

Report 17.20
Date 2 February 2017
File CCAB-10-230

Committee Environment
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Whaitua Programme Update

1. Purpose

To provide information to the Environment Committee on the status of the three active whaitua projects and any key upcoming work.

2. Background

The whaitua process is a community-led, collaborative planning process to address a number of land and water management issues and carry out our obligations under the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM). The programme aims to improve the integration of activities and achieve better resource management practices which reflect local aspirations.

The region has been divided into five whaitua or catchments (see Figure 1). Whaitua Committees, consisting of community members and partner representatives, will make recommendations to the Council through a Whaitua Implementation Programme (WIP) report. These Committees are a partnership between the regional council, iwi, territorial authorities and the community.

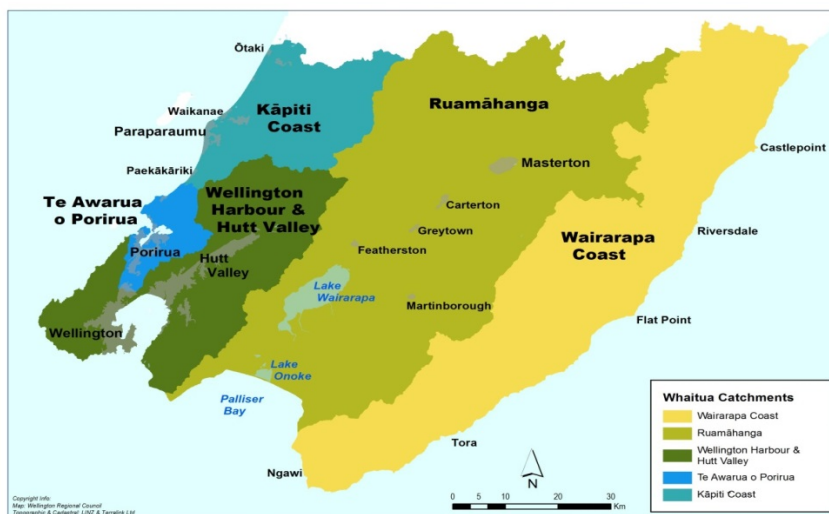


Figure 1: Whaitua catchments.

A Whaitua Implementation Programme (WIP) will contain strategies and actions that will form a programme of work to implement the NPS-FM in the catchment area of the Whaitua Committee. It will include both regulatory provisions and non-regulatory programmes. The regulatory provisions will be included progressively into the Natural Resources Plan by way of plan changes into the whaitua specific chapters. The recommendations from WIPs aren't being considered as part of the current Proposed Natural Resources Plan Schedule 1 process.

There are currently two established committees, the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee and Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Committee. Planning is underway to set up the Wellington Harbour and Hutt Valley Whaitua.

A Collaborative Modelling Project supports each Whaitua Committee by feeding knowledge into their decision making process. Experts in the various topic areas (for example ecologists, economists, social scientists) work collaboratively to ensure information and data is up to date and to provide expert advice to the Whaitua Committee when required. The project involves partnering with mana whenua as well as having significant iwi and community input from relevant stakeholders.

The current modelling projects for Ruamāhanga and Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua provide collective scientific, cultural and community knowledge, data and information to describe the current state of each catchment. The Whaitua Committee will ask questions about what could happen in the future under certain conditions, such as different land management practices, and how the catchment would respond to those. These are called scenarios. The models will be used to forecast the potential environmental, social, recreational, cultural and economic consequences of these scenarios. The Whaitua Committee will use this information, alongside their own knowledge of community values, agriculture, biodiversity, mana whenua, recreation, urban and economic interests in setting freshwater objectives and limits.

The experience gained as the Ruamāhanga Whaitua modelling evolved has shaped the process for Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua. From these processes, we learnt that each whaitua is distinct and each process requires a design that suits the whaitua individual needs.

