Developing a freshwater vision for Taranaki

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Taranaki Regional Council

Developing a freshwater vision for Taranaki

An overview of Phase 1 engagement: March – April 2021

Taranaki Regional Council

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February 2022

Document: 2741945

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of Taranaki Regional Council (the Council) on its preliminary engagement to develop a long term vision for fresh water to be included in a revised *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki* (RPS). In particular, the report:

- presents a summary of the methodology adopted noting that this is Phase 1 of Council engagement on the development of a long-term vision for freshwater;
- summaries the responses of the online survey and in-person workshop, including key concepts, themes and priorities; and
- based on the responses from this exercise, identifies the options for incorporating key concepts, themes and priorities in a **draft** long-term vision for fresh water to be provided for feedback to tangata whenua and stakeholders prior to developing a draft *Proposed Natural Resources Plan for Taranaki*.

This report has been prepared by the Council and will inform the review of the RPS 2010. In particular, this report will inform subsequent engagement on the development of a long term vision for fresh water and will form part of the section 32 analysis.

Background

The Taranaki region – and overview

The Taranaki region has 217 parent catchments and 530 named rivers and streams. Catchments are therefore generally rather small and are fed by smaller areas compared to other parts of the country where fewer catchments exist over larger spatial extents.

One of the most significant water sources is Taranaki Maunga whose waters feed the ring-plain while in the east of the region, the elevated topography of the eastern hill country drains water bodies to the sea.

Surface water in Taranaki is a high use resource providing for agriculture and industry, town water supplies, hydro-electric power generation and recreation amongst other things. Freshwater is also managed and controlled to assist in the day to day operations of farming, transport and urban development requirements, including for flood protection purposes.

The RPS is a high level document, prepared by the Council, which provides an overview of the resource management issues of the region and the policies and methods to achieve integrated management of the natural and physical resources. It also sets out the requirements for the region which both district and regional councils must give effect to through their regulatory frameworks and other operational processes.

In 2020, the Council commenced a statutory review of its RPS as required under the *Resource Management Act 1991* (the RMA), which requires any RPS to be reviewed ten years following becoming operative.

The review of the RPS is expected to be ongoing until mid-2024, at which point, the Council will publicly notify the RPS as part of the combined *Proposed Natural Resources Plan for Taranaki*.

The Natural Resources Plan is a combined plan which will incorporate the RPS, regional air plan, regional freshwater plan and regional soil plan into one comprehensive plan. The only other regional plan prepared by the Council, the Coastal Plan will remain separate from the Natural Resources Plan, however the Regional Policy Statement will continue to set out directions for integrated management, including for the coast.[1]

[1] *The Proposed Coastal Plan is in the final stages of being adopted after a long and comprehensive public process. It is likely to be incorporated into the Proposed Natural Resources Plan at its next statutory review.*

Following this, the Council will enter into the formal Schedule 1 consultation phase under the RMA which includes public notification and calling for submissions.

The review, amongst other things, provides the Council with the opportunity of updating its policy directions to align with national direction instruments that have changed or come into effect over the life of the current RPS. It also provides the Council with the opportunity to update the RPS in light of changing local context and community expectations.

In 2020 the government released the *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management* (NPS-FM), which provides specific directions and requirements for the management of the freshwater resource within the region. Amongst other things, the NPS-FM requires that the Council develop a long-term vision for freshwater which is to be articulated as objectives within the RPS.

What is a long-term vision for freshwater?

As noted above, a long-term vision for freshwater is an objective that sits within the RPS. The purpose of that objective is to set out community aspirations for fresh water, set an ambitious but achievable goal for fresh water in the future which will help to guide freshwater management.

The timeframe for achieving a long-term vision is not tied to the life of the RPS/plan (10 years), like other objectives. Instead, the long-term vision identifies the timeframe within which the objective is to be achieved. This approach encourages the Council to plan across a much longer planning horizon and to adopt more aspirational goals for improvement that may take longer to achieve than the traditional ten year planning cycle.

The broader RPS and freshwater planning framework, as well as other operational or non-regulatory methods, will provide the mechanism to achieving that objective.

Because the long-term vision reflects and is built around the desires of the community, it will naturally be ambitious. This needs to be balanced against what can also be achieved to ensure that the objective(s) the community and the Council set can be met and be met within the timeframe identified.

Other provisions of the NPS-FM explain how the long-term vision for freshwater should be given effect to and how to incorporate this vision into other policy directives including in the management and monitoring of freshwater through freshwater plans.[2]

Identification of a long-term vision will inform further plan development, provisions and monitoring, and may also influence non-regulatory aspects of the Councils works as well.

3.3 Long-term visions for freshwater

(1) Every regional council must develop long-term visions for freshwater in its region and include those long-term visions as objectives in its regional policy statement.

(2) Long-term visions:

- (a) may be set at FMU, part of an FMU, or catchment level; and
- (b) must set goals that are ambitious but reasonable (that is, difficult to achieve but not impossible); and
- (c) identify a timeframe to achieve those goals that is both ambitious and reasonable (for example, 30 years after the commencement date).

(3) Every long-term vision must:

- (a) be developed through engagement with communities and tangata whenua about their long-term wishes for the water bodies and freshwater ecosystems in the region; and
- (b) be informed by an understanding of the history of, and environmental pressures on, the FMU, part of the FMU, or catchment; and
- (c) express what communities and tangata whenua want the FMU, part of the FMU, or catchment to be like in the future.

(4) Every regional council must assess whether each FMU, part of an FMU, or catchment (as relevant) can provide for its long-term vision, or whether improvement to the health and well-being of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems is required to achieve the vision.

