

Te Arotake Kaupapahere Waimāori – Te rīpoata a te haere a ngā rōpū hapori

Freshwater Policy Review – Citizen reference groups progress report part 2 - 2023

Prepared by:
Dr Louise Stone

For:
Waikato Regional Council
Private Bag 3038 Waikato
Mail Centre HAMILTON 3240

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Kōrero whakataki | Executive summary

This report provides an overview of the feedback that was received from the Citizen Reference Group (CRG) workshops which were held during October 2023. These groups were formed in an advisory capacity as part of community engagement for the Freshwater Policy Review (FPR), to provide additional community voices that could inform policy development and test directions or options. Membership was sought based on experience and knowledge, while aiming for a range of backgrounds and perspectives.

A total of five groups have been formed, aligned with the boundaries indicative of the Freshwater Management Units (FMUs). One group has been formed for all of the Waikato-Waipā FMUs. The formation of the groups included an open process calling for expressions of interest, followed by review and selection by a staff panel.

To date, four workshops have been held for both the Waikato-Waipā and Hauraki CRGs, three have taken place for the West Coast and Taupo areas, and two have been conducted for the Coromandel CRG. The process is intended to cover key elements of the National Policy Statement – Freshwater Management (2020) planning framework, including the steps of the National Objectives Framework (NOF). The topics covered during the most recent sessions (October 2023) included the Engagement Round 2 results, baseline attributes and trends, and policy direction context and questions¹.

CRG members acknowledged the effort WRC put into the FPR's second round of engagement, however, there were some concerns with the response rates. Members provided recommendations and suggestions to help improve response rates for future engagement events. With regards to opinions, CRG members typically expressed agreement with the comments provided by community participants. The CRG members stated that climate change and its effects need to be taken into consideration when designing freshwater policy. In addition, there was an emphasis on policy achieving a balance between 'pristine' and 'polluted' freshwater.

When presented with data summarising baseline states and trend information (both for their FMU and the entire Waikato region), the CRG members often asked where deterioration was more prevalent and which areas were most concerning – it was thought that freshwater policy should focus on improving these areas first. CRG members questioned whether the morphology of their catchment influenced attribute baselines and if it would allow for improvements. Continued monitoring of water quality was seen as a necessity and some suggested increasing the number of monitoring sites. CRG members also asked if the cause and effects of various attributes has been definitively established.

Each CRG was presented with policy direction context and questions that were specific to their FMU. CRG members provided several recommendations for freshwater policy and gave their opinions on how future limits and regulations should look. It was mentioned, however, that contextual factors (both on a catchment and individual property level) need to be taken into consideration. Reference was often made to Freshwater Farm Plans (FWFP) and the positive effects that these may have once full implemented.

¹ For a review of the sessions which took place between February and August 2023, please refer to part 1 of this report series: WRC 2023. Freshwater Policy Review – Citizen reference groups progress report – 2023, Waikato Regional Council Policy Series 2023/21 Doc # 28230829

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1 He tīmatanga kōrero | Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Citizen Reference Group (CRG) workshops which took place during October and November 2023. This report is a follow-up to the one constructed in August 2023², which recorded progress since the formation of the groups early in 2023. The first section discusses the purpose of the CRGs, how members were recruited and selected, and the structure of the CRG workshops. The second section summarises the thoughts and feedback provided by the CRG members during October and November 2023.

1.1 What are Citizen Reference Groups?

Citizen or Community Reference groups are a way for those with lived experiences in a particular demographic area or community to have a voice. They allow for specific parts of the community to provide feedback on council activities; for example, planning, developing, or delivering services and programmes. Within New Zealand, CRGs have been used by both local and central government organisations. For example, Palmerston North City Council created a Disability Reference Group in 2018, and in 2022 set up both a Pasifika Reference Group and a Seniors Reference Group. Similarly, to acquire feedback on the Regional Policy Statement, the Otago Regional Council established eleven reference groups to discuss a variety of issues. In 2019, the central government formed a community reference group to support the Inquiry into the Earthquake Commission. In order to engage with perspectives from New Zealand's migrant communities and inform medium term priorities, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment established the Migrant Community Reference Group in 2023.

