

I hereby give notice that an ordinary meeting of the Rural Advisory Panel will be held on:

Date: Friday, 3 May 2024
Time: 12.30pm
Meeting Room: Level 26, Room 1
Venue: 135 Albert Street
Auckland

Ngā Hui a te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take ā-Taiwhenua / Rural Advisory Panel

OPEN AGENDA

MEMBERSHIP

Chairperson	Cr Andy Baker	Auckland Council
Deputy Chairperson	Alan Cole	Franklin Local Board, Auckland Council
Members	Mike Bramley	Dairy New Zealand
	Jesse Brennan	Federated Farmers of NZ
	Trish Fordyce	National Forest Growers Levy Trust
	Tim Holdgate	Rodney Local Board, Auckland Council
	Steve Levet	Rural Contractors New Zealand
	Andrew McKenzie	Beef and Lamb New Zealand
	Brian Mason	Land Owners and Contractors Association (Wellsford)
	Annaliese Morgan	Young Farmers
	Linda Potauaine	Waitākere Ranges Local Board, Auckland Council
	Leanne Roberts	Horticulture NZ
	Cr Greg Sayers	Auckland Council
	Wayne Scott	Aggregate and Quarry Association
	Cushla Smith	Fonterra Shareholders Council
	Geoff Smith	Equine Industry
	Peter Spencer	NZ Forest Owners Association
	Keith Vallabh	Pukekohe Vegetable Growers Association
	Glenn Wilcox	Māori representative

(Quorum 10 members)

Phoebe Chiquet-Kaan
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23 April 2024

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Terms of Reference

(Excerpt – full terms of reference available as a separate document)

The terms of reference set out the purpose, role and protocols of the Auckland Council Rural Advisory Panel for the 2019-2022 term of the council. Panel members must abide by the Code of Conduct for Members of Auckland Council Advisory Panels.

Purpose

As one of council's engagement mechanisms with the rural sector in Auckland, the Rural Advisory Panel provides advice to the council within the remit of the Auckland Plan on the following areas:

- council policies, plans and strategies relevant to rural issues
- regional and strategic matters relevant to rural issues
- any matter of particular interest or concern to rural communities.

Outcomes

The panel's advice will contribute to improving the outcomes of the rural sector as set out in the Auckland Plan. The panel will provide advice through its agreed work programme.

Work programme

The panel must develop a work programme for the term. The agendas should be focused and aligned with the Auckland Plan and the long-term plan.

Submissions

The panel cannot make formal submissions to Auckland Council on council strategies, policies and plans, for example, the annual plan. However, the panel may be asked for informal feedback during a consultative process.

In its advisory role to the council, the panel may have input into submissions made by the council to external organisations but does not make independent submissions, except as agreed with the council.

This does not prevent individual members being party to submissions outside their role as panel members.

Review

The form and functioning of the panel may be reviewed prior to or after, the end of the year 2022.

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1 Ngā Tamōtanga | Apologies

2 Te Whakapuaki i te Whai Pānga | Declaration of Interest

Members are reminded of the need to be vigilant to stand aside from decision making when a conflict arises between their role as a member and any private or other external interest they might have.

3 Te Whakaū i ngā Āmiki | Confirmation of Minutes

That the Rural Advisory Panel:

- a) whakaū / confirm the ordinary minutes of its meeting, held on [Friday, 9 February 2024](#), including the confidential section, as a true and correct record.

4 Ngā Pakihi Autaia | Extraordinary Business

Section 46A(7) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (as amended) states:

“An item that is not on the agenda for a meeting may be dealt with at that meeting if-

- (a) The local authority by resolution so decides; and
- (b) The presiding member explains at the meeting, at a time when it is open to the public,-
 - (i) The reason why the item is not on the agenda; and
 - (ii) The reason why the discussion of the item cannot be delayed until a subsequent meeting.”

Section 46A(7A) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (as amended) states:

“Where an item is not on the agenda for a meeting,-

- (a) That item may be discussed at that meeting if-
 - (i) That item is a minor matter relating to the general business of the local authority; and
 - (ii) the presiding member explains at the beginning of the meeting, at a time when it is open to the public, that the item will be discussed at the meeting; but
- (b) no resolution, decision or recommendation may be made in respect of that item except to refer that item to a subsequent meeting of the local authority for further discussion.”

Essential Freshwater update report

File No.: CP2024/04031

Te take mō te pūrongo

Purpose of the report

1. To provide an update on the government's review of the freshwater instruments encompassed by the former *Essential Freshwater* programme, and a brief overview of Auckland Council's implementation of its component regulatory instruments.