Figure 1 *Clause 3.3 [Long-term vision for freshwater] from the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020*

The engagement discussed in this report addresses the work undertaken to date, however, ongoing work in the development of the long-term vision is expected to be undertaken until the time that the Proposed Natural Resources Plan is notified following which, engagement will enter into the formal engagement process required under Schedule 1 of the *Resource Management Act 1991*.

To avoid confusion, the long-term vision for freshwater is only one aspect of the NPS-FM which the Council is required to address through its regional plan reviews. Other aspects

[2] NPS-FM 3.9 [Identifying values and setting environmental outcomes as objectives] (5)(b).

of the NPS-FM, including consultation on te mana o te wai (te mana o te wai is a broader concept encompassing the management of freshwater under the NPS-FM), freshwater values and attributes will be addressed through separate engagement streams.

General consultation approach

The NPS-FM directs that each long-term vision must reflect the aspirations of tangata whenua and communities for freshwater bodies within the region. Therefore, consultation with the public, tangata whenua and stakeholders is essential in the development of the vision to ensure that it represents the aspirations of the Taranaki community and is informed by the history and context of freshwater within the region.

The Council is therefore undertaking comprehensive public engagement in the development of the vision to maximise community input. In addition to consultation through formal statutory processes set out in Schedule 1 of the RMA, the Council is undertaking the following two phases of preliminary engagement prior to developing a draft vision:

- **Phase 1** consultation with communities and the public focuses on getting a broad understanding of the aspirations for freshwater for future generations generally and building an understanding of the concerns that communities have for their freshwater at a local level.
- **Phase 2** consultation will be informed by the outcomes of phase 1 consultation and will primarily target tangata whenua and stakeholders. Phase 2 allows participants to reflect on the wishes of their communities in their response and assist the Council on identifying an ambitious, yet achievable vision.

Phase 1 consultation

Phase 1 engagement on the freshwater vision was undertaken across March - April 2021 and comprised of an online survey and in person workshop held in New Plymouth.

Both the online survey and workshop explored the following key areas of interest:

- **Exploration of freshwater aspirations** – *What are the freshwater aspirations for the Taranaki community?*
- **Identification of freshwater values** – *across the region, where do people consider there are:*
    - *examples of locations already meeting their aspirations for the future of freshwater;*
    - *areas requiring enhancement or improvement to meet their aspirations for the future of freshwater; and*
    - *areas which require **protecting** in their current form to be preserved for future generations?*
- **Prioritization** – *what aspirations of areas of improvement are the most important from a community perspective?*

The Council further incorporated the four well-beings into its consultation methodology as a tool to assist users in framing responses:

- environmental well-being;
- economic well-being;
- social well-being; and
- cultural well-being

and were incorporated into the engagement in order to encourage responses from a broad range of perspectives and ensure that individuals are considering the different ways and areas that freshwater is important.

The four-well beings are fundamental to the *Local Government Act 2002* forming part of the purpose of the act as well as being a requirement for local government to promote (specifically s3, s5 and s 10).

The four-well beings are also reflected in the NPS-FM Policy 15 which reads: "*Communities are enabled to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being in a way that is consistent with this National Policy Statement*".

Online survey

The online survey was available for responses between 10 March and 30 April 2021.

The online survey, being targeted at individuals, focused on responses specific to that single person's interests and aspirations.

As noted, the survey was structured using the four well-beings, each major heading focusing on one of the well-beings and requested responses in line with the three questions around exploring freshwater aspirations, identification of freshwater values and prioritization.

For each well-being type, participants were provided the following response opportunities:

a) to describe (in relation to the well-being type) their aspiration for freshwater for future generations;

b) to identify on a map any water bodies, catchments or rivers and streams that, in relation to that well-being type, were significant to them and to identify whether that site/locality:

- met their expectations for future generations;
- required improvements to meet expectations for future generations; or
- required protection to preserve current values for future generation;

c) to describe why above site had been identified and how the chosen category applied including any relevant information on how that site could be improved or protected to meet their aspirations for future generations; and

d) from a range of listed values, to indicate whether they thought that the value required improving/enhancing, maintaining, reducing or neutral (no answer).

Workshop

On 22 April 2021, the Council held a community workshop in New Plymouth for in-person engagement on the freshwater vision.

The community workshop adopted a different approach to the survey and focused more generally on exploring the prioritization of aspirations across the four well-beings rather than exploring values at different locations.

Because of the nature of in-person engagement, the workshop provided a better opportunity to interact and problem solve in a group setting, allowing a broad range of perspectives and priorities to be brought forward and considered by the group as a whole.

Each of the workshop participants were assigned one of the four well-beings and in groups worked together to identify the key aspirations for freshwater within that well-being and report back to the larger group.

Each group was then tasked to locate their aspirations on a 2-by-2 table that explored the relationship between long-term and short term time frames and low priority and high priority aspirations.

Participants were then given five sticky dots and asked to place their stickers against the aspirations that they considered to be the most significant/important. Some participants placed their stickers against five different aspirations while others placed multiple stickers against aspirations which they felt were significantly more important than others.

The workshop session was facilitated by Mary Bourke, the former Mayor of the South Taranaki District for fiver terms, and was assisted by Council planning staff.

The results of the workshop is included at Appendix 1.

Engagement responses and demographics

The NPS-FM directs that the long-term vision for freshwater must be developed from engagement with communities and tangata whenua and reflect their aspirations for freshwater for the future.

The online survey attracted 105 responses all of which were valid and useable in the analysis.

It is important for the Council to understand where responses and engagement have come from in order to assess the effectiveness of the engagement method and ensuring that any vision that is developed achieves these requirements.

The Council made some of the demographics' fields mandatory (indicated by a red asterisks in the question heading) which assisted in providing a clear snap shot of how effective the survey has been at capturing the perspectives of people from across the region as well as from different age groups and backgrounds.

