



## CONCEPT SHEET 3

# Surface water quality

Water quality is influenced by natural factors such as climate, flow, geology, soils and vegetation cover. It is affected by what enters it, whether running off the land or through a pipe, and by how much is flowing in the waterway. It is also influenced by human activities such as waste disposal, urban and industrial development and agriculture.

The Taranaki Regional Council monitors waterways to assess their health and their suitability for a range of uses.

Ecological health is regarded as the primary measure of freshwater quality, and the Council pioneered the use of a waterways ecological health index based on macroinvertebrate communities (tiny animals including insects, crustaceans, molluscs, worms and leeches) found in rivers and streams. The Council also examines the physical and chemical state of waterways, including a programme of monitoring popular freshwater swimming spots in summer months.

### The state of our waterways

Overall, Taranaki's freshwater quality is good relative to other regions. However, more needs to be done to meet national directives and community expectations. While monitoring shows that water quality across the region is either improving or showing no significant change, the instream health of rivers does decline downstream.

The main pressure stems from intensive agriculture. Currently there are 1,795 resource consents for discharges of dairy farm effluent.

Of these, 995 discharge treated effluent into water only or have dual land-water systems.



### What would the Draft Plan change?

The main changes around freshwater quality are directed towards improving dairy farm practices to maintain and enhance surface water quality.

**Planting and fencing riparian (streamside) margins** is one of the most effective methods of protecting and enhancing the region's waterways. Vegetation in riparian zones filters nutrients, sediments and bacteria that leave the land as run-off.

Taranaki's Riparian Management Programme, a partnership between farmers and the Council, has already seen great progress, with millions of plants in the ground and thousands of kilometres of streambanks fenced.

The Draft Plan would require this work to be completed by 2020 on farms on the volcanic ring plain and the northern and southern coastal terraces. A farmer who failed to do so would need a resource consent requiring stock exclusion from waterways and completion of riparian planting.

See Concept Sheet 5 for more information.



The Draft Plan would also require **farm dairy effluent** to be discharged (sprayed) to land, as a general rule. The previous approach has been for many farmers to treat dairy effluent before discharging it to waterways, although the number of land disposal systems and dual systems has been steadily increasing in recent years.

The requirement for discharge to land would generally be phased in as current resource consents are renewed. Discretionary consents for discharge to water will still be available for the small percentage of farmers unable to discharge to land because of high rainfall and particular soil types. High levels of treatment would be required.

**Better farm management** would also be promoted by requiring farmers to minimise losses to ground water, prevent uncontaminated stormwater from entering storage treatment and disposal facilities as far as practicable, and to ensure that all concentrated sources of animal effluent, such as those from dairy sheds and feed pads, are directed to storage, treatment or disposal facilities.

See Concept Sheet 4 for more information.

Changes for the **forestry sector** would include a requirement for erosion and sediment control plans to be prepared when harvesting on land that is 28 degrees or steeper. And a resource consent would be required for harvesting or planting within five metres of lakes, regionally significant wetlands or waterways more than a metre wide.

### Why is this important?

High-quality freshwater is highly valued in Taranaki for a range of uses, from recreational fishing and swimming, to uses for agriculture, industry and town supplies. Ensuring that the quality is protected and enhanced is of paramount importance.

The region must also comply with two new compulsory national values of ecosystem health and human health for recreation. For more information see Concept Sheet 2.

### Feedback and more information

Go to [www.trc.govt.nz/draft-plan](http://www.trc.govt.nz/draft-plan) to find:

- The Draft Freshwater and Land Plan in full.
- A summary and background document.
- Info sheets and background papers.
- An online form for giving us feedback.

You can also send us your feedback by emailing [info@trc.govt.nz](mailto:info@trc.govt.nz) or writing to the Council at Private Bag 713, Stratford 4352. Or contact the Council's freshwater planning team directly by calling 0800 736 222. We can give you more information, take your feedback or arrange a meeting.

Our deadline for feedback is Friday 26 June.

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