Whakarāpopototanga matua

Executive summary

2. The *Essential Freshwater* programme encompasses several regulatory instruments that came into effect from 3 September 2020. Since 2020, a few amendments have been made to support the implementation of these instruments. Key regulatory instruments of relevance to this update include the:
 - National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM)
 - National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020 (NES-F)
 - Resource Management (Freshwater Farm Planning) Regulations 2023 (FWFP)
 - Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020 (stock exclusion).
3. The new government has indicated its commitment to review and make changes to multiple Essential Freshwater instruments. Changes have already been made to the NPS-FM plan change deadline and the government has set out a timeline for its wider Resource Management reform programme, including amendment of several freshwater instruments.
4. Due to the uncertainty around future changes across Essential Freshwater instruments, a few relevant work programmes have either slowed down to enable a reset of approach and timeframe while further baseline information is analysed (e.g. NPS-FM) or been temporarily put on hold (e.g. Fresh Water Farm Plans) while the government works through its review and amendment process in the near term.
5. Indications are that the next legislative amendment will be proposed by June 2024 – this will formally propose the removal of the requirement to apply the 'te mana o te wai' hierarchy of obligations to consent decision-making. Further amendment proposals of relevance to NPS-FM, NES-F, FWFP, and potentially the national stock exclusion regulations, are expected before the end of the third quarter of 2024. These changes seek to remove complexity and provide further clarity on how freshwater outcomes are best achieved in a cost-effective way.

Guidance documents / reports published

6. As a result of the government still working through potential changes across multiple Essential Freshwater instruments, there has only been two relevant publications from the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) and no relevant publications from the Ministry of Primary Industries since the Rural Advisory Panel's last meeting.
 - MfE - [Our Land 2024](#) and [Our Land 2024: A snapshot](#) (published 10 April 2024). Our land 2024 explores the current state of our natural assets and natural infrastructure, the benefits they provide us, and how we've placed them under pressure.
 - MfE - [Update to highly erodible land and estimated long-term soil erosion data sets for environmental reporting](#) (published 27 March 2024). The report details updates to the datasets for highly erodible land and estimated long-term soil erosion across the country, with data up to 2022.

Regulatory and planning updates

National reforms of freshwater instruments

7. The regional sector, consisting of staff from the 16 regional and unitary authorities, continue to provide input and advice to senior Ministry for the Environment officials on potential changes that, where appropriate, could be made to simplify and/or streamline requirements for implementation of the freshwater instruments. The intention is to tailor planning, regulatory and operational responses (whether the responsibility of councils or other parties) to be more effective and efficient in their application, relative to the environmental risk that needs to be addressed. Auckland Council staff participate in several Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that provide specialist input to regional sector leaders, particularly the Resource Managers Group (RMG), and the Policy Managers SIG that reports into RMG.
8. Freshwater instruments that have been highlighted for proposed change during the 2024 calendar year include:
 - NPS-FM – proposing the formal removal of the te mana o te wai hierarchy of obligations from resource consent decision-making (within proposed Resource Management Amendment Bill # 1, likely to be introduced by June 2024)
 - NES-F – considering interrelated provisions with the NPS-FM to simplify interpretation and scope of some of the regulatory requirements (e.g. definition of a natural inland wetland, also following recent court decisions where a compliance body had to demonstrate presence of certain species to fulfil the definition of a natural inland wetland; winter grazing provisions (although not an issue in Auckland region); and consenting constraints on certain land use activities (e.g. coal mining)
 - FWFP – putting more emphasis on catchment and farm plans and reducing complexity and potential costs to farmers, while taking into account the environmental risks present in different areas, ensuring that certification and auditing steps are justifiable given costs and environmental benefit, in addition to better integration and recognition of existing farm environment plans (Ministerial announcement of 10 April [Freshwater farm plan systems to be improved | Beehive.govt.nz](#)).
 - Stock exclusion – potentially refine where aspects of the NES-F and FWFP are inter-related, and simplification and / or ease of application is desirable, although these regulatory provisions have not been expressly highlighted for review.
9. More generally, council staff are expecting more specific announcements on the proposed changes to some of the freshwater instruments once Ministers and Cabinet receive further advice from officials by June 2024. Auckland Council's Natural Environment Strategy staff continue to keep abreast of discussions being held between regional sector staff and central government staff in the interests of ensuring that opportunities for feedback are taken up. Formal proposals should materialise before the third quarter of 2024.

NPS-FM implementation in the Auckland Region

10. At the February Rural Advisory Panel meeting, it was noted that the government had amended the RMA deadline for notification of plan changes to implement the NPS-FM from December 2024 to December 2027. This extension was to allow time for the government to revise the NPS-FM and for regional and unitary councils to then implement the revised NPS-FM.
11. In response to the change in the RMA deadline, the council has been revising the NPS-FM programme. Recommendations for change have been discussed with the programme's Steering Committee and Political Working Group. On the recommendation of the Steering Committee, the Political Working Group endorsed the approach to amending the NPS FM programme with the freshwater plan change to be notified after the revised NPS FM has been finalised and there has been consultation on a draft plan change. An Information Memorandum setting this out is being prepared to update the Planning, Environment and Parks (PEP) Committee on these changes.

12. The Memorandum will also include the results of the consultation undertaken in November 2023 on 'Setting our Direction for Improving freshwater in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland'. Over 3,800 submissions were received. A summary of the feedback was reported to all 21 local boards in March 2024. The local board responses will be included in the report to the PEP Committee. The two key rural local boards provided feedback as follows:

Franklin Local Board

- Note the feedback received from the communities in the second phase of public consultation to inform implementation of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland.
- Recommend that Auckland Council pause work on Freshwater Management, noting that current work responds to a Government Policy Statement that is being reviewed by the current Government.

