Setting our Direction
for **improving freshwater** in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland

Feedback must be received by
4 December 2023

AK HAVE YOUR SAY

We're working out what we need to change to put the health of our freshwater first.

Your feedback last year helped us develop a vision and values to better manage our freshwater in Tāmaki Makaurau through the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM).

Now we want to check back in with you to make sure we're moving in the right direction.

NPS-FM is a government policy to guide how freshwater should be managed across New Zealand, in our rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, aquifers (groundwater) and springs. It also includes how freshwater affects coastal waters and considers the impacts of climate change.

The results from this round of feedback will be worked into next year's proposed Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) Plan Change.

To support this engagement, we have developed:

- *Setting Our Direction* – our consultation document
- A freshwater consultation viewer with detailed information about the region
- A state and trend dashboard about the health of our waterbodies.

We encourage you to read the proposed approach and supporting information before you answer any of the following questions.

We encourage you to give feedback online at **akhaveyoursay.nz**, or you can:

Scan and Email your completed form to:
freshwaterplanning@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Post your completed form to:
Fresh Water Auckland
Auckland Council
Private Bag 92300, Victoria Street West
Auckland, 1142

Your details

Your name and feedback will be included in public documents. All other personal details will not be made publicly available.

First name: _____ Last name: _____

Email address or postal address: _____

Your local board: _____

Is your feedback on behalf of an organisation or business?
(If yes, this confirms you have authority to submit on the organisation's behalf)

☐ Yes ☐ No Name of organisation/business: _____

These questions are optional but will help us understand which groups of the community are engaging with us.

What gender are you?

☐ Male ☐ Female Another gender: _____

What age group do you belong to?

☐ Under 15 ☐ 15-17 ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44
☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65-74 ☐ 75+

Which ethnic group(s) do you feel you belong to? (Please select as many as apply)

☐ Pākehā/NZ European ☐ Other European ☐ Māori
☐ Cook Islands Māori ☐ Samoan ☐ Tongan
☐ Indian ☐ Chinese ☐ Southeast Asian
☐ Other (please specify):

Important privacy information

The personal information that you provide in this form will be held and protected by Auckland Council in accordance with our privacy policy (available at **aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/privacy** and at our libraries and service centres) and with the Privacy Act 2020. The privacy policy explains how we can use and share your personal information in relation to any interaction you have with the council, and how you can access and correct that information. You should familiarise yourself with this policy before submitting this form.

Would you like to subscribe to any of the following (tick all that apply):

☐ People's Panel – to take part in council surveys
☐ Our Auckland – your weekly guide to what's happening in Auckland
☐ Auckland Conversations - free public events, offering ideas, inspiration and action for world-class cities

You can also visit AK Have Your Say at **akhaveyoursay.nz** to find out about, or register to receive regular updates on, consultation activities happening across Auckland

Your feedback (all questions are optional)

We would like feedback on many aspects of the plan, so we have split the feedback form into different topic areas. If you would like to provide feedback on just some aspect of the plan, you can skip to the sections most important to you. The sections are:

A. Long-term vision
B. Values and environmental outcomes
C. Waterbodies where special management is required
D. Achieving the vision and environmental outcomes for freshwater
E. Habitat protection and improvement
F. Water quantity
G. Other feedback.

A. Long term vision

Proposed vision for freshwater in Tāmaki Makaurau

We are required to have a vision for freshwater management in Tāmaki Makaurau. The proposed vision aligns with the Auckland Water Strategy and responds to the feedback we've already received from mana whenua and the community about freshwater values. The vision will become an objective in the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP). This means that it will need to be applied in the policies and rules of the AUP, and to resource management decisions.

The overarching vision is: To protect and enhance Te Mauri o te Wai – the life-sustaining capacity of water.

The proposed wording also includes some detailed goals for 2030, 2040, and 2050 to 2080. Read section 6 of the *Setting Our Direction* document for more information.

