

Te Mana o te Wai

Hierarchy of obligations

Overview of the Freshwater Policy Review

| Mō te Arotake Kaupapahere Waimāori

Healthy, clean water. How we manage our environment so freshwater bodies are healthy and safe is the focus of Waikato Regional Council's Freshwater Policy Review. This policy review is just one of the requirements under central government's Essential Freshwater package, which is about stopping further degradation of New Zealand's fresh water and improving its quality and ecosystem health.

A key element of the package is an update to the *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020* (NPS-FM), which requires all freshwater planning documents to give effect to

Te Mana o te Wai, a concept that refers to the vital importance of water by prioritising its health and wellbeing.

To give effect to the NPS-FM and Te Mana o te Wai, we will be making changes to the *Waikato Regional Policy Statement* (RPS) and *Waikato Regional Plan* over the next two years. This is our Freshwater Policy Review.

It's a massive task, but by working with tangata whenua and communities we can determine how Te Mana o te Wai is applied to freshwater management throughout our rohe and ensure our waterways can be used and enjoyed for generations to come.

What is Te Mana o te Wai and what does it mean? | Mō Te Mana o te Wai me tōna tikanga

Te Mana o te Wai, or mana of the water, is about recognising the vital importance of clean, healthy water for maintaining the health of our waterbodies, freshwater ecosystems and the communities that rely upon them for their sustenance and wellbeing. In essence, by protecting the health and wellbeing of our rivers, lakes, streams and other freshwater bodies, we in turn protect the health and wellbeing of our people and surrounding environments.

The NPS-FM has incorporated the concept of Te Mana o te Wai since 2014. But an update to the NPS-FM in 2020 elevated Te Mana o te Wai as the foremost fundamental concept that will determine how New Zealand's freshwater resources will be managed.

How will it be implemented?

Mō te whakatinana

Hierarchy of obligations

Te Mana o te Wai imposes a hierarchy of obligations by prioritising the health and wellbeing of waterbodies and freshwater ecosystems first. The second priority is the health needs of people (such as drinking water) and the third is the ability of people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

This hierarchy does not mean that in every case the water needs to be restored to a pristine or pre-human contact state before the other needs in the hierarchy can be addressed.

Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato

In the hierarchy of obligations specific to the Waikato and Waipā catchments is *Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato – The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River*. Created through the Treaty of Waitangi settlement process, this document has legal status as the primary direction-setting document for freshwater policy relating to the Waikato and Waipā rivers, meaning the concept of Te Mana o te Awa within *Te Ture Whaimana* will be woven into the review and will prevail over any inconsistency with the NPS-FM.

Key principles

- **Mana whakahaere:** the power, authority and obligations of tangata whenua to make decisions that maintain, protect and sustain the health and wellbeing of, and their relationship with, fresh water.
- **Kaitiakitanga:** the obligation of tangata whenua to preserve, restore, enhance and sustainably use fresh water for the benefit of present and future generations.
- **Manaakitanga:** the process by which tangata whenua show respect, generosity and care for fresh water and for others.
- **Governance:** the responsibility of those with authority for making decisions about fresh water to do so in a way that prioritises the health and wellbeing of fresh water now and into the future.
- **Stewardship:** the obligation of all New Zealanders to manage fresh water in a way that ensures it sustains present and future generations.
- **Care and respect:** the responsibility of all New Zealanders to care for fresh water in providing for the health of the nation.

Giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai

Te Mana o te Wai underpins our approach to protect and improve our rivers, streams, lakes and other waterbodies and, therefore, will be applied throughout the Freshwater Policy Review. We will do this by actioning the five key requirements of Te Mana o te Wai (see figure 1), which includes applying its hierarchy of obligations and implementing the National Objectives Framework (see figure 2), a process that connects the aspirations for fresh water held by tangata whenua and communities with potential solutions to realise these aspirations.

Every local authority must actively involve tangata whenua (to the extent they wish to be involved) by identifying a local approach to freshwater management, and giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai.