Rodney Local Board

- Support feedback received from local board communities in the second phase of public consultation to inform implementation of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland (two dissenting votes).

13. The council is committed to continuing to improve the health of waterways and maintaining the momentum of the last few years, consistent with its adopted higher level position in the Auckland Water Strategy (2022). The NPS-FM work underway focuses on underpinning technical work including the baseline state of our waterbodies, potential target attribute states at different timeframes, and connections between freshwater and coastal waters. Policy development work is identifying the regulatory and non-regulatory options for improving freshwater quality and ecosystem health, and assessing their costs and benefits. Much of this work will be required irrespective of the precise nature of the changes to the NPS-FM.
14. There will be continued mana whenua, stakeholder and community engagement as part of the NPS-FM programme. The extension to timeframes may allow for more engagement opportunities where it is beneficial. We need to ensure this is an efficient process for all involved, and that it responds to community expectations for improved freshwater outcomes.

Freshwater farm plan regulations (FWFP)

15. The Government has indicated that it is intending to make some changes to the freshwater farm plan regulations, with changes to be included in the Resource Management Amendment Bill # 2 which is forecast to be introduced through Parliament in the third quarter of the 2024 calendar year.
16. Due to the current uncertainty around the scope of these 'minor' changes, some FWFP workstreams have been put on pause while we await more detail and clarity over coming months.
17. Primarily, the internal submission of an outsourced (completed) business case for the development of a council platform for communicating catchment context, challenges, and values (CCCV) is currently paused to allow us to best assess alignment with any changes made to the CCCV function by the government. However, councils have not received any specific government messaging that suggests planned regulatory changes to the CCCV function.
18. Initial hui with each of the mana whenua entities with areas of interest in the Auckland Region got underway in late March 2024. This is part of a Natural Environment Strategy Unit multi-programme engagement approach with freshwater farm plans being one of several topics covered through such hui.

19. Industry engagement meetings were also held over February and March 2024 which included engagement with HortNZ, Pukekohe Vegetable Growers Association, DairyNZ, Fonterra, Synlait, Open Country, Federated Farmers, Beef & Lamb, and Balance. The timing of the next round of industry check-in meetings will be proposed once we have certainty around what changes are to be made to the farm plan regulations.

Ngā tūtohunga Recommendation/s

That the Rural Advisory Panel:

- a) whiwhi / receive the Natural Environment Strategy staff update on central government's review of the freshwater instruments making up the former government's *Essential Freshwater* programme, and how Auckland Council staff are contributing to development of such proposals
- b) tuhi ā-taipitopito / note that implementation of some the regulatory instruments within the former Essential Freshwater programme either continue to be implemented following a programme timeframe reset, or are temporarily paused, depending on how next steps of implementation are best progressed given several interdependencies with central government's revised work programme.

Ngā tāpirihanga Attachments

There are no attachments for this report.

Ngā kaihaina Signatories

Authors	Andrew Bird - Senior Analyst Natural Environment Strategy Dave Allen - Manager Natural Environment Strategy
Authorisers	Jacques Victor – General Manager Auckland Plan Strategy and Research Warren Maclennan - Manager Regional, North, West and Island

Enhancing Environmental Criteria to Prioritise Regional Unsealed Road Improvements

File No.: CP2024/04424

Te take mō te pūrongo Purpose of the report

1. To provide an update on enhancing the environmental criteria used to prioritise regional unsealed road improvements, with a particular focus on reducing sediments from entering waterways and significant ecological areas.

Whakarāpopototanga matua

Executive summary

2. In 2022, the council's Strategic Approach to Sediment (SAS) programme identified rural roads near ecological significant areas and waterways as a potential risk factor where sedimentation runoff occurs.
3. Between December 2022 to April 2024 council and Auckland Transport staff undertook a trial using high resolution satellite imagery (post-Gabrielle) to identify bare earth areas. A new machine learning model was developed to identify the most likely unsealed rural roads needing mitigation to prevent bare earth/sediments from either entering freshwater and/or significant ecological areas.
4. The technical assessment of High Sediment Potential from unsealed rural roads using the machine learning model is separate to Auckland Transport's current Unsealed Road Improvement Programme (URIP) [methodology](#). The recent technical report using the machine learning model highlights the top 40 unsealed rural roads with highest sediment potential across the Auckland region.
5. Council is working with Auckland Transport to include this information into its prioritisation process to identify future unsealed rural roads for Auckland Transport's maintenance programme.