1.2 Purpose of the Citizen Reference Groups (within the Freshwater Policy Review)

Waikato Regional Council (WRC) is reviewing its Waikato Regional Plan (WRP) and Regional Policy Statement (WRPS), in response to central government direction set out in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) 2020 and within it, the stepwise process of the National Objectives Framework (NOF). In achieving the objective of the NPS-FM, Policy 3 and 5 requires that freshwater is managed through the NOF, to ensure that the health and well-being of degraded waterbodies and freshwater ecosystems is improved and considers the effects of the use and development of land on a whole-of-catchment basis, including the effects on receiving environments. As part of the process, WRC was interested in seeking input to inform and fine-tune the policy direction for different parts of the region (Freshwater Management Units or FMUs – see Appendix A). Suitably interested, and/or experienced persons were sought to participate in a series of sub-regional CRG meetings. Sub-regional CRGs were aligned with proposed Freshwater Management Units boundaries in the region, with all of the Waikato-Waipā FMUs combined. That is, there is a CRG for Waikato-Waipā, Hauraki, Coromandel, West Coast, and Lake Taupō.

The objectives for the Citizen Reference Groups were to:

- Provide input into policy direction, based on the knowledge and experience members bring about the local area, community and resource use, and considering the best available information from a range of knowledge bases (science, mātauranga Māori and community input).

² WRC 2023. Freshwater Policy Review – Citizen reference groups progress report – 2023, Waikato Regional Council Policy Series 2023/21 Doc # 28230829

- Consider the issues, current state of the environment, pressures on freshwater systems, obligations, technical information and input from tangata whenua and community engagement, as a basis for input into options to policy outcomes for freshwater and ecosystems.
- Alongside WRC staff, relate this local information and personal knowledge to the requirements and frameworks of the NPS-FM and the NOF, including the overarching principle of Te Mana o te Wai.
- For the Waikato-Waipā catchments, Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato – The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River – is the primary direction-setting document for all freshwater policy. This provides direction for the Citizen Reference Groups working in these catchments, who will also consider the Waikato and Waipā chapter of the WRP where proposed Plan Change 1 (PC1) changes need to be expanded and aligned to the NPS-FM 2020. This process has no input into the PC1 appeals.
- Provide advice about engagement avenues to take emerging policy directions to local communities for further input.
- Consider the input from the community gained through WRC’s engagement and provide further suggestions to refine the policy direction.

1.3 CRG member recruitment and selection process

For recruitment, advertisements were placed within newspapers briefly describing the purpose of the CRGs and interested parties were referred to the ‘Expression of Interest’ form and Terms of Reference (see Appendix B). After expressions of interest were submitted, a panel of three WRC staff reviewed the applications to select the CRG members. The membership selection was based on experience and knowledge, while aiming for a range of backgrounds and perspectives. The selection criteria included:

- Having an intimate understanding or knowledge of the local area relevant to freshwater management.
- Having community connections across a number of associated networks.
- Having the ability to participate in the facilitated discussion and supporting tools if this needed to be held online i.e. video conference meeting.

1.4 Workshops formatting and structure

A total of 19 workshops were planned to take place throughout the Freshwater Policy Review engagement process. Two of the CRGs – Waikato-Waipā and Hauraki – were scheduled to complete a total of five in-person workshops. The three remaining groups – Taupō, West Coast, Coromandel – were scheduled to complete a total of three workshops, with the first and last of these being done in person and the second conducted online. The Waikato-Waipā and Hauraki FMUs were assigned a greater number of sessions as they were perceived to have the most complex issues to deal with and considerable challenges in meeting national bottom lines across several attributes. Appendix ‘C’ contains a table showing the planned dates, times, and locations of all 19 sessions; and the table in Appendix ‘D’ provides a broad overview of the topics to be discussed during each workshop. Some changes were made to this initial plan, in response to the overall progress of the Freshwater Policy Review, as well as availability of the groups and facilitator. The first CRG progress report (August 2023) summarised the feedback from the initial three sessions with the Hauraki and Waikato-Waipā FMUs and the first two sessions for the Coromandel, West Coast, and Taupō FMUs. This report summarises a further series of workshops held with four of the groups in October 2023. The fifth group (Coromandel CRG) was unable to meet due to members’ availability, and their third workshop was postponed to 2024. This round of workshops covered reporting back on Round 2 engagement, baseline attribute state information and input to policy direction. Different policy questions relevant

to each FMU were posed in order to gain input across a range of topics and highlight issues to be addressed in each area. The policy background information and specific questions asked for each FMU are in Appendix E.

2 Te Wae Whakahaere Waimāori a Taupō | Taupō FMU

For the Taupō CRG, eight people were included in this group. The range of interests in this group include backgrounds and experience in dairy farming, farming, Taupō Lake Care, Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board trustee, Biosecurity NZ, farm trusts, recreational fishing, hunting and other activities, and Taupō Climate Action Group.