***Please note** that in the graphs below, decimals have been rounded up to the nearest whole number.*

Participation district

Of the 105 participants, 79% of responses were from the New Plymouth District, while 13% from the South Taranaki District and 6% from Stratford District as shown in **Figure 2**. Only 2 participants indicated that they were from outside the region. This is comparable to the 2018 statistics NZ results which show that for residents in Taranaki, 67% are in the New Plymouth District, 8% in Stratford, and 23% in South Taranaki. While there is a slight over, representation in New Plymouth, the spread across the different districts is generally good.

The district demographic question was a required field and so there was a 100% response rate from the survey group.

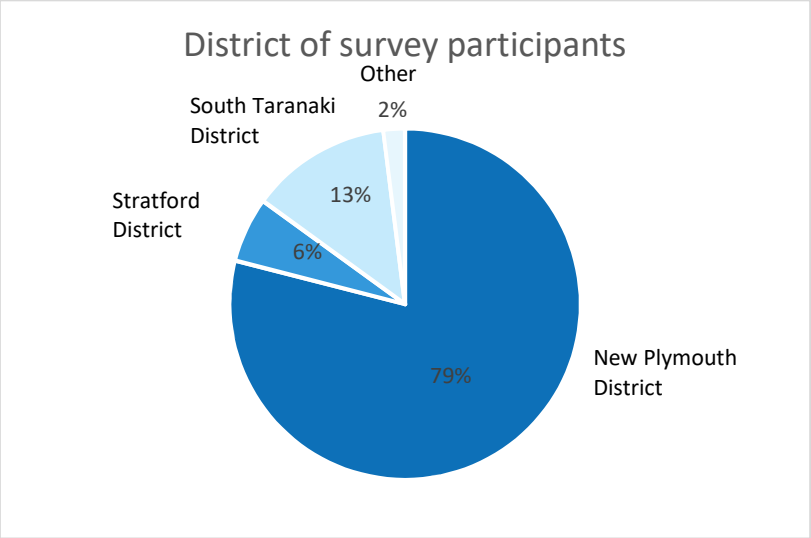

***Figure 2** Graph showing the percentage of survey participants from each of the Taranaki districts.*

Workshop was attended by 12 participants from across Taranaki. Attendees also show higher representation from New Plymouth, which may have been a result of the location of the workshop being held on New Plymouth itself.

Representation at the workshop included 6 from New Plymouth, 1 from Oakura, 1 Okato, 1 Eltham, 1 from Hawera and 2 who identified the Mounga/Taranaki wide as being their area of interest.

Participation age

The majority of responders (about half) were between 40 – 59 years of age, while both the 20 – 39 years and over 60 years age groups had about a quarter of responses each as shown in **Figure 3** above. None of the responders were under 20 years of age.

This representation is not unusual for engagement of this type, and it is generally expected that greater participation will occur for higher bracket age groups.

There were only two non-responses for this question indicating good representation of the survey group.

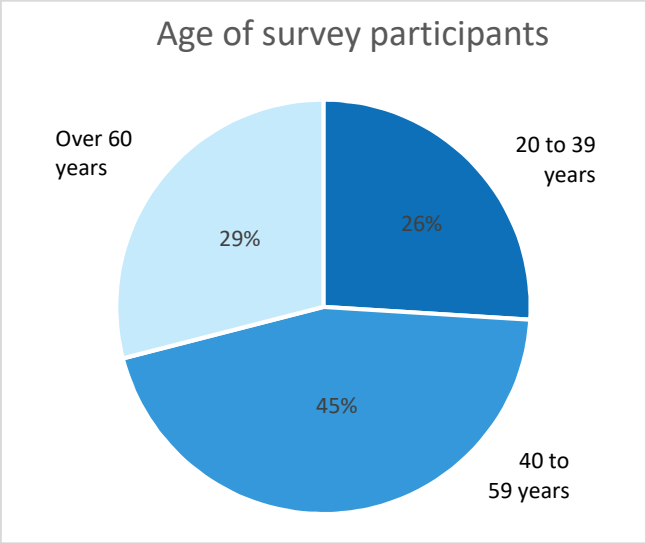

Figure 3 *Graph showing age of survey participants as percentages.*

Participation ethnicity

The survey included a demographic question about ethnicity. The options available were NZ European, NZ Māori, Other European, Pacific Islands, Asian and Other. Participants could choose as many of the options as was appropriate.

Highest representation was for 'NZ European' at 81%, followed by 'NZ Māori' at 14% and 'Other' and 'Other European' at 7% each. No participants indicated that they were a Pacific Islander and only 1% Asian.

This compares to the 2018 census results which identify ethnicity in Taranaki as being 84% European, 19.8% Māori, 2.1% Pacific peoples, 4.5% Asian and 2% as other[3].

This was not a mandatory question within the survey, however, there were only 2 non-responses indicating good representation of the survey group.

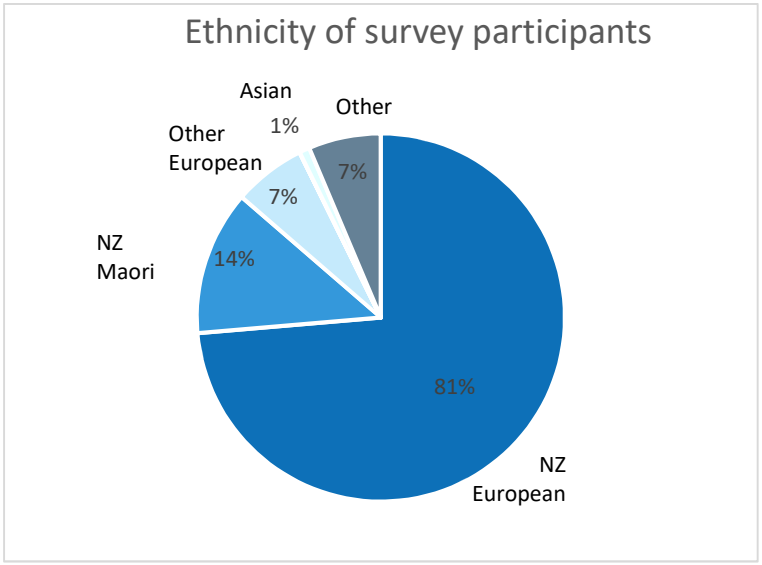

Figure 4 *Graph showing the ethnicity of survey participants as percentages.*

[3] Because ethnicity is a multi-choice options and responders may choose as many ethnicities that apply, the percentages will total more than 100%. This is done to be consistent with the analysis method used in the 2018 census data.

