



Waipaoa Catchment Planning Advisory Group – Hui 1

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Title of report: Te Mana o te Wai

Report No: **2**

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Purpose of this report

This report provides information about Te Mana o te Wai – the central concept for freshwater management under the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020.

(Most of the information in this report is sourced from the Ministry for the Environment)

Outcome sought

Discussion around Te Mana o te Wai provides an opportunity for members to consider and express what this important concept means to them and to freshwater in Tairāwhiti and how this concept can be applied locally in freshwater management.

Note: no appendices to this report

1 What is Te Mana o te Wai?

Te Mana o te Wai, directly translated, can be interpreted as the *'status of the water'* - recognising the vital importance of water. Te Mana o te Wai thus refers to the inherent authority and integrity of water. It recognises water as a taonga and acknowledges its vital role in sustaining all forms of life. It further emphasises the holistic wellbeing of water bodies, including their ecological health, cultural significance, and the ability to meet the needs of present and future generations.

It expresses the special connection all New Zealanders have with freshwater - it ensures the health and wellbeing of the water is protected first and foremost, and human health needs are provided for, before enabling other uses of water.

Through engagement and discussion, regional councils in partnership with tangata whenua and communities, will determine how Te Mana o te Wai is applied locally in the management of freshwater.

Te Mana o te Wai has been part of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) since 2014, though there's been changes introduced in 2020 to provide stronger direction on how Te Mana o te Wai should be applied when managing freshwater.

On 3 September 2020 the NPS-FM 2020 (amended in February 2023) came into force, of which the [Essential Freshwater Package](#)¹ forms part. It provides stronger national direction which Council needs to translate into actions on the ground.

2 Implementing the NPS-FM 2020

2.1 Hierarchy of obligations

Te Mana o te Wai introduces a hierarchy of obligations, or priorities, that were designed by the Freshwater Iwi Chairs in 2018. The focus is on putting water at the centre of all decisions. The priorities are:

- **1st priority:** put the health and wellbeing of water first.
- **2nd priority:** health needs of people (such as drinking water).
- **3rd priority:** ability of people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

This is a key consideration for policy development and a matter for discussion with the Advisory Group as we progress through various regional freshwater sections.

2.2 Implementation principles

The six principles of Te Mana o te Wai listed below provide an important platform for building strong and effective partnerships between all involved.

