

Managing limits

Water allocation limits have been discussed at recent RWC workshops. Both permitted activity water takes and consented water takes were addressed. The limit for a freshwater management unit is simply the addition of the permitted amount and the consented amount. RWC consensus at workshops is now summarised.

Permitted activities

Stock and domestic water use

The taking and use of water for domestic use and stock drinking will be a permitted activity as set out in RMA s14(3)(b). The use of rainwater tanks on residential households will be promoted. District Councils will be encouraged to require rainwater tanks in new subdivision to promote efficient use of water. Education will be used to promote knowledge around efficient home water use. Other matters relating to efficient water use will be introduced as a package later on.

General water use

Surface water and some groundwater management units in the Ruamahanga catchment are fully allocated. The amount of water a person is permitted to take for use on a property is relatively high at 20 and 10 m³ per day compared with permitted water takes being used in other parts of the country. Reducing the permitted activity water take amount to 5 m³ per day per property will help ensure water allocation does not exceed limits. To make sure permitted activities are being treated equitably with consent holders, taking of permitted water will cease at minimum flow.

Farm dairy wash down and cooling water

There will be a permitted activity rule for takes below minimum flow associated with clean farm dairy wash down water. The current permitted rule in the PNRP will be amended such that water takes for farm dairies are part of a wider farm water take consent. Such changes may need to be implemented over time allowing for upgrades in line with industry improvement. The volume per day required for clean wash down water will need to be identified.

Consented activities

The RWC has reviewed minimum flows and water allocation in eight of the main rivers in the Ruamahanga River catchment (Kopuaranga, Waipoua, Waingawa, Upper Ruamahanga, Waiohine, Mangatarere, Lower Ruamahanga, Tauherenikau). Table 1: Draft summary table for minimum flows and allocation limits in the Ruamāhanga Whaitua gives river by river allocation amounts for consented water takes and minimum flows.

Allocation

Allocation limits for rivers in Table 1 are set at existing amounts allocated from rivers and directly connected groundwater in each management unit.

Rivers with changes to minimum flows

Minimum flows for rivers are also in Table 1. The Kopuaranga minimum flow will change from 270 to 280 L/sec. The change will have minor effect and can be implemented at the time of the whaitua plan change.

Amending the minimum flow from 250 to 340 L/sec in the Waipoua will reduce the reliability of supply to water users in an average year from 90 to 85%. There are 10 resource consents in the catchment. Five of these consents are for irrigation. RWC agreed in principle with the change to minimum flow. An economic assessment of the impacts of reducing reliability by 5% will be undertaken before deciding on a timeframe for progressive implementation.

A similar situation arises for changes to minimum flow for the Upper Ruamahanga. Amending the minimum flow from 2,400 to 3,250 L/sec will reduce the reliability of supply to water users in an average year by 10% from 95 to 85%. There are 62 resource consents to take water in the catchment and almost all are for irrigation. RWC agreed in principle with the change to minimum flow but an economic assessment of the impacts of reducing reliability by 10% will be undertaken before deciding on a timeframe for progressive implementation.

Minimum flow increases for the Upper Ruamahanga and Waipoua will be implemented via consent conditions over a period of time that is to be confirmed by RWC once economic impacts have been assessed.

Category A groundwater takes

The PNRP requires 50% reduction in Category A water takes at minimum flows. Because the impact is immediate, groundwater abstracted from Category A aquifers can be considered as being analogous to direct surface water abstraction. There are 150 category A groundwater takes in the Ruamahanga catchment that account for 40% of total river depletion and 65 to 75% of the groundwater take. At the 4 September 2017 workshop RWC agreed in principle with Category A Groundwater takes ceasing at minimum flow. More information on the economic implications is needed before deciding on a timeframe for progressive implementation.

Community water supply

Community water supply should be restricted to the health needs of people with the exception that taking water for industry is allowed to continue for a period of time. The PNRP provides a seven year timeframe following notification for water to continue to be supplied to industry at minimum flow. The Masterton District Council have not discussed with industry implications of restricting community water supply at minimum flow. Evidence from Masterton and South Wairarapa district councils at hearings on the PNRP sought a timeframe of seven years from the date the whaitua plan change is notified.

Water races

Taking water for domestic use and stock drinking shall be allowed at minimum flows.