1. What do you think about the direction we are proposing in the region-wide vision statement?

☐ Strongly support ☐ Mostly support ☐ Mostly do not support ☐ Strongly do not support

☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

Proposed vision for our Freshwater Management Units

Freshwater Management Units are the spatial areas we use for freshwater management and accounting purposes. After community consultation in 2022, we identified three Freshwater Management Units (FMU) for Tāmaki Makaurau. They are the Kaipara FMU, the Manukau FMU and the Hauraki FMU.

Based on the characteristics, state and environmental pressures on freshwater in each of the FMUs, we are proposing specific local visions for each one of these.

Please refer to the proposed vision statement for each FMU in sections 8, 9 and 10 of *Setting Our Direction*.

2. What do you think about our proposed vision statement for the Hauraki FMU?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

3. What do you think about our proposed vision statement for the Kaipara FMU?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

4. What do you think about our proposed vision statement for the Manukau FMU?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

B. Values and environmental outcomes

Values proposed for the Auckland region

Values are the things that people think are important about water. They will guide what we prioritise to manage.

We propose to adopt 12 of the 13 national values from the NPS-FM. They are: ecosystem health, mahinga kai, threatened species, human contact, natural form and character, drinking water supply, transport and tauranga waka, wai tapu, fishing, animal drinking water, irrigation, cultivation, and production of food and beverages, and commercial and industrial use. We have excluded hydroelectric power generation, because it isn't relevant to our region.

We also propose to add two new values:

i. The importance of **resilience** for our freshwater and freshwater bodies. You can read more about the resilience value in section 11 of *Setting Our Direction*.

ii. The value that Aucklanders place on **amenity** - that is, enjoying being near rivers, lakes and waterfalls without necessarily going into the water. Read more about the Amenity value in section 11 of *Setting Our Direction*.

5. Do you think we should add 'resilience' as a value in the Auckland Unitary Plan?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

6. Do you think we should add 'amenity' as a value in the Auckland Unitary Plan?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

Proposed environmental outcomes

We have developed an environmental outcome for each of the freshwater values that will apply in Tāmaki Makaurau. We have also identified environmental outcomes for the Pukekohe Specified Vegetable Growing Area, the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area and the Hunua Ranges. The outcomes describe what we want to achieve for each of the values.

Please read the proposed environmental outcomes in section 12 of *Setting Our Direction*.

7. Do you have any feedback on the proposed environmental outcomes?

Tell us why:

C. Waterbodies where special management is required

Outstanding waterbodies

Outstanding waterbodies are the rivers, lakes and wetlands that are the 'best of the best' in the region. We have been developing relevant criteria for Tāmaki Makaurau and assessing available information relating to Māori cultural values, ecological, landscape and recreational values.

You can read more about the identification of outstanding waterbodies and see the full list of proposed sites in section 13 of *Setting Our Direction*. You can also see these waterbodies mapped on our freshwater consultation viewer.

8. What do you think about our approach to identify outstanding waterbodies, with criteria for Māori cultural values, ecological, landscape and recreational values?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

Primary contact sites

Primary contact sites are freshwater sites that we know are regularly used for recreational activities where people make contact with water, like swimming, waka ama and kayaking.

We are proposing to identify primary contact sites alongside Auckland's Safeswim programme. Although Safeswim historically focused on our beaches, it now includes nine existing freshwater sites. There are 14 other potential freshwater sites that we might include (subject to further analysis and evaluation).

We will pay particular attention to the human health risks at these sites. This means **we may need to introduce stricter standards to reduce sources of contamination in these catchments**, such as keeping stock out of waterways and upgrading wastewater systems.

You can read more about primary contact sites and see the full list of Safeswim sites in section 13 of *Setting Our Direction*. You can also see these sites mapped on our freshwater consultation viewer.

9. Tell us what you think about our approach to use the Safeswim sites as our primary contact sites, and introduce stricter standards to manage contamination in these catchments?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

D. Achieving the vision and environmental outcomes for freshwater

Establishing our baseline

The NPS-FM needs us to set a baseline state for freshwater improvements. This is a starting point for us to measure the health of our rivers and lakes, and to assess our improvements over time. We are measuring baselines for a range of water quality and ecosystem health attributes (the characteristics that we measure). The baseline is usually set at 2017 to protect against any degradation since that time.