Auckland Unitary Plan rules for unsealed rural roads

6. Regulation of the diversion of stormwater and discharge of sediment, from unsealed rural roads during their operation, falls within the regional council functions under section 30 of the RMA. The objective and policies regarding 'stormwater diversion and discharge' are in *E1. Water quality and integrated management* of the Auckland Unitary Plan. Rules regarding stormwater diversion and discharge are in *E8. Stormwater – Discharge and diversion* of the AUP provisions. The *Table E8.4.1 Activity table* specifies the activity status for stormwater runoff from impervious areas diverted and discharged to land, water, or the coastal marine area. In the Auckland Unitary Plan, the definition of 'impervious area' includes sealed and compacted metal roads.
7. Diversion and discharge of stormwater runoff from unsealed rural roads is a **permitted activity** under rule E8.4.1(A3) if it complies with Standard E8.6.1 and Standard E8.6.2.2. The standard includes not giving rise to any significant adverse effects on aquatic life.
8. If there was evidence to support the view that discharge of stormwater runoff from unsealed rural roads gave rise to any significant adverse effects on aquatic life, the activity would not meet the permitted standard.
9. Unsealed local roads can have high impacts on water quality from increased sediment, and habitat destruction which support aquatic species.

10. Diversion and discharge of stormwater runoff from public unsealed rural roads would require a resource consent from Auckland Transport where permitted activity compliance is not possible. The argument that there are existing use rights is not relevant under the current policy settings.
11. If the discharge of stormwater runoff from unsealed rural roads is giving rise to any adverse effect on the environment, then the road controlling authority has a duty to avoid, remedy, or mitigate any adverse effect of the sediment discharge (under section 17(1) of the RMA).
12. The obligation under section 17 of the RMA is a lower threshold and more general than the permitted activity standard in Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) rule E8.4.1(A3). The AUP rule standard relates to any significant adverse effects on aquatic life. If there are any significant adverse effects on aquatic life, they should be avoided to meet the permitted activity standard.
13. To aid clarity and interpretation of application, section 17 of the RMA relates to any adverse effect on the environment, and would include, but not be limited to the effects on aquatic life. In this case, if sediments were having significant adverse effects on aquatic life, then the roading authority would need to remedy this to either meet the permitted activity rule standard or seek a resource consent.

Rodney Local Board study of unsealed rural roads

14. In June 2023, council strategy staff undertook a trial that used high spatial and temporal resolution satellite imagery alongside machine learning techniques to identify bare earth and unsealed roads in the Rodney district. This region has the highest number of rural roads and areas that discharge sediments into the Kaipara Harbour. GIS (Geographic Information System) processing techniques were used to identify areas of high sediment potential (HSP) within the Rodney district, where bare earth and unsealed roads intersect with overland flow pathways, river networks and steep slopes. These datasets were used to generate low-medium-high sediment potential areas along these roads.
15. This new methodology to identify areas with bare earth (post cyclone Gabrielle) near to unsealed rural roads has the potential to improve the identification of unsealed roads within high-risk environments for sediment loss. This information can be added to Auckland Transport's environmental assessment criteria to further assist them in prioritising improvement works to prevent sediment discharges.
16. Council strategy staff are working collaboratively with Auckland Transport's Asset Management Team to identify roads with high sediment potential areas to use in their environmental criteria and, in early 2024, were involved with Auckland Transport's preparations to deliver a business case to Waka Kotahi for sealing sections of 10 identified roads as part of their unsealed roads priority programme (Figure 1). Due to the success of trialing the new methodology in the Rodney district, strategy staff extended the analysis across the entire Auckland region.

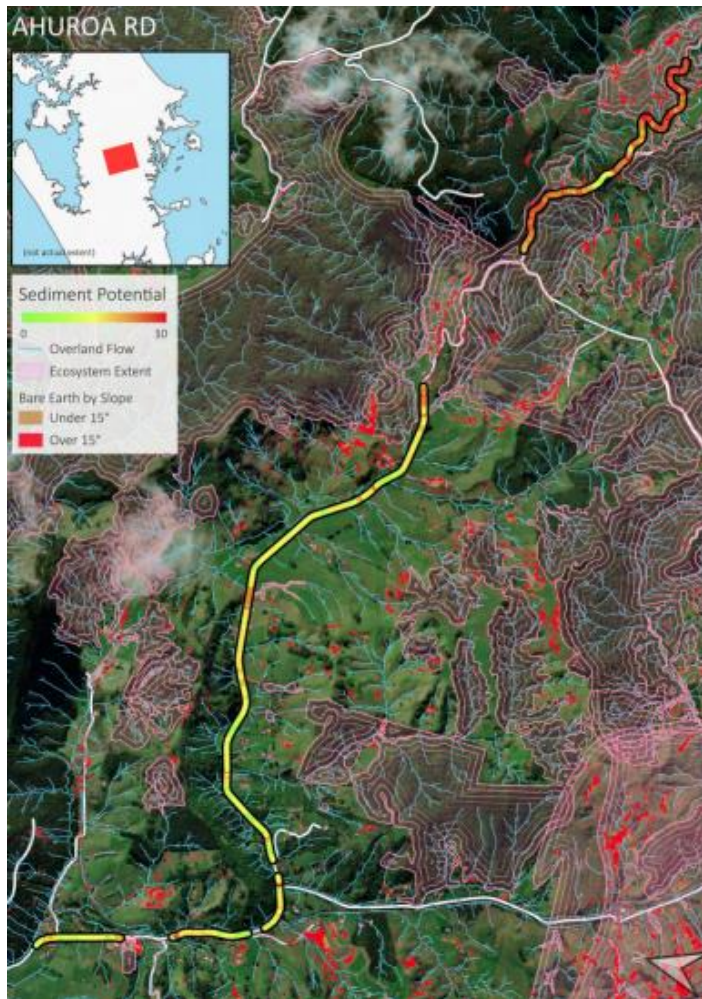


Figure 1. Sediment Potential scores along Ahuroa Road (High Sediment Potential ranking #11), with red representing the highest scores and yellow representing the moderate scores.