Figure 1

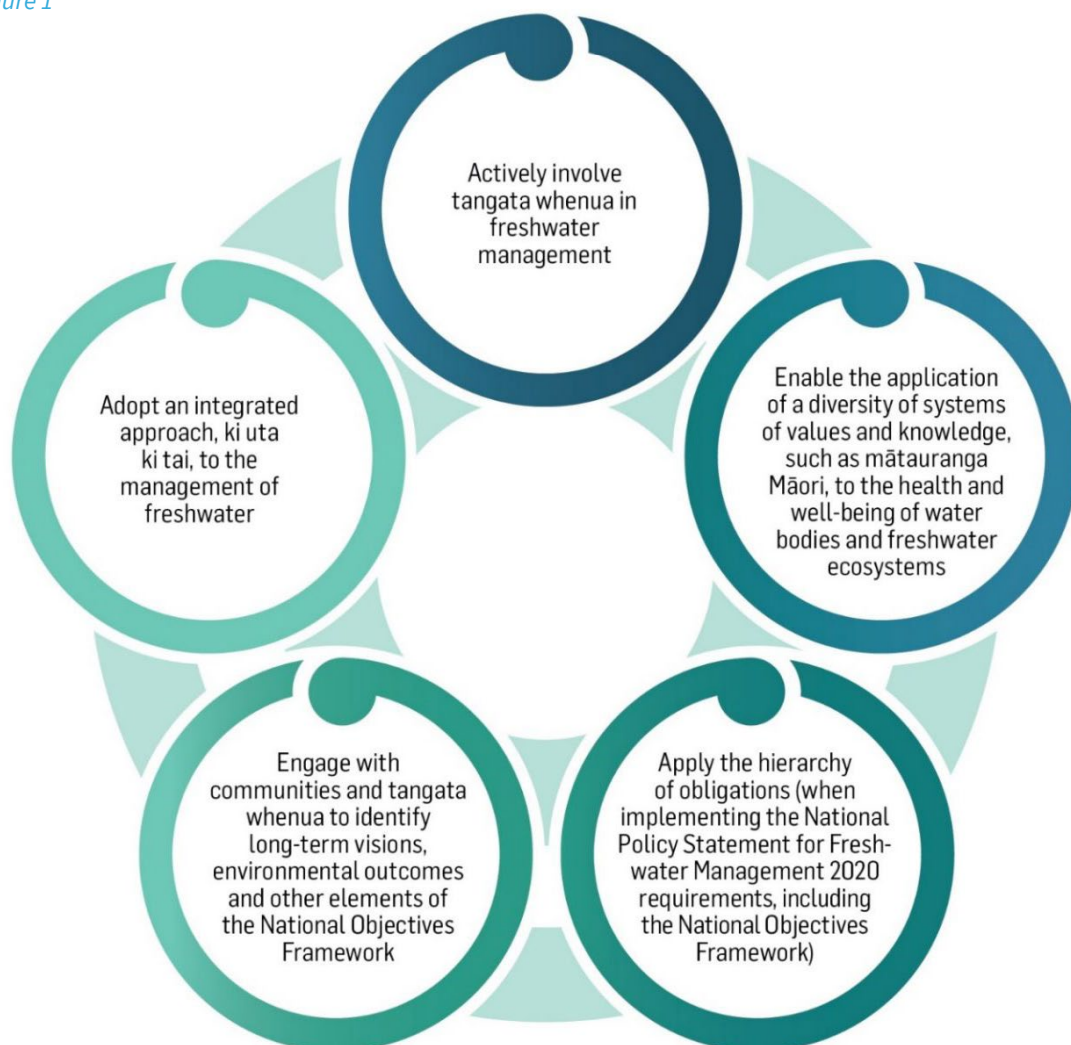
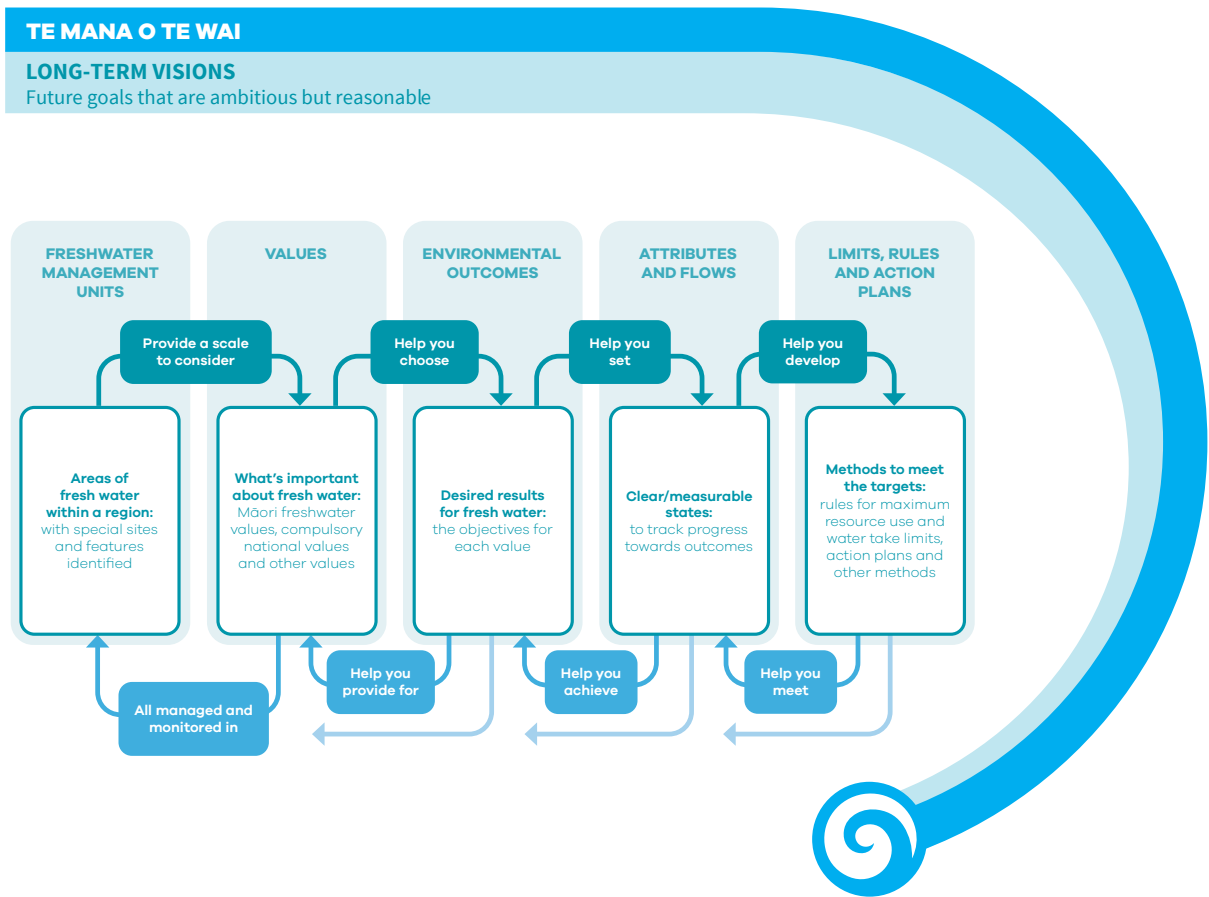