Number of responses and certainty

As noted previously, the survey received 105 responses and the workshop received 12 attendees. This response rate is acceptable but on the lower end of an acceptable response rate.

For both the survey and the workshops a higher response rate was anticipated and initially, four workshops across Hawera, Stratford, Opunake and New Plymouth were advertised with interested participants signalling interest. Unfortunately confirmed numbers at each location were not sufficient to hold separate workshops and so were ultimately combined and centralized at New Plymouth where the majority of attendees were based.

It is understood that lower than expected engagement response can be attributed to concurrent engagement on the Long-Term Plan for Taranaki as well as other concurrent engagement processes occurring from the district councils resulting in significant engagement fatigue from the public.

Notwithstanding the above, the response rate is acceptable, particularly given that there are further opportunities for engagement at Phase 2 and throughout the Schedule 1 engagement process.

Analysis methodology

The exploration of freshwater aspirations across the four well-beings was one of the most well responded aspects of the online survey.

In order to demonstrate the amount of detail and effort put in by participants, responses were initially compiled, simplified and then run through a word cloud generator. This produced four infographics according to the well-being types which demonstrate the relative importance/significance of key themes and topics, based on how often those themes were included in participant responses.

To create these response infographics words and phrases that appear in larger typeface were assigned greater weighting in the generator resulting in larger font size while those that appeared less frequently were assigned smaller font sizes.

This provides a quick and straightforward analysis which allows the viewer to identify synergies and links across the four well-beings. This also provides a helpful tool to prompt discussion in phase 2 as it allows the viewer to get a real appreciation for the flavour of responses and provides a mechanism to represent the views presented in responses that are not statistically sterilised as is the case when compiling qualitative data and representing it quantitatively through graphs and charts.

In addition to the above, a statistically accurate analysis of the same response data was undertaken by counting the frequency of responses on key themes/topics. These key themes/topics were largely informed by the results from the word cloud analysis and were grouped under the following headings:

- biodiversity values;
- recreation;
- state of water and waterbodies;
- water use and allocation;
- social and cultural perspectives;
- management approaches; and
- opportunities.

Under each heading, a number or core positions, perspectives and preferences were identified as specific themes/topics. For example, for water use and allocation, some people considered that water use should only be granted under a user pays scheme, while others considered that free use for all was appropriate. Each theme/topic therefore identified a range of options/preferences against which responses could be weighed against.

Within each well-being, the themes were graded according to the frequency of response. The grading used is as follows:

- **NA** - no responses within that well-being
- **Low** - theme contributed less than 2% of response amount within that well-being
- **Medium** - theme contributed to between 2 – 5% of the response amount within that well-being
- **High** - theme contributed to between 5 – 10% of the response rate within that well-being
- **Very high** - greater than 10% of response rate within that well-being.

An overall grading which combined each of the grades across the four well-beings was assigned according to the overall score by assigning a numeric value to each grade and then tallying that grade, per topic/theme, across the four well-beings to give an overall grade. The numeric values assigned to each well-being grade was:

NA = 0
low = 1
medium = 2
high = 3
very high = 4.

And the overall grade was assigned according to the final score once tallied was:

<5 = low
5–6=medium
7-8=high
>8=very high.

The overall grading is important for identifying topics/themes which may not have scored high in the individual well-beings, but showed consistent interest and responses

Results

Response infographics

Set out in figures 5 to 8 are the four survey response infographics generated to identify the core themes raised in response to each of the well-beings.

Figure 5 *Infographic showing the environmental aspirations from survey responses.*