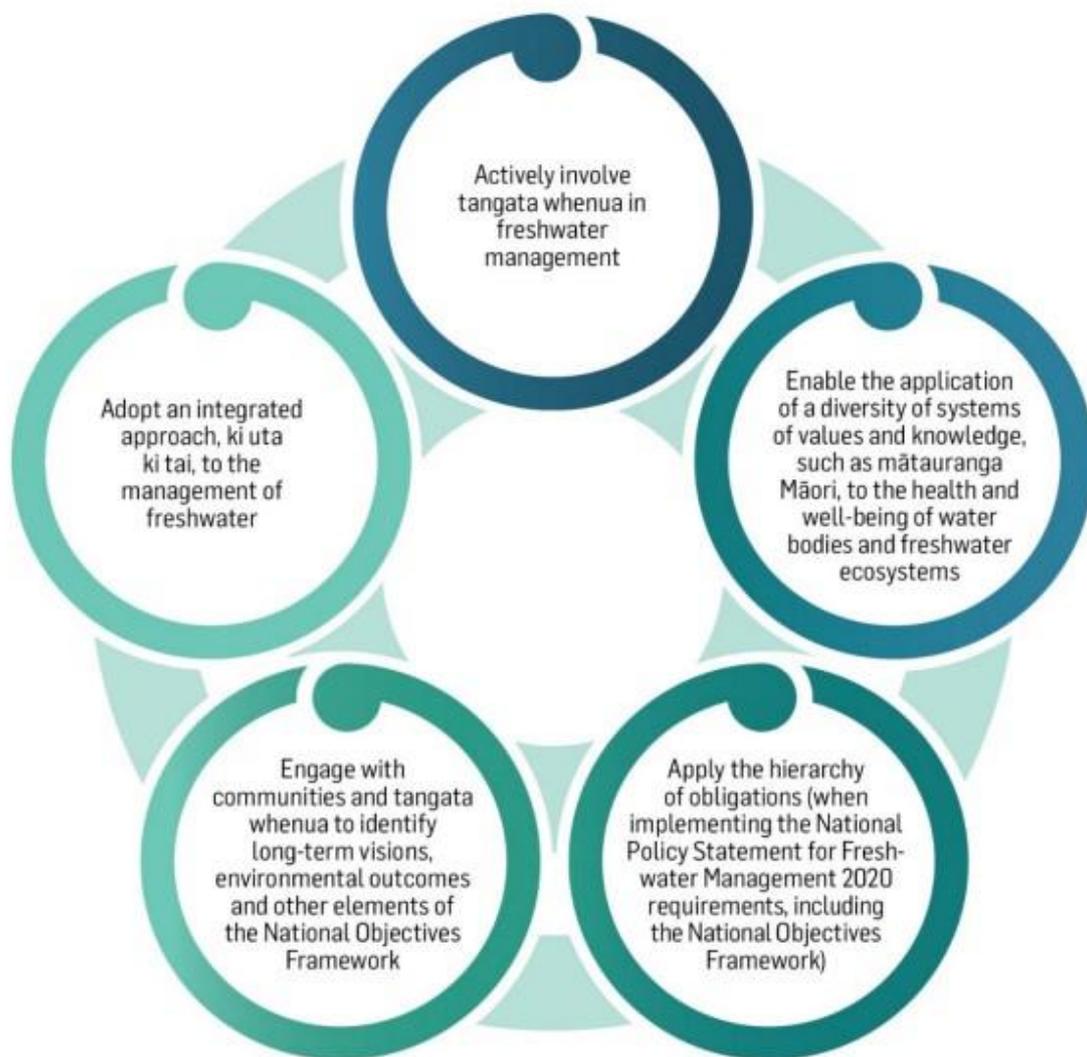
¹ The Essential Freshwater package aims to: stop further degradation of our freshwater; start making immediate improvements so water quality improves within five years; and reverse past damage to bring our waterways and ecosystems to a healthy state within a generation.

Mana whakahaere	Power, authority, and obligations of tangata whenua to make decisions that maintain, protect, and sustain the health and well-being of, and their relationship with, freshwater
Kaitiakitanga	Obligation of tangata whenua to preserve, restore, enhance, and sustainably use freshwater for the benefit of present and future generations
Manaakitanga	Process by which tangata whenua show respect, generosity, and care for freshwater and for others
Governance	Responsibility of those with authority for making decisions about freshwater to do so in a way that prioritises the health and well-being of freshwater now and into the future
Stewardship	Obligation of all New Zealanders to manage freshwater in a way that ensures it sustains present and future generations
Care and respect	Responsibility of all New Zealanders to care for freshwater in providing for the health of the nation.

3 Giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai

Regional councils must give effect to Te Mana o te Wai by actioning the five key requirements as illustrated below²:

² Ministry for the Environment and Ministry for Primary Industries, 2020. Te Mana o te Wai [Factsheet]



3.1 Tangata whenua involvement

Local authorities must actively involve tangata whenua in freshwater management (including decision-making processes, and monitoring and preparation of policy statements and plans). Regional councils must investigate the use of tools in the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) such as joint management arrangements, Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, and transfer of powers – as a way of involving tangata whenua.

In the context of waterbodies and freshwater ecosystems, this means tangata whenua will, for example:

- a. Work with local authorities to identify matters that are important to them. This will include identifying both how Te Mana o te Wai will be applied locally and the outcomes that tangata whenua want for relevant waterbodies in the future.
- b. Be enabled to apply different systems of knowledge for freshwater care and be involved in monitoring (such as mātauranga Māori).
- c. Work with regional councils to implement the National Objectives Framework (NOF).

