

Report 2014.339
Date 21 May 2014
File ENV/06/08/06-v1

Committee Council
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Proposed re-gazettal of the Wairarapa Airshed for the National Environmental Standard for Air Quality

1. Purpose

To seek Council's approval for the proposed re-gazettal of the Wairarapa Airshed for the National Environmental Standard for Air Quality.

2. Background

Air quality is monitored and managed to meet the National Environmental Standard for Air Quality (the NESAQ) - a regulation under the RMA. The NESAQ requires councils to reduce levels of air pollutants in their nominated airsheds to achieve a minimum level of health protection for all New Zealanders.

In 2005, Greater Wellington gazetted eight separate airsheds based on a combination of topographical, climatic and emissions features. The Wairarapa airshed encompasses the entire Wairarapa valley, and is based on air quality monitoring in Masterton. This airshed fails to meet the NESAQ due to winter air pollution (wood smoke particles known as PM₁₀) from domestic fires.

In 2011, amendments to the NESAQ extended the deadline for airsheds to meet the NESAQ from 2013 to either 2016, or 2020 depending on the level of pollution in the airshed. These amendments also require 'offsets' from certain new industries (or current industries looking to expand) with PM₁₀ discharges in 'polluted' airsheds. Based on the current Wairarapa airshed boundary, industries in clean air locations face the same hurdles as those in areas with poor air quality.

3. Proposed new airshed

We are proposing to reduce the Wairarapa airshed boundary to enclose the area that fails to meet the NESAQ as well as areas where emissions that contribute to poor air quality are produced. This is to provide certainty and fairness for future industry, and provide council with the ability to develop a targeted strategy for improving air quality where it is needed.

In 2013, consultants were engaged to produce an airshed model for the Wairarapa valley using air pollution and meteorological data to identify areas are most likely to meet the NESAQ. The model results show that the area of non-compliance with the NESAQ is centred on the town of Masterton. The industrial area outside of Masterton (Waingawa) is predicted to comply, apart from a small area within one of the industrial site boundaries, which is exempt from the provisions of the NESAQ. Greytown, Carterton, Featherston and Martinborough are all likely to comply.

The proposed new airshed boundary is the Masterton Urban Area – as defined by the Wairarapa Combined District Plan (see Attachment 1). This boundary has been selected because it covers the residential area of Masterton where domestic fire emissions arise, and it is the area where most people live and work, and will be exposed to air pollution, including at levels that fail to meet the NESAQ.

The Ministry for the Environment provides information and advice for regional councils that change airshed boundaries in their regions. The procedure for implementing a change in boundaries is under the Ministries guidance notes for the national environmental standard. Recently, Hawkes Bay Regional Council changed one of their airshed boundaries and followed the Ministry process.

4. Consultation

The final modelling report and proposed airshed boundary for Masterton has been discussed with Masterton District Council, Carterton District Council, South Wairarapa District Council, and the Regional Public Health – Wairarapa (see letter on consultation meeting with RPH, Attachment 2). Further consultation was undertaken with Juken Nissho – Masterton as they lie outside the proposed new airshed boundary, and there have been discussions that their stack discharge may influence the make-up of air pollution in the town. The modelling predicts that this is not the case. The Ministry for the Environment has been notified and has provided advice throughout the consultation and re-gazettal for the Masterton airshed.

5. Next Steps

The next steps in the gazettal process are to submit the final airshed boundary map to Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) for certification and registration, and then submit the final report to the Minister for the Environment for her approval. Once approval is obtained the new airshed boundary will be publicly notified in the NZ Gazette.

6. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

7. Recommendations

That the Council:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

3. *Notes Attachment 1 and 2.*

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Attachment 1: Proposed Masterton Urban Airshed map

Attachment 2: Letter from Regional Public Health