You can read more about the baselines we're considering for rivers and lakes in part 3 of *Setting Our Direction*.

10. What do you think about the summaries of the baseline health of our rivers/streams and lakes?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

11. How satisfied are you with the health of Tamaki Makaurau's river, streams and lakes?

☐ Very satisfied ☐ Fairly satisfied ☐ Fairly dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied
☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

Additional attributes to support ecosystem health outcomes

We can include measures of freshwater health (called 'attributes'), above what is required in the NPS-FM, if they will help us to achieve our long-term vision and environmental outcomes.

We have identified the need to manage zinc and copper (in urban streams). At high concentrations these metals may be toxic to aquatic life. To decrease the amount of these metals in our waterways, we need to manage high contaminant-generating carparks and high-use roads, some industrial and trade activities, consider controlling the use of building materials that contain these metals, and improve our stormwater management.

You can read more about copper and zinc in section 14.4 of *Setting Our Direction*.

12. Do you think we should include and manage copper and zinc as attributes for urban streams in this plan change?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

Increased temperature is a significant issue in streams across Auckland, so we propose to add and use this attribute to measure the health of aquatic life and habitat quality.

Increases in temperature can decrease the amount of oxygen in our waterways and harm the fish and other freshwater life. Increases in temperature can be caused by less shade from overhanging trees, warm water entering streams (from roads and concrete surfaces, or direct discharges), and reduced water flowing into streams which means they warm up more easily.

You can read about temperature here in section 15.3 of *Setting Our Direction*.

13. Do you think we should include and manage temperature as an attribute in this plan change?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

Setting targets for improvement

We need to set targets to improve our freshwater, using measures for ecosystem health (called 'attributes'). These targets need to be set above national bottom lines, as specified in the NPS-FM.

This is ambitious for some attributes, such as *E. coli* in freshwater (*E. coli* is an indicator of faecal contamination), and sediment in coastal areas. Change is already underway, but the scale of improvement means results may take more than a generation to achieve.

Mana whenua have stronger ambitions to improve our waterways in all the places where human activities have negatively impacted them, or wherever they are not of the highest quality.

We propose to set long-term targets to improve all attribute states across the region where they are poor (C or D band). Where waterbody health is already good (A or B band), we propose to at least maintain the baseline state.

Read about our proposed targets throughout part 3 and in section 17 of *Setting our Direction*.

14. What do you think about our proposal to at least maintain the state of waterbodies where they are already good and set ambitious targets to improve the health of waterbodies where they are poor?

☐ Strongly support ☐ Mostly support ☐ Mostly do not support ☐ Strongly do not support

☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

Setting targets in the Pukekohe Specified Vegetable Growing Area

Pukekohe is where 26 per cent of New Zealand's vegetables are grown. This area is very important for national food security. There are some specific problems with the freshwater quality in this area, particularly due to the amount of nitrate (from fertiliser) used in vegetable production.

Even if all vegetable production stopped in the area immediately, it would take multiple generations for the nitrate-related attributes to meet national bottom lines. Because of the lag time between fertiliser being applied, nutrients going into groundwater and then into streams, we also understand it is likely that the state may get worse before it improves.

The Specified Vegetable Growing Area exemption still requires us to improve water quality but gives us an option to set targets below the national bottom lines proposed.

We propose to set longer-time frames to meet the national bottom lines with some interim targets to make sure we keep improving.

We are working with vegetable growers to ensure that they are using best management practices as they produce vegetables. We could also include requirements to limit expansion of the area and have a cap on fertiliser application.

You can read more Pukekohe Specified Vegetable Growing Area here in section 13.5, 14.2, 17 and 18.1 of *Setting Our Direction*.

15. How should we strike the balance between maintaining food security and improving water quality in the Pukekohe Specified Vegetable Growing Area?

Tell us why:

Managing our activity

To achieve our freshwater targets, we need to improve how we manage the activities that impact water in both our rural and urban areas.