Figure 6 *Infographic showing the economic aspirations from survey responses.*

Figure 7 *Infographic showing the social aspirations from survey responses.*

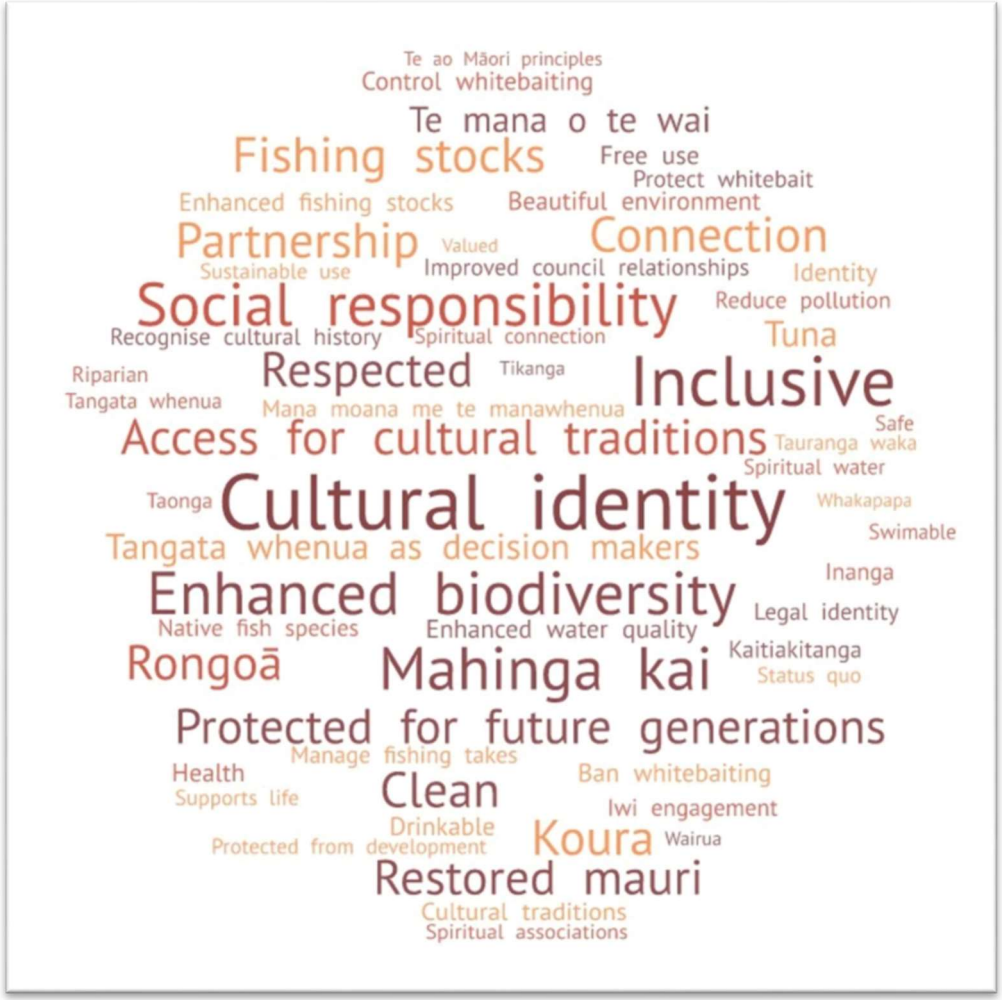

Figure 8 *Infographic showing the cultural aspirations from survey responses.*

Topic/theme significance

Set out in Table 1 are key topics as identified by participants, including the relative interest or significance of the topics across the four well-beings, and an overall average grade that combines the grades across the four well-beings.

***Table 1** – List of key topics/themes and the significance of that theme based on engagement responses. Themes show individual grades across each of the four well-beings based on survey responses and an overall grade which combines each of the well-beings is also provided.*

Topic/theme	Importance based on survey responses				
	Environmental wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Cultural wellbeing	Overall grade
Biodiversity					
Supports biodiversity	High	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Functioning ecosystem	High	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Native flora and fauna	Medium	NA	Low	Medium	Low
Recreation					
Near waterbody activities - cycling, walking, bird watching, quiet enjoyment	NA	NA	Medium	Medium	Low
Surface water activities - boating, kayaking, water sports & waka	Low	NA	Medium	Low	Low
Boating management	NA	NA	Medium	NA	Low
Fishing and fishing stocks	Low	NA	Medium	Medium	Medium
General use recreation and enjoyment	Medium	NA	Very high	Low	High
State of water and waterbodies					
Drinkable	High	Low	High	Low	High
Surface water activities - Swimming	Very high	Low	Very high	Medium	Very high
Enhanced high water quality standards	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Reduced contamination and pollution	High	Medium	Low	Low	High
Healthy environmental flows	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
Visibly clean, clear and fresh	High	Low	High	Medium	Very high
Status quo	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Water use and allocation					
Available for all to use	Low	Low	Low	High	Medium
Prioritize renewable energy and green technologies	NA	Medium	Low	NA	Low

Topic/theme	Importance based on survey responses				
Efficient and effective allocation	NA	High	Low	Low	Medium
Water for households, communities and essential human needs	Low	High	High	NA	High
Metred use and user pays	NA	Medium	Low	NA	Low
Supply for industry, businesses and economic development	Low	High	Low	Low	Medium
Prioritize sustainable use	Medium	Very high	Low	NA	High
Social and cultural perspectives					
Social responsibility (kaitiakitanga), relationship and respect for water	Medium	Medium	Low	Very high	Very high
Enhanced mauri and wairua	Low	NA	Low	High	Medium
Access to healthy mahinga kai and rōngoa	Low	NA	Medium	High	Medium
Provisions for cultural traditions and relationships between tangata whenua and wai	Low	NA	Low	Very high	Medium
Improved relationships between tangata whenua and Council	Low	NA	NA	High	Low
Management approach					
Ki uta ki tai – Mountains to sea management	Medium	NA	NA	NA	Low
Regulation and enforcement	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Te Mana o te Wai	Low	NA	Low	Low	Low
Riparian planting and fencing	High	Low	NA	Low	Medium
Reduce impacts from industry and agriculture	NA	Very high	NA	Low	Medium
Reduce litter and dumping	Medium	Low	Low	NA	Low
Opportunities					
Explore and promote water saving opportunities	NA	High	Medium	NA	Medium

Discussion – Freshwater aspirations for Taranaki

This section examines the key topics and themes identified in participants' responses, for each across the four well-beings, as well as providing broad observations or common perspectives raised by responders.

Most important topics and themes – "Very high"

Four topics/themes generated the highest interest/responses. These topics were not only consistently raised by participants but also showed some of the most effort in responses. This part of the discussion will focus on themes that received a 'very high' overall grade as indicated in **Table 1**.

Surface water activities – Swimming

While this theme could easily have been bundled with the recreation heading of the analysis, the majority of responders when referring to an aspiration for swimming were concerned with the water quality in relation to the swimming activity. Of all of the themes, swimming and bathing water standards were the ones most identified and received a 'very high' grade for both the environmental and social well-beings and 'medium' for the cultural well-being leading to its 'very high' overall grade.