As per legislative provisions and guidance, Council is directed to engage tangata whenua at whānau, hapū, and iwi levels, and intends to provide the opportunities necessary for this to occur. Council will be directed by iwi on how best to achieve engagement at whānau, hapū and the iwi level while ensuring a collective voice. Outcomes of this engagement will include identifying both how Te Mana o te Wai will be applied locally and the outcomes that tangata whenua want for relevant waterbodies. This information will direct Council’s position and should be upheld throughout the catchment planning and implementation process.

In order to give effect to the NPS-FM 2020, Council intends to adopt the following approach to partnership with tangata whenua in developing the regional freshwater planning provisions and the seven catchment plans:

Partner/stakeholder	Requirement
Whānau/hapū/iwi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Te Mana o te Wai visions for catchments Identify environmental outcomes Identify values and attributes
Whānau / hapū / iwi landusers / stakeholders / communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wānanga the above positions - are there any gaps or anything further to add? Further environmental outcomes/values/attributes? Set baselines and limits to work toward attributes identified Revisit visions and outcomes - do the intended limits enhance the vision and outcomes?

An extract from the document ‘Te Mana o te Wai Guidelines [for Mana Whenua](#)’, commissioned by ‘Our Land and Water’, provides context to the approach Council is taking to partnering with tangata whenua in the first instance, and then wider land user and stakeholder groups.

“Te Mana o te Wai is a concept that is derived from mātauranga Māori. As such it cannot be defined without the leadership of hapū and iwi in their respective takiwā (tribal areas). These definitions are shaped, by the unique mana whenua (indigenous people of Aotearoa within their takiwā) who belong to each type of water, of each spring, of each river, of each puia (geothermal spring), of each expanse of ocean”.

The guidance is clear on the position of tangata whenua within freshwater planning. It is important that a Māori worldview informs the foundations for this work and is also included in the design and delivery of implementation and monitoring frameworks.

Council will be guided by tangata whenua on how best to engage on the work ahead. Council recognises the uniqueness of each catchment and those that whakapapa to the waterbodies that will be included.

3.2 Long-term visions for freshwater

To give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, Council must develop long-term visions through partnering with tangata whenua and facilitating discussion with land users and wider community stakeholders.

Establishing a long-term vision for a waterbody means capturing the needs and aspirations of tangata whenua and communities in each region. Long-term visions should identify a timeframe that is both ambitious and reasonable (for example 30 years).

The long-term vision is intended to be based on the history of, and current pressures on, local waterbodies and catchments. Environmental limits and targets must be set and monitored so we understand the extent of change needed to achieve the long-term vision and how we are tracking. The visions may be set at FMU, part of an FMU, or catchment level.

Action plans may be needed if the current state needs improvement to achieve the long-term vision. Council is required³ to report on the region's process toward achieving the long-term visions. It may take several decades to make the changes required, which should be factored in the identified timeframe to achieve the long-term visions.

3.3 Integrated management – ki uta ki tai

We must take an integrated management approach to freshwater management in accordance with the principle of ki uta ki tai, meaning from the mountains to the sea. This principle recognises the interconnectedness of the whole environment, from the mountains and lakes, down the rivers to lagoons, estuaries and the sea.

The NPS-FM requires us to:

- recognise the interactions between freshwater, land, water bodies, ecosystems and sensitive receiving environments;
- manage freshwater, and land use and development, in catchments in an integrated and sustainable way to avoid, remedy, or mitigate adverse effects, including cumulative effects on the health and wellbeing of water bodies, freshwater ecosystems and receiving environments
- encourage the co-ordination and sequencing of regional or urban growth.

³ See clause 3.30 of the NPS-FM 2020



Te Mana o te Wai – the connection of water, land and people

4 Conclusion

The principle of Te Mana o te Wai reflects the vital importance of water's health and wellbeing. The approach is not 'new' but rather reflects a Te Ao Māori approach to freshwater management which puts the mauri o te wai at the heart of all decision-making. It also requires people to think about the water as a living breathing tāonga that needs to be looked after rather than a commodity to be taken until it is gone or pushed to its limits until it can no longer survive. It is about operating from a place of abundance, not abstraction.

Refer to Essential Freshwater: Te Mana o te Wai factsheet for more detailed information.