3. Ruamāhanga Whaitua

3.1 Committee progress

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee was established in December 2013 and has 14 members, one from each territorial authority, one elected and one appointed member from Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Management Committee, representatives from both iwi, and eight community representatives.

Since their establishment, the Committee has been working to increase their understanding of the history, physical geography, hydrology, water quality and the ecological state of the catchment.

The Committee has worked closely with the community to develop a set of community values, key catchment issues and a vision and outcomes they would like to see for the future.

The Committee achieved a major milestone in late 2016 when they finalised the scenarios they want to test through the collaborative modelling. The scenarios contain a range of management options purposely chosen to provide the most relevant information to aid their decision-making. The scenarios include three integrated packages and six separate management options around water storage options, lakes, wetlands, and allocation and minimum flow options.

All papers, documents developed by the Committee and meeting records for Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee meetings can be found on our website www.gw.govt.nz/ruamahanga-whaitua.

3.2 Key work in the coming months

Modelling results – In the coming months, the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee will begin to receive and examine the modelling scenario outputs. The modelling outputs are critical to the Committee’s decision making around policy recommendations and ultimately to delivering their WIP. The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee is also meeting with stakeholders to keep them up to date and to ground-truth the stakeholder relevant outputs of modelling.

Engaging with stakeholders – The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee is developing a plan to engage with stakeholders in the coming months about how stakeholders can support the WIP, in particular how they can contribute towards education or collective action. The Committee will workshop the feedback and suggestions received into their own thinking and reflect that back to stakeholders and the public.

It is expected that the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee will present their Whaitua Implementation Programme to Council in mid-2017.

4. Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua

4.1 Committee progress

Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Committee was established in December 2014 and has 13 members, one from each territorial authority, one elected and one appointed member from Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Management Committee, one Ngāti Toa Rangatira representative and eight community members.

Since their establishment, the Committee has been working to increase their understanding of the context for their work and the state of their catchment.

During 2016, the Committee has produced a set of values and attributes for the whaitua, and developed a trio of scenarios categorised as wastewater/stormwater, rural issues and urban design.

The Collaborative Modelling Project team (CMP) have designed the modelling framework and architecture to test the work of the Committee, sought registrations of interest for 13 work briefs, and contracted a team of modelling providers. The framework is broad and multidisciplinary, covering the effects of urban and rural land water resource use on freshwater, harbour and coastal water quantity and quality, and encompasses environmental, social, cultural and economic aspects. A set of multiple interacting models and stand-alone models is required to deliver this coverage.

All papers and meeting records for Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Committee meetings can be found on our website at <http://www.gw.govt.nz/te-awarua-o-porirua-whaitua-committee/>.

4.2 Key work in the coming months

The overarching aim for the Committee this year is to have the Whaitua Implementation Programme presented to Council by the end of 2017. To achieve this, the first piece of key work is to further develop the scenarios for testing by the CMP. This will require the Committee to develop a deeper understanding of the relationships between explored management options and the agreed values and attributes, while also learning about the capabilities of the modelling architecture and how to gain the most information from the modelling. It is estimated that this work will be completed in April 2017.

In the interim, the CMP will be using a ‘business as usual scenario’ (which combines current policy, practice and projected investment and population growth) in order to prime their models and ensure alignment between the different modelling streams and providers. Representatives from the Lead Modelling Group will attend Committee meetings to answer questions and learn about the needs of the Committee.

Once the Committee has achieved consensus around the modelling inputs, the second piece of key work is to explore policy options to achieve the variety of freshwater outcomes desired by the Committee. This is expected to take until mid-year.

5. Wellington Harbour and Hutt Valley Whaitua

It is our intention to have the Wellington Harbour and Hutt Valley Whaitua Committee established in mid-2017. Meetings with partners and stakeholders are being organised and a communications plan developed.

A more detailed update will be provided at the 22 March 2017 Environment Committee meeting, before final approval is sought from Council for the establishment of the Committee.

6. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report. This report is for Councillors to receive an update on the progress of the three whaitua processes.

6.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is unnecessary.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

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