Responders identified a range of desired outcomes within this category which broadly sit across a spectrum that begins at water standards for safe swimming being achieved in certain water bodies of interest and when weather is favourable and on the other end of the spectrum achieving water quality standards for swimming across every waterbody, river and stream in the region and those standards being maintained across the entire year.

The diversity of responses across this spectrum may be a result of the survey questions which asked responders to relate their response to areas of personal interest, rather than being a broad, region wide response. Irrespective of how responders chose to answer the question, it is clear that a large proportion of the community can agree that swimming is a vital aspect of fresh water in Taranaki that affects multiple areas of well-being. It highlights that fear of sickness or ill-health as a result of swimming in water that does not meet health standards is shared by many.

Many responders consider that water quality standards that provide for safe swimming will have an added benefit for the environment and all aspects of a functioning ecosystem. This ties into the 'Supports biodiversity' theme and other themes under the biodiversity heading which is explored in more detail below.

In responses relating to social well-being, responders considered that swimmable freshwater would have the added benefit of encouraging people and communities to build relationship with the environment and enhancing the sense of responsibility and unified respect for waterbodies. This concept relates strongly to the following theme of 'Social responsibility and kaitiakitanga' which is also explored in the sections below.

Some response examples relating to swimming include:

- *for all our waterways to be swimmable year round;*
- *to have waterways that are safe for kids to swim in;*
- *waterways that are full of life, crystal clear and can be swum in safely at all times;*
- *that all waterways are swimmable under normal conditions;*
- *that water quality in major river will be good enough to swim in safely most of the time (except after major weather system); and*
- *that all waterbodies where swimming historically and currently takes place be free of pollutants.*

Freshwater that supports biodiversity

'Fresh water that supports biodiversity' did not score as 'very high' against any of the individual four well-beings (it scored a 'high' grade for both the environmental and cultural well-beings and a medium grade for social well-being). However, the regularity that this theme occurred across the well-beings resulted in its overall grade being classified as 'very high'.

Under this theme, responders wanted Taranaki waterways to support biodiversity and for that biodiversity to be protected for future generations. Responders consider biodiversity to be an essential component to healthy waterways which has links through to other themes such habitat restoration, catchment plans and riparian planting activities. Biodiversity values also has synergies with the waterbodies ability to support life (whether native or introduced species such as trout) and at a deeper level connects with concepts such as mauri (life force) and wairua (soul or spirit), which received high recognition, particularly in the cultural well-being section of the survey.

Looking at the other two similar topics/themes under the biodiversity heading (functioning ecosystem and native flora and fauna) and the reasonable number of responses these also received, it is clear that matters affecting the natural life supporting capacity of fresh water are of concern to responders.

Under the cultural well-being, responders linked an environment that supports biodiversity to one that supports cultural values such as mahinga kai (food gathering/source of food), rongoa (medicines) and fishing and an abundance of freshwater species that contribute to maintaining these practices, for example tuna/eel, koura/freshwater crayfish, piharau/ lamprey and inanga/whitebait.

Some response examples relating to supporting biodiversity include:

- *pristine rivers where life is thriving that support our Taranaki ecology;*
- *to have a greater diversity of species in our waterways;*
- *that it is pure and clean and able to support an abundance of life;*
- *to see more eels & wildlife thriving;*
- *to experience the quiet beauty of a healthy, functioning freshwater ecosystem, listen to the water, turn a few rocks and look at the invertebrates, shine a light at night and see fish and koura;*
- *heathy biodiversity for traditional healing plants & freshwater creatures to thrive.*

Social responsibility and kaitiakitanga

Social responsibility and kaitiakitanga was graded as 'medium' across the environmental and economic well-beings and 'very high' for cultural well-being. Within this topic/theme, responders envisaged individuals, industry and businesses and well as communities as a whole having a sense of social responsibility and guardianship towards fresh water. This was expressed in a number of ways from 'kaitiakitanga', 'respect for water', 'sense of guardianship and stewardship', 'recognising water as taonga' and similar.

Within this topic, responders sought that fresh water be valued by all and upheld as central to the health of both the environment and people. Some responders wished to have more opportunities to provide for the health of fresh water, either through restoration projects or being involved in catchment groups, while others believed that there needs to be a cultural shift so that protecting the 'health' of fresh water is at least equal to providing for the economic health of the region.

This topic connected strongly with the theme of education, where some responders considered that in order to promote social responsibility it would be necessary to build community understanding of environmental impacts on fresh water and identify how these impacts can be avoided or remedied either by individuals, industries or communities.

Responds within this topic highlight a desire for people to consider themselves as part of the environment and not separate from it, and to encourage greater respect for water.

Under the cultural well-being, social responsibility connects with broader cultural themes such a kaitiaki, wairua, tikanga, mauri, spiritual connection to and relationship with wai. These are not explored in the sections below, however, are central to a te ao Māori perspective which draws upon the traditional and cultural relationships that tangata whenua have with freshwater, the environment and people generally.

Some response examples relating to social responsibility and kaitiakitanga include:

- *all people in Taranaki to value water for its life giving properties and to safe guard the quality and quantity for future generations;*
- *freshwater to be looked after by everyone not just certain sectors;*
- *more people to understand their connection to water and how precious it is;*
- *the community to recognise the importance of freshwater in their daily lives recognising the responsibility to care for and be kaitiaki;*
- *citizens to take greater responsibility for the care of freshwater and for children to be actively engaged in learning how to do this;*
- *to have an authentic reciprocal relationship with our water sources that is governed by care, ethics and justice.*

Visibly clean, clear and fresh

A vast proportion of responders seek fresh water that has the visual and aesthetic appeal of being clean, fresh, pure, pristine and clear. Use of these descriptors or similar were highest for responses under the environmental and social well-beings but was also notable in the cultural well-being.