Figure 2



Tangata whenua and community involvement

To implement the NPS-FM and Te Mana o te Wai, we will be revising the freshwater aspects in our planning documents. These revisions will affect many communities across our rohe so we'll be seeking input from tangata whenua, farmers, industry, rural professionals and the general public to identify and understand their issues, values and aspirations for fresh water. We will then use this feedback to prepare the revised RPS and regional plan.

The Freshwater Policy Review will also look at ways to actively involve tangata whenua in freshwater management, including decision making, monitoring of freshwater bodies and the preparation of planning documents. One way we may do this is by investigating the use of tools in the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), such as joint management arrangements and transfers of power, as a way of involving tangata whenua.

Integrated management and diverse knowledge systems

For the Freshwater Policy Review, we'll be taking an integrated management approach to how we manage our region's fresh water. This approach is underpinned by the principle of ki uta, ki tai (from the mountains to the sea) – a principle recognising the interconnectedness of our taiao (environment) and the interactions between each of its parts.

Ki uta, ki tai requires integration between freshwater management and land use to avoid adverse effects (including cumulative effects) on the health and wellbeing of freshwater environments and coastal receiving waters.

Implementing Te Mana o te Wai also means applying a diversity of values and knowledge systems, such as mātauranga Māori, to the management of fresh water.

Where can I find more information? | Mō te puna kōrero

Check out waikatoregion.govt.nz/freshwater-policy-review to find:

- information sheets breaking down the Freshwater Policy Review
- how to share your views
- a summary of key milestones
- update on our progress.

You can also email us at policy@waikatoregion.govt.nz or call 0800 800 401 to speak to a member of our Freshwater Policy Review team.

