

National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management, Progressive Implementation Programme for Auckland

Adopted: xx November 2018

Date of Public Notice:

Purpose

The purpose of this updated progressive implementation programme¹ is to identify key revisions to the 2015 programme to enable Auckland Council to implement the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) by 2025.

Context

Auckland Council supports the objectives of the NPS-FM and has committed significant effort to implement it by 2025. This intent is demonstrated in the 2015 programme which identified three implementation stages and timing of its implementation programme as follows:

- Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan;
- [Guideline Document 2014/004 – Water Sensitive Design for Stormwater \(WSD\)](#); and
- A programme of progressive plan changes and variations to the Auckland Unitary Plan, based on a coastal receiving environment basis, from 2017-2025.

Under this 2015 programme, it was envisaged that the NPS-FM would be implemented fully by 31 December 2025 through a series

of scheduled changes to the [Auckland Unitary Plan](#), with this work programme originally planned to commence in 2017. It was considered that these plan changes would be best addressed using a staged geographical approach across the region, initially beginning with the Manukau Harbour.

Further policy direction provided by central government and increased supporting environmental data requirements means that implementation of the NPS-FM through the 2015 programme is no longer achievable and council has accordingly adapted processes and initiatives to accommodate these changes. In response to updates to the NPS-FM a range of actions and work programmes have been introduced to implement the NPS-FM (see Figure 1).

Auckland Council acknowledges that while future plan changes to the Auckland Unitary Plan are required for the successful implementation of the NPS-FM, significant work continues to be carried out across the council family that will improve fresh and coastal water outcomes. The NPS-FM requires overall policy implementation by 2025. This timeframe may be extended out to 2030 if necessary and required (Policy E 1 (ba) of the NPS-FM).

¹ The first NPS-FM Progressive Implementation Programme was adopted by Auckland Council in December 2015.

Work undertaken since 2015 progressive implementation programme

In support of the NPS-FM implementation programme, the council has completed a range of key initiatives including:

- Auckland Unitary Plan made Operative in part with the freshwater provisions being operative;
- Separate plan changes based on geographic areas were piloted in five locations. Following early engagement it was found that there was enough similarity of issues between the areas that it merited rolling out the plan changes by attribute instead;
- Completion of the first iteration of Water Quality Accounting (based on data from currently monitored sites) which is presented via the [Integrated Watershed Plans](#) (a GIS based engagement tool);
- Development has begun of a region wide Freshwater Management Tool (FWMT) to estimate current catchment contaminant loads associated with various instream water quality states;
- Approval of a [Water Quality Targeted Rate under the 2018 Long Term Plan](#) which will provide \$452 million of additional

investment over the next ten years into water quality outcomes across the region;

- Development of Auckland's water strategy to provide strategic direction and priorities for the Auckland Council family to improve management of water in all its forms;
- Work to support central government swimmability targets and at-risk catchment initiatives continues;
- Development of [Safeswim model](#) to provide forecasts of coastal water quality and real-time alerts of public health risks (84 beaches and 8 freshwater locations) around Auckland;
- Publication of [Watercare's Auckland Water Efficiency Strategy 2017 to 2020](#). The strategy outlines Watercare's plans to enhance existing programmes and identifies new initiatives for water efficiency;
- Strategic reviews with respect to holistic management of sediment, and water allocation across the council; and
- Identification of Auckland's outstanding freshwater bodies.

Programme for Implementation 2018 – 2025

Given changes to the operating context since 2015, Auckland's Progressive Implementation Programme has been revised to address the following:

Attribute Group Based Plan Changes

Based on the learnings from the five geographical pilots discussed above, together with the development of the Freshwater Management Tool, plan changes are now being prepared for progressive roll out by attribute² rather than by geographic location.

A progressive roll out of plan changes by attribute groupings promotes and drives integrated management of land use, fresh water and coastal water. This provides clear policy direction to adopt an integrated management approach in planning and decision making at all levels, i.e. growth strategies, the regional policy statement, regional plan and district plan and resource consents.

² "Attribute" is defined in the *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2017* as "... a measurable characteristic of fresh water, including physical, chemical and biological properties, which supports particular values". "Value" is defined as "...: a) any national value; and b) includes any value in relation to fresh water, that is not a national value, which a regional council [or Unitary Authority] identifies as appropriate for regional or local circumstances (including any use value)".

This enables council to learn from the first plan change and develop ways to streamline the process, the testing of statutory parameters and ensure outcomes are technically sound. It reduces litigation risk as each plan change occurs when detailed investigation and modelling work is available for each attribute and enables flexibility in approach and recognition of issues within the catchment level. Importantly it enables the spatial scale to be set at either the regional or catchment level for each attribute, (unlike the 2015 staged geographic approach which addressed all attributes within a specific area).

Subject to investigations on groundwater quantity (due for completion in December 2018), it may be possible to initially undertake a plan change for water quantity in 2019. The timing of plan changes for water quality attributes (E. coli, nutrients, sediment, copper and zinc) will be determined subject to further assessment of the current evidence base, additional modelling of predicted future states will be provided by the Freshwater Management Tool (see below) scenario testing and supporting investigations in 2020.

Freshwater Management Tool Development – modelling where we can't measure

To support the roll out of plan changes by attribute groupings, dynamic contaminant load models that estimate the total daily loads of each attribute in all the regions waterways have been developed, these models with the associated scenario analysis software are called the Fresh Water Management Tool (FWMT). The outputs of the tool will be reviewed with respect to existing Auckland Unitary Plan policies and rules, compliance measures, proposed infrastructure upgrades across the region, education programmes, and implementation of other national level tools (for example national stock exclusion regulations). The development of scenarios will assist in engagement and decisions on setting of limits or targets to restrict resource use where appropriate (including whether these occur at a regional or catchment level). The first iteration of the FWMT is due to be completed in 2019.

Targeted Rate - water quality improvement

Over the next ten years the targeted rate will focus on specific programmes including:

- Stormwater quality improvement programme of the western isthmus (\$317.1 million). This will in turn reduce combined sewer overflows into the Waitemata Harbour.

- Contaminant reduction programme (\$44.5 million) including reduction of sediment into the Kaipara Harbour.
- Urban and rural streams rehabilitation (\$20.4 million). This includes improvements to the ecological health of the streams (via improved environmental outcomes associated with urban development in areas such as Omaru Creek in East Tamaki).
- Proactive compliance and monitoring of onsite waste water systems (\$8.2 million).
- Illicit discharges reduction programme (\$5.0 million), aimed at reducing Safeswim non-compliance alerts, improving amenity value of recreational beaches around the region, and improving freshwater stream environments.

In summary, Auckland Council's 2018 progressive implementation programme now includes a revised range of actions and work programmes to implement the NPS-FM by 2025. However, it is recognised that this timeframe may be extended out to 2030 if necessary and required (Policy E 1 (ba) of the NPS-FM).

FIGURE 1 – Progressive Implementation Programme's indicative timeline (based on calendar year)