Some responders noted that some waterways were susceptible to muddy waters or high sediment loads while others may produce an odour that is unappealing or may look unhealthy for other reasons such as stagnation or algae growth. It is clear that many responders consider that the visual appeal of the water body reflects the actual health and well-being of that water body and how intact the ecosystem functions are.

Often these responses connect strongly with recreation aspirations generally, which, in turn, reflects people's connection and relationship to fresh water and nature generally. A number of responses considered that enhanced sensory experiences would have benefits across other areas such as enhanced mauri and wairua, as well as tourism and connection leading to sense of pride and social responsibility.

Some response examples relating to visibly clean, clear and fresh include:

- waterways to be full of life and crystal clear;
- for genuinely pure and fresh water;
- to ensure freshwater maintains its clarity, its integrity and meets the highest standards;
- that all our fresh waterways are exactly that – fresh;
- that we become an eco-friendly pristine preserved waterways region;
- for water that is clean and clear to provide future generations with exceptional recreation opportunities.

Other notable topics and themes – 'High'

Six additional topics/themes generated a high interest or a relatively high response. These 'notable' topics identified certain themes where there is a general consensus of opinion. However, these topics have not been raised as frequently or across as many of the well-being types as those which achieved the 'very high' overall grade. Many of these topics shared a close connection to those topics that were graded 'very high' and support the key themes identified above. This part of the discussion will focus on topics/themes that received a 'high' overall grade as indicated in **Table 1**.

General use recreation and enjoyment

This theme refers to the general ability for people to access waterbodies for recreational purposes. While other areas of the recreation category split interests into 'near water body activities' or 'surface water activities' this is a more general catch all as many responders did not specify the exact activity they wished to participate in. This reflects a general aspiration to have safe and reliable access to freshwater for recreation and enjoyment.

Some responders were concerned that access to waterbodies is limited, or that the activity they wished to participate in could only take place in a few select locations due to limited access rights or low water quality standards at other locations.

Drinkable

It is important to note that where possible, responses that were categorised as 'drinkable' were separated from those that were concerned with proving drinking water generally as an essential human need. However, the exact intention behind each response is not always identifiable. For example, some responders are seeking waterbodies whose water quality is so high that they could drink from them without treatment, while others are more concerned about having access to water which can be treated or brought to a drinkable standards. In this category, responses are interpreted to be seeking a water quality enhancement that would allow for the safe drinking of water from freshwater bodies, generally without treatment.

Aspirations for drinkable water was common across the environmental and social well-beings.

Some responders drew on personal historic experiences where they may have drank directly from a local water source as a child or where in generations past water was of a drinkable quality.

Drinkable water quality was closely associated with swimmable water quality and the values and connections discussed for swimmable in the heading above. As an additional observation, it appears that many responders considered that a swimmable standard would also achieve water quality that was drinkable and *vice versa*.

Enhanced high water quality standards

While responses for 'enhanced water quality standards' did not produce the high frequency numbers seen in the 'swimmable' or 'drinkable' topics, it was the most consistently sought aspiration across the four well-beings with a grade of medium being assigned to each. Because this aspiration was so consistently sought by responders across the well-beings it received a 'high' overall grade.

Responses seeking 'enhanced high water quality standards' are separated from those seeking 'swimmable', or 'drinkable' water quality. These responders generally sought enhanced water quality standards but were less specific about the 'standard' to be achieved.

The general conclusion that can be drawn from this topic, and considering the high and very high grades assigned to both the 'swimmable' and 'drinkable' topics/themes, responders are keen for improved water quality in Taranaki generally.

Of note, very few responders consider that freshwater quality is currently meeting their expectations.

Reduced contamination and pollution

This topic reflects responses that were concerned with harmful discharges entering waterbodies. This topic received a high importance grade in the environmental well-being and a medium grade for the economic well-being.

In this topic, responders are concerned with pollution, contaminants, industrial, agricultural and trade run off, nitrates, sewage, effluent and sediment.

Responses under this topic focused on reducing the volume of discharges entering a waterbody and ensuring that any remaining discharges are treated to a high standard. This topic connected strongly with other topics, for example 'riparian planting and fencing' where responses focused on specific management practices as a means for reducing agricultural run-off and nitrates; 'reducing impacts from industry and agriculture' which scored 'very high' for the economic well-being; and 'reduce litter and dumping'.

Water for households, communities and essential human needs

This topic/theme was graded as 'high' for both the economic and social well-beings. Common responses focused on ensuring that people and communities are able to ensure their basic water needs are met. Primarily, this was sought for in domestic water use (such as drinking and cooking water as well as providing for washing and laundry needs).

Some of the responses in this category are concerned that access to water for basic household needs may become limited or scarce, possibly as a result of climate change or from prioritizing use for industry and businesses before residents. A number of responders recognise that there is a responsibility placed on all water users, including at a household level to ensure that water is not used wastefully and to prioritize use during hot summers to where it is most necessary.

Prioritize sustainable use

The importance of sustainable use of water featured across all of the well-beings. However, this topic was most central to the economic aspirations. Here there was a desire to be less reliant on waterbodies and look at alternative water sources such as water storage options to enhance sustainable use and reduce over consumption through practices that enhance efficiency and reduce reliance on takes.

Participants recognise that water use is an important part of a healthy economy and that there is a need to provide for use and development. However, a large proportion of responders consider that sustainable use of that water should be prioritized to ensure that water is being used wisely and that the resource is respected by water users.

Some responders consider that some management decisions are weighing economic gains above the environmental health of a water body. Responders consider that under a 'sustainable use' model, water takes would only occur where there is an appropriate abundance of water for takes to not have an adverse effect. In addition, any takes would demonstrate an efficient and effective use of that take without or with reduced waste and that there would be a general acceptance and awareness for responsibility of wise use.