Regionwide prioritisation of unsealed rural roads

17. Subsequently, the bare earth model and machine learning analysis was used to assess all the region's unsealed rural roading network to identify the top 40 highest ranking roads for high sediment potential from unsealed rural roads. This work has now been completed and a final report produced in March 2024.
18. Council staff undertook this work with data analysts at Lynker Analytics and Zealandia Consulting to:
 - a) identify Bare Earth areas (post Gabrielle) using high resolution satellite imagery to map and assess areas nearest to the roading network
 - b) overlay GIS layers including slope steepness, river network, overland flow paths, ecological significant areas, and to
 - c) assess and score the potential of sediments to enter waterways or ecological areas (criteria range from low, moderate, highly moderate, high, and very high).
19. This information provides the most robust assessment of environmental issues used to date to assess sediment potential areas, including utilising artificial intelligence (AI) machine learning combined with satellite high resolution imagery at fine scales (Figure 2).

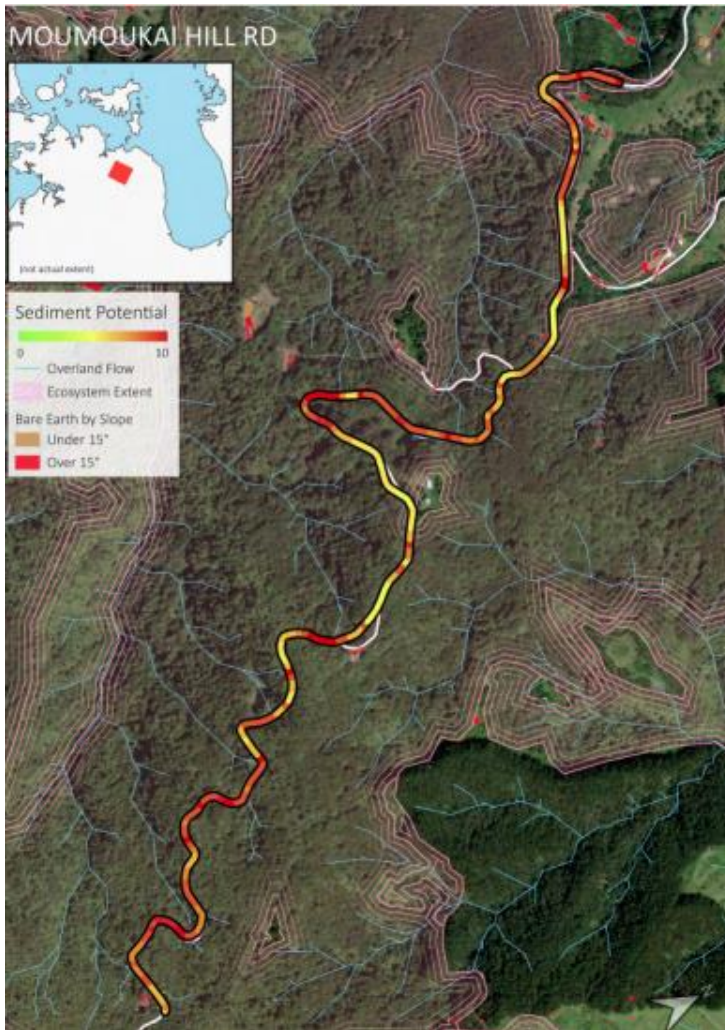


Figure 2. High Sediment Potential areas along #1 ranked unsealed rural road (Moumoukai Hill Road) for sediment management.

20. A total of 809 unsealed roads were included in the analysis. These roads are included in the current Road Assessment and Maintenance Management (RAMM) database held by Auckland Transport. Roads were scored in order of length of road with high sediment potential. This amounts to a total of 778 kilometers of unsealed roads in the data set.
21. The geospatial scoring method identified all roads considered to have a score of eight or more out of ten. Of the 809 unsealed roads, 267 of them had lengths / segments that were scored eight or more. Accordingly, approximately 33% of all the unsealed roads in the Auckland region are considered to have lengths with high sediment potential (HSP) ratings, at a total of approximately 49.3 kilometers.
22. All 267 roads were initially filtered and ranked by HSP score on the length of road, with the longest lengths of HSP ranking highest, in this case Whatipu Road at 2100 m HSP (ranked 1), to the least, being Irvine Road at 1 m HSP, noting that Irvine Road is 135 m total length but only 1 m has a HSP score (ranked 267). The data set was then ranked by the percentage of lengths having a score of 8 or more, by the total road length, given a HSP length % ranking. These ranking scores were then combined to provide a weighted score for each road based on total length and total percentage of those lengths, being a score 8 or more. This combined score was then ranked and filtered to provide a top 40 list.
23. A sensitivity check was undertaken to see if shorter roads, that might have been pushed down the rankings because of the total length of other roads being greater, still made it into the preliminary list of 40 roads. This resulted in 3 of the top 10 roads, based only on % HSP score 8 or more, being included in the preliminary top 40 list.