We need to use a combination of both regulatory tools (such as rules in the Auckland Unitary Plan) and non-regulatory tools (council strategies, action plans, asset management, monitoring, support for community work, incentives and training). We are considering a range of methods such as:

- strengthening the requirements around riparian margins
- improving the management of sediment run-off from both urban land uses (including construction sites) and rural land uses
- requiring improvements in rural management practices
  - increasing the national requirements around excluding stock from waterways
  - setting limits of discharge volumes and fertiliser application for horticulture
  - increasing restrictions on forestry activities with a high risk of generating sediment
  - promoting good farm management practices through Freshwater Farm Plans, including requiring farmers and growers to provide greater detail through Freshwater Farm Plans of how they will manage the risk from fertilizer use
- improving wastewater management in both urban and rural areas
  - reducing wastewater overflows and discharges in urban areas
  - strengthening the provisions in the AUP relating to on-site wastewater management.

Read about the range of options in section 18 of *Setting Our Direction*.

16. Tell us what you think about the draft management options being considered?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

17. Are there other management options outside of those listed that you think we should consider?

Tell us why:

E. Habitat protection and improvement

Fish Passage

Many native fish species need to migrate between fresh and salt water to complete their life cycle. **Culverts and other barriers in streams can impede fish passage. New culverts need to meet fish passage standards, however there are more than 4,000 existing barriers to fish passage in the Auckland region.** Most of these are on private land.

We are drafting an action plan to remediate these barriers, but realistically it will take time to replace these barriers with fish-friendly designs.

We are considering how to prioritise remediating existing barriers. We are looking to prioritse catchments based on factors such as mana whenua engagement and initiatives, maintaining existing high-quality habitat catchments, supporting threatened species management, cost-benefit analysis, presence of community groups who can contribute, and connectivity to the coast.

You can read more about fish passage in section 18 of *Setting Our Direction*.

18. What do you think of our proposal to prioritise catchments across the region for fish passage remediation?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

Wetlands, rivers and streams

Only around 4 per cent of Auckland's freshwater wetland ecosystems remain. Our urban and rural streams and wetlands are at risk from reclamation, drainage, vegetation clearance and piping.

The NPS-FM means we need to avoid the loss of wetland areas, rivers and streams, and their values. In some cases, we propose to retain stricter rules in the AUP than those required under national regulations. For example, for wetlands we are considering keeping the 20 metre (AUP) setback for vegetation removal, instead of the 10-metre national standard. For rivers and streams, we are looking at keeping the current non-complying activity status for river reclamation, which is more restrictive than the discretionary activity status set in the national regulations.

You can read more about protecting wetlands and streams in section 18 of *Setting Our Direction*.

19. Do you think we should retain our existing regional standards for wetlands and streams where they are higher than national requirements?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ I don't know

Tell us why:

F. Water Quantity

Demand for water is high in some parts of the Auckland region, and this demand is only likely to increase as the population grows and the climate changes.

Under the NPS-FM, freshwater flows and levels in rivers and lakes must be high enough to support the health of aquatic life and ecosystems, even in times of drought. Once we provide for the health of waterbodies, we can look at allowing water to be taken for other uses, such as household needs, animal watering and irrigation.

Currently, the AUP prioritises domestic needs, municipal water supply, and animal drinking water above other water uses. We could be more specific, for example making location-specific priorities for agriculture or horticulture where there is highly productive land.

Managing the taking and use of water is especially important when water levels are low, as in times of drought, and in areas where we have over-allocated the amount of water that can be taken out of waterbodies.

Our best available information suggests around 10 per cent of our aquifers are currently over allocated. This may increase as we revise flows, levels and take limits.

Work is underway to develop an approach for phasing out over-allocation, and to determine the timeframe in which it will take place. The notified plan change will include further information about how and when this will take place.

Read more about water quantity issues in part 5 of *Setting Our Direction*.

20. How do you suggest the council fairly reduces water allocations to existing consent holders where that is considered necessary?

21. How do you think we should prioritise allocation where or when water is scarce?

G. Any other feedback?

22. Do you have any other feedback on improving freshwater in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland?

Need more room? You can attach extra pages.