This approach connects strongly with the previously explored theme of 'social responsibility and kaitiakitanga' as well as other lesser responded themes such as to 'explore and promote water saving opportunities'. Similarly, some users sought the phasing out of practices such as pasture irrigation.

Conclusions

The Council appreciates the time and effort taken by individuals to participate in the online survey and workshop and in what is but the initial phase of a much longer engagement process.

This report presents the findings of Council on its preliminary engagement so far to develop a long term vision for fresh water. The vision will be developed after further engagement and ultimately will be included and consulted on as part of a revised RPS.

Responses of the online survey and in-person workshop have identified key concepts, themes and priorities to inform further engagement as part of developing a long term vision for freshwater in Taranaki.

The process has highlighted strong community interest in what and how we are managing fresh water in Taranaki. A review of comments shows a number of common themes that responders were seeking to incorporate into the freshwater vision. They are:

- swimmability;
- freshwater which supports biodiversity;
- social responsibility and kaitiakitanga;
- visibly clean, clear and fresh water;
- providing for general use, recreation and enjoyment;
- drinkable water;
- enhanced water quality;
- reduced contamination and pollution;
- provision of water for households and essential human needs; and
- prioritising sustainable water use.

Responders generally want to ensure that fresh water is valued by citizens and by all those who depend on it for their livelihoods and that kaitiakitanga and stewardship be exercised in the management of freshwater (suggesting that this is a concept that more people and industries should align themselves with in promoting sustainable use of freshwater).

Responders want fresh water to be respected and that people can come together with a shared sense of social responsibility and purpose to ensure that the health of the water is enhanced and promoted at all levels of society.

Responders also want freshwater which is visually appealing and has a high sensory value being clean, clear and unpolluted. Responders want to ensure that freshwater is safe to swim in and undertake other recreational activities with certainty that the health of their children and older generation will not be at risk. In doing so, they want to ensure that the current relationship that people have with freshwater through recreation, swimming, traditional practices and general use and enjoyment is not only maintained, but enhanced to encourage the sense of relationship and therefore responsibility.

They want to know that freshwater biodiversity is being supported and nourished by freshwater and that there is an abundance of life which can be seen when in or near freshwater bodies. That species indigenous to Aotearoa and species which provide a social benefit to people and communities are abundant and flourishing.

As previously noted the process run to date is but the initial stage of a longer engagement process to develop a long term vision for Taranaki. Further engagement is to follow.

Appendix 1 – Workshop responses

Environmental prioritization

	Low priority	High priority
Short term	• Recognise ecological intrinsic values **(5)** • Capturing history, stories from the older generation • Acknowledge lessons,, learnings and successes	• Reducing impacts of contaminants that are discharged to water **(6)** • Local community solutions focus**(3)** • Recognising different interests, views and values • Recognise and provide for different uses and values • Guardianship/kaitiakitanga for next generation • Swimming locations • Balance between protection and use • Education • Knowledge (community) – both mātauranga Māori and scientific knowledge • Water cycle approach • Recognise and support ecosystem processes • Holistic integration • Connectedness of waterways ecosystems and values • Layered management approach
Long term		• High water quality at all times – able to swim everywhere **(3)** • Protect the mauri of water **(3)** • Ecosystem health - richness and abundance **(1)** • Wildlife in water • No direct discharges of contaminants

Economic prioritization

	Low priority	High priority
Short term		• Enhance opportunities for innovation, especially in farming **(2)** • Targeted results for environmental outcomes **(2)** • Flexibility **(2)** • Avoid regulation that does not focus on environmental outcomes **(1)** • Channels for adaptation and innovation **(1)** • Simplify resource consent process • Rejig values so that economics does not conflict with the environment • Adaptable to encourage change • Non-regulatory approaches (carrot not stick) • Retain the ground up approach • Efficiency of use

		• Avoid perverse outcomes
Long term	• Ownership and self determination	• Remain prosperous **(4)** • Retain partnerships with farmers and agriculture **(3)** • Priority of use **(1)** • Employment opportunities • Empowering innovation • Tourism • Renewable energy

Social prioritization

	Low priority	High priority
Short term	• Access for everyone and future generations **(2)** • Transparent, easy to understand information on water quality. • Supporting community participation in awa restoration and a shared vision for that waterbody and wider.	• Use water as efficiently as possible – Te mana o te wai – the river comes first **(2)** • A principle that everyone own the water and that property rights does not imply ownership **(1)** • No one gets ill from freshwater/ocean recreation
Long term	• Societal view of zero tolerance for pollution/resource consent breaches.	• Recreation reserve areas **(1)** • Recreational opportunities, walkways etc • Multi-generational & multi-cultural involvement • Fairness of transition – ensuring rural communities thrive, not suffer • Investment in three waters – rates • Kai gathering connections and family activities and well-being • Sustainable productive fisheries • Swimmable waters • Enjoying freshwater is a free activity – without it there are less free activities for people to enjoy.

Cultural prioritization

	Low priority	High priority
Short term	• Structuring smooth transitions in consenting	• Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au – If the mauri is good our people are good **(4)** • Matauranga Māori incorporated into how we measure water quality **(3)** • Kai moana health not negatively affected by poor freshwater quality **(3)** • Cultural values **(2)** • Aspirations for particular awa in Taranaki to be determined by tangata whenua and hapū **(1)** • Valuing Mahinga kai values • Awa able to provide kai for our people

Long term		• Thriving ecology into the future **(2)** • Clean, healthy water and all living things in awa **(2)** • Values and culture leads to positive environmental outcomes **(2)** • Cultures of organisations need to be adaptable to change **(1)** • Swimming for people – high quality of freshwater (and sea water) **(1)** • Tangata whenua confident to collect (e.g. water cress and other kai) • Natural rongoa/medicine can be utilised.