24. Each road identified in the top 40 was reviewed in GIS to check the status of the unsealed roadway to make sure that the road, for example, was not a cycleway or an abandoned paper road, or have highly infrequent vehicle use if at all. One cycleway was identified and excluded from the rankings for the purpose of identifying the top 40 roads.

Highest 40 Priority Rural Unsealed Roads – using the enhanced environmental assessment criteria

25. The top 40 priority rural unsealed roads for sediment potential to waterways are shown in Table 1 below.
26. This work is a novel method that Auckland Transport could use to update their environmental criteria and strengthen their assessment process in relation to improving freshwater and ecological outcomes to prioritise which roads are improved (including sealing) under their asset management programmes.

Table 1. Top 40 Unsealed Rural Roads ranked by High Sediment Potential (HSP). Roads *highlighted in grey* are included in the 2023-2028 list from AT as a priority for improving (i.e. sealing or localised improvement works), as informed by a wider range of criteria.

Roads ranked 1-20	Roads ranked 21-40
Moumoukai Hill Road	Fitzpatrick Road
Whatipu Road	Mt Donald Mclean Road
Noakes Hill Road	Waiwhiu Road
Anawhata Road	Lake Road Te Arai
Otau Mountain Road	Pakiri Block Road
Old Forest Hill Road	J Mason Road
Opanuku Road	Rodney Road Pakiri
Burke Road	Tauhoa Road
Moumoukai Road	Smith Road
South Head Road	Hamilton Road Warkworth
Ahuroa Road	Witford Road
McNicol Road	Smyth Road
Jonkers Road	Govan Wilson Road
Tunnel Road	Ryan Road Tomarata
Broken Bridge Road	Conical Peak Road
Kanohi Road	Burma Road
Upper Waiwera Road	Ocean View Road Te Arai
Kaipara Hills Road	Run Road
Bethells Road	Wharehine Road
James St Sandspit	Tahekeroa Road

Item 6

Future Assessments of Bare Earth and AI models

27. Other uses of the information using this bare earth model is to identify priority areas near unsealed roads for treatment such as installing devices or designing new engineering solutions to channel water to designated treatment areas to trap sediments.
28. Another use of this type of analysis could be to identify subdivision bare earth disturbing activities, which are allowed for by condition of consent/permitted activities and measuring the extent of exposed area within a land parcel boundary. The aim being to develop the data and model into a decision support process that helps staff manage earthworks compliance. Linking this analysis and associated data with Auckland Council's rain radar information could quickly identify areas that have had high rainfall (>30mm) and alert staff to the most susceptible areas to sediment erosion into waterways. There are several strategic uses of this easily updatable dataset to support near real time management of natural systems and associated built infrastructure.
29. Working with data analytical experts at Lynker Analytics and Zealandia Consulting has enabled strategy staff to improve current council group processes because of new technology such as Explainable AI and machine learning to interrogate high resolution satellite imagery. This real time use of satellite imagery will assist the council group in better managing sediments from different land-use and land-based activities.

Ngā tūtohunga Recommendation/s

That the Rural Advisory Panel:

- a) whiwhi / receive the staff update on enhancing environmental criteria to prioritise regional unsealed road improvements.

Ngā tāpirihanga Attachments

There are no attachments for this report.

Ngā kaihaina Signatories

Author	Jacque Reed - Senior Analyst NES
Authorisers	Jacques Victor - GM Auckland Plan Strategy and Research Warren Maclennan - Manager Regional, North, West and Island

Healthy Waters regular update

File No.: CP2024/04472

Te take mō te pūrongo

Purpose of the report

1. To whakarite / provide an update on Healthy Waters activities in rural Auckland.

Whakarāpopototanga matua

Executive summary

2. This brief report provides updates on current priority issues for Healthy Waters in the rural sector including:
 - drainage maintenance,
 - Tomarata groundwater use study,
 - rural activities in Making Space for Water, and
 - Field Days 2024.
3. A further update report will be provided to the panel at its August 2024 meeting.

Drainage maintenance

4. Following feedback at previous Rural Advisory Panel meetings, Auckland Transport and Healthy Waters have agreed that the current service level agreement for roadside drainage will not change.
5. Specific feedback has been given regarding the management of the land drains and run-off in Pukekohe Hill. This market garden area has specific needs regarding the type of maintenance needed to manage silt accumulation.
6. In response, Healthy Waters will establish a working group including cross council stakeholders to consider the various commercial, regulatory, and environmental pressures. The working group will seek feedback from businesses and landowners to inform options to manage the silt accumulation.

