuab. Include through future work additional FMU provisions developed by tangata whenuac. give effect to hapū and iwi planning documents and/or mana whakahono a rohe agreementsd. Incorporate water quality and quantity limits and targets suggested by tangata whenua to achieve environmental outcomese. Incorporate methods proposed by tangata whenua to avoid, remedy or mitigate any over-allocation within a specific timeframef. Empower tangata whenua through s.33 and s.36B of the RMA to assess water quality and quantity levels, taking into account cultural indicators or attributes they have identified.3. Specific FMU provisions prevail over other provisions within the Region-wide Objectives and Region-wide Policy sections, unless stated otherwise.4. A region wide freshwater vision statement for tangata whenua should be included in the FPI, in lieu of individual FMU vision statements. NRC must ensure there is consistency with implementing the objectives and policies that give effect to Te Mana me te Mauri o te Wai presented in this report.5. Action plans for FMUs are developed in partnership with tangata whenua groups who have the appropriate mana whakahaere over a freshwater area. NRC must resource those who are active in the development of the proposed action plans.
<p>Advisory Note: It would be inappropriate to make changes to regional objectives, policies and rules in relation to FMUs without the involvement of wider tangata whenua groups impacted by provisions.</p>

PSLG had not been specifically asked by NRC to provide feedback on the FMUs, though it is anticipated that feedback will be received during this initial round of public consultation.

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