

Environmental alert - NPS Freshwater Management amendments

Paul Beverley, Patrick Mulligan, Jennifer Caldwell, David Allen, David Randal, Cedric Carranceja

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The NPS Freshwater Management will be amended, with changes taking effect 1 August 2014. The amended NPS will be issued by notice in the *Gazette* on 4 July 2014.

The amendments introduce a national objectives framework to help regional councils set freshwater objectives in their regional plans, with national bottom lines being set for ecosystem health and human health for recreation.

The national objectives framework requires that regional councils:

- Divide water bodies in their region into freshwater management units (FMUs)
- Identify the values for each FMU, including the two compulsory values (ecosystem health and human health for recreation) and any other values that the council considers appropriate (eg economic or commercial development, mahinga kai)
- Decide what attribute state (the level to which each measurable characteristic of fresh water is to be managed) is acceptable for each FMU - unless specific exceptions apply, this level must be at or above the minimum bottom lines set in the NPS. This level becomes the numeric freshwater objective for each FMU.

When establishing freshwater objectives, regional councils must consider several matters including the current state of the FMU, the limits required to achieve each objective and implications for resource users. They must also account for all water takes and sources of contaminants (freshwater accounting).

The Ministry for the Environment is due to release guidance on:

- Freshwater accounting
- Establishing freshwater management units.

Auckland

PwC Tower
188 Quay Street
Auckland 1010

PO Box 1433
Auckland 1140
New Zealand

P: +64 9 358 2555
F: +64 9 358 2055

Wellington

Aon Centre
1 Willis Street
Wellington 6011

PO Box 2694
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

P: +64 4 499 4242
F: +64 4 499 4141

Christchurch

83 Victoria Street
Christchurch 8013

PO Box 322
Christchurch 8140
New Zealand

P: +64 3 379 1747
F: +64 3 379 5659