Tomarata groundwater use study

7. The Tomarata groundwater use study commissioned in response to low water levels in bores within the community area is still in progress. A memo was provided to the Rural Advisory Panel in February 2024. Subsequently, 14 sites were tested for signal strength. Of these, 10 have a good enough signal to install remote reading equipment onto water meters for data collection. Now that sites are confirmed, property owner permission will be confirmed, and procurement can be completed. Installation is scheduled to start in June 2024.
8. Overall, property owners and farm managers have been open to the study and willing to provide additional information about their water use and changes they have observed in the area over time. This is valuable to staff and will inform our future analysis of the data as it comes in.
9. There are two consent holders with substantial groundwater allocations in the area. Their consent information has been reviewed to provide wider context on influences on water levels. One of the consent holders is involved in the study and will have four sites being monitored.

Rural activities in Making Space for Water

10. The Making Space for Water programme is still in the planning phase, so there has been limited physical works in rural areas outside of the storm recovery work shared at the February 2024 panel meeting.
11. As part of the community flood resilience initiative staff have held workshops with Matakana (Rodney) and Clevedon (Franklin) catchment groups to help scope codesigning a catchment viewer to support flood resilience interventions with rural landowners.
12. Given the substantial rural land area in Auckland, the goal of the rural settlements initiative for this financial year is to identify which communities are most in need of support. Staff are identifying community halls and marae in flood risk areas to support this prioritisation.
13. Operations staff have identified at least 10 community halls that could be vulnerable, either their wastewater system, drinking water systems or the building itself. They would need additional investment to improve long-term resilience, which has not yet been scoped.
14. Staff are developing a definition of rural settlements for the purpose of the Making Space for Water programme. Stats NZ identifies rural settlements based on population, land zoning and infrastructure. It updated its classifications in [2023](#). There are 41 rural settlements in the Auckland region, refer to Attachment A.
15. These rural settlements are defined by the following criteria:
 - form a contiguous cluster of one or more low density statistical areas
 - contain an estimated resident population of 200–999 or at least 40 residential dwellings
 - represent a reasonably compact area or have a visible center of population, with a population density of at least 200 residents per square kilometre or 100 address points per square kilometre
 - contain at least one community or public building, such as a church, school, or shop.
16. This list of rural settlements informs our base definition but will be refined based on our experience with rural communities around the region. For example, Healthy Waters applies a water catchment view, rather than a strictly population view and so other smaller communities may be encompassed by Stats NZ criteria.
17. Staff seek feedback from the panel on the initial rural settlements definition scope, based on the Stats NZ list.

Field Days 2024

18. Healthy Waters staff will host a stall at the Field Days from the 12 - 15 June, this will be the third consecutive year of attendance. Staff designed the stall to promote environmental restoration, incorporating educational tanks, providing funding information and brochures, and educational posters. Staff will be on-site to answer any freshwater or restoration questions rural Aucklanders might have. Attendance allows staff to interact and offer support to an audience of rural Aucklanders at a scale that would not be achievable otherwise.

Ngā tūtohunga Recommendation/s

That the Rural Advisory Panel:

- a) whiwhi / receive the information on Healthy Waters activities in rural Auckland
- b) whakarite / provide feedback on the initial definition scope for rural settlements.

Ngā tāpirihanga Attachments

No.	Title	Page
A	Rural settlements in Auckland according to StatsNZ classification	21

Ngā kaihaina Signatories

Author	Elizabeth Johnson – Principal, Wai Ora Strategic Programmes
Authorisers	Craig Mcilroy – General Manager Barry Potter - Director Infrastructure and Environmental Services Warren Maclennan - Manager Regional, North, West and Island

Attachment A – Rural settlements in Auckland according to StatsNZ classification

Islands	North
Kawau Island	Port Albert
Medlands Beach	Te Hana
Tryphena	Kaipara Flats
Omiha	Shelly Beach
South	Matakana
Big Bay-Grahams Beach	Whangateau
Matakawau Point	Point Wells
Glenbrook Beach	Leigh
Waiau Pa	Ti Point
Kingseat	Rainbows End
Clevedon	Sandspit
Paerata	Baddeleys Beach-Campbells Beach
Kawakawa Bay	Kaukapakapa
Orere Point	Puhoi
Bombay	Scotts Landing-Mahurangi East
West	Algies Bay
Bethells Beach/Te Henga	Mahurangi West
Piha	Waiwera
Karekare	Stillwater
Huia	Okura
Parau	Paremoremo

Views of the Rural Advisory Panel on the Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024 - 2034 to the Budget Committee

File No.: CP2024/04589

Te take mō te pūrongo Purpose of the report

1. To report back on the feedback to the Budget Committee from delegated members of the Rural Advisory Panel to the draft Long-Term Plan 2024 - 2034

Whakarāpopototanga matua Executive summary

2. Every year the Council Panels are given an opportunity to provide feedback to the Budget Committee on the Annual Budget / Plan or the Long-Term Plan. In this case it is seen as important to provide feedback from a rural perspective as councillors make decisions on the 10-year Long Term Plan.
3. Feedback was put together by the delegated team of Alan Cole and Trish Fordyce.
4. Key points of the submission included:
 - Support for core proposal providing a reasonable balance between continuing infrastructure and environmental improvement with a moderate rate rise.
 - Concerns relating to the use of the Water Quality Targeted rate.
 - Context of rising on-farm costs.
 - Support for rural roading programme.
 - Support for increased drainage and maintenance programme.

Ngā tūtohunga Recommendation/s

That the Rural Advisory Panel:

- a) whiwhi / receive the report and Members Alan Cole and Trish Fordyce be thanked for their work.

Ngā tāpirihanga Attachments

No.	Title	Page
A	Views of the Rural Advisory Panel on the Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024-2027 to the Budget Committee	25

Ngā kaihaina Signatories

Author	Warren Maclennan - Manager Regional, North, West and Island
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Views of the Rural Advisory Panel on the Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024-2027 to the Budget Committee

28 March 2024

Introduction

The Rural Advisory Panel comprises 21 members including councillors, local board members and a former Houkura member, together with pastoral, equine, forestry and horticultural interests, rural contractors and quarry operators, and representatives of young farmers and rural women.

Panel members have taken an active interest in providing comments through 2023-2024 on staff presentations covering early drafts of the Long Term Plan, and generally support the direction of these documents. This feedback has been prepared by a sub-group of the Panel comprising representatives from the farming, forestry and horticultural sectors.

General Support for Core Proposal

The subgroup considers that the level of 7.5% rates increase provides a reasonable balance for continuing infrastructure development (especially roading and water), as well as environmental improvements and taking into account the level of inflation, but not so high as to be overly burdensome on ratepayers. Rates projections of 3.5% in year 2, 8% in year 3 and 3-5% for the following 7 years are noted.

Targeted Rates

A general concern is that the rural sector not only pays general and targeted rates as legally required but also faces increased compliance costs which also benefit the wider community. Examples are as follows:

- The Water Quality Targeted Rates was initially set for ten years and now it has become ten years from 2024. There is concern that this is primarily focussed on urban discharges rather than dealing with infrastructure in the rural area. It seems that rating funds are being gathered from the rural communities who then have to deal with their own discharges.
- Farmers are now required to have certified farm plans to set out how they are mitigating impacts on the environment including impacts on water bodies. These plans come at a cost of at least \$3000. which are then audited again at the cost to the farmer. Under new government regulations farmers must also annually report on their use of nitrogenous fertiliser. Government regulations also prevent access by stock to water bodies to ensure that discharges to water bodies are mitigated. Fencing, temporary or otherwise, all comes at a cost to the farmer. Farmers are also required to manage their discharges or contaminants to land and or to water. The council does not pay for this work, and the collective work of the farming community is benefitting the community.
- In the forest industry the legislative requirements are a little different, but all involve costs to the forester to mitigate any impacts of discharges of contaminants to land and or water. Harvesting and any earthworks are all subject to management plans. The management plans

set out how the forester is going to meet the statutory requirements. Council monitors compliance of the plans at the cost of the forester. In house expertise and or consultants are used to produce the plans so the costs can vary for each forester. However, they can cost up to \$3,000 to produce. The management plans, like farm plans, are only part of the cost to the operator. Then the foresters must pay for the mitigation measures to ensure discharges to land and or water are minimised.

The plans and the work undertaken by the rural landowners are to not only the landowners' benefit but also to the wider community.

The reinstatement of the Natural Environment Targeted Rate to previously planned levels is supported as it not only enables pest management and native biodiversity work to be continued on council land but also can be accessed by partnerships with community groups and rural land owners. It is noted that this rate will raise \$350M over the ten year period. The RAP requests a breakdown of how the fund is intended to be spent in the coming year. - the Panel also supports targeted rates in Rodney (Rodney Drainage District Targeted Rates).

Fees and Charges

It is also noted that charges which are increasing above the level of inflation to ensure cost recovery include resource consent processing, building consents and new charges such as dam compliance fees. These all add to the costs that rural landowners face.

Water Programmes

Making Space for Water - RAP supports the work being carried out within this programme, particularly in high flood risk areas in rural catchments and also supports community resilience planning.

Essential Water programme – the Panel has had regular briefings on the series of projects that make up this programme. In particular, the Panel supports the current programme for the NPS Freshwater Management plan change work which takes account of deadlines being extended by the Government. This will enable associated district plan changes to be prepared at the same time and the development of other material such as non-statutory action plans so that a full picture of the proposed freshwater improvements can be seen.

Rural Road sealing programme

The proposal acknowledges that 70% of Auckland's land area is rural and this requires a fair share of for both maintenance and sealing infrastructure funding. The Panel strongly supports fully funding the Unsealed Roads Improvement Programme with \$124M over the next decade. The Panel would be keen to provide feedback on the annual sealing programme and the accelerated program.

Drainage and maintenance programme

The RAP supports the proposal for increased maintenance including weed clearance from streams to maximise stormwater network efficiency. We wish to see an increased programme of roadside drain maintenance that is responsive to storm events, that is that such drains are regularly maintained, that after storm events there is a timely checking and remediation programme of works and a programme that responds in a timely fashion to public complaints of blockages etc.

Conclusion

The introduction of the WQTR and the NETR was initially supported by the rural sector despite the limited programmes being carried out in rural areas. However the rural sector is already implementing progress towards improvement of water quality, and pest and weed management, and this needs to be taken into account.

The Panel appreciates the opportunity to present these comments.