2.1 Workshop three

Four CRG members attended the third Taupō workshop. The purpose of this session was to briefly discuss the results of the second round of engagement; review and discuss baseline states for different attributes within the FMU and trends for the Waikato Region; and gain feedback on policy direction questions for their specific FMU.

2.1.1 Engagement Round 2 results

At the beginning of the session, CRG members were presented with slides summarising the key findings of the second round of engagement for the Freshwater Policy Review. This included information provided by community, tangata whenua, and sector stakeholders. While CRG members expressed concern regarding the small number of people who provided feedback, they stated that the comments provided aligned with their expectations.

During the second round of engagement, feedback had emphasised the importance of climate change. Similarly, Taupō CRG members stated that climate change and the concept of reducing emissions is relevant to international markets as well as the Waikato Region. Internationally market trends for emissions reduction show a bigger picture of the pressures currently being placed on farming practices. It was acknowledged that (dairy) farmers can do more as milk prices continue to rise. In comparison, price incentives for those in the meat and wool industries are not as strong – which creates affordability issues for those wanting to improve their practices.

On the topic of climate change and weather, CRG members from Taupō believed that the erosion of Taupō's lakeshore which took place last year was due to high winds pushing the water. Currently, the weather is in El Niño and it was proposed that Westerly winds might affect algal growth and pest species. The presence of gold clams was also acknowledged, and it was questioned how this invasive species might affect native fauna and the Macroinvertebrate Community Index (MCI).

It was thought that marrying soil and water policy will result in better practices. In addition, the Taupō CRG members believed that the science underpinning regenerative agricultural practice will gain prominence in the future as it continues to develop. Regardless of practices and policy, however, it was stated that human activity will leave some kind of a footprint and that the goal should be to strive for a balance between 'pristine' and 'polluted.' It was suggested that resources should be focused on high value environments ('pristine') rather than those that are already degraded. There was concern that trying to attend to too many areas may spread resources thin, and that less money would be required to protect high value places. Therefore, CRG members recommended that freshwater work should begin in the headwaters before moving down, improving the corridor as work progresses.

Participants noted that the examples of data for setting target attribute states that were shared during the Round 2 engagement had used a Lake Taupō baseline year of 2017 (consistent with other parts of the region). The CRG members pointed out that for existing Taupō policy provisions, there is a

different baseline year for nitrogen. They also commented that there is some evidence of improvement since 2017.

2.1.2 Baseline attributes and trends

The next portion of the meeting focused on discussing baseline states and trend information for water quality attributes. This included data for the entire Waikato Region using graphs from the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website, and data collected by WRC scientists that was specific to Lake Taupō. The attending scientists (present online) briefly described the findings and CRG members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback.

In response, CRG members wanted to know if the morphology of Taupō streams allows for improvement in MCI, and what the absence of any locations showing as a 'C' band (for MCI) meant. Taupō CRG members questioned why some streams within the catchment are not fenced, and sought advice on how to best maintain existing riparian areas. They observed that as many plantings were done in the same era, existing riparian trees were starting to all fall down at the same time. There was a query about the causes of 'poor' MCI scores and whether they should be worried by these scores.

For the issue of phosphorus, it was asked whether there are natural sources of phosphorus and if these are taken into account during freshwater planning (e.g., how to account for high natural phosphorus when setting limits and/or loads). Taupō CRG members asked why *E.coli* levels are increasing whereas phosphorus appears to be improving. Despite these improvements, there was recognition that phosphorus levels still need to be monitored. It was believed that historical measures within Taupō removed some phosphorus whereas Variation 5 addressed nitrogen – but work still needs to be done on urban and nearshore sources. The group discussed progress with nitrogen reduction in the catchment, and the different data trends that occur according to when land use change occurred, and the varying rates of nitrogen attenuation below the ground. One group member commented that as more information comes to light, the 20% reduction that was aimed for under Variation 5 now seems "about right".

In reference to the entire Waikato region, as depicted by the LAWA graphs/ figures, Taupō CRG members noted that there had been some deterioration.

With regards to monitoring, CRG members asked if WRC would continue to keep all the monitoring sites they currently use and if the addition of new sites would alter the baseline.

2.1.3 Policy direction context and questions

The final portion of the workshop presented the CRG members with context and questions regarding the direction of freshwater policy provisions, including limits, rules and action plans.

Some of the outcomes of new policy directions coming from central government were described as 'perverse' since they were making positive action too difficult (for example, restoring wetlands or clearing in-stream silt traps), and CRG members expressed concern over the number of rules being put in place. It was stated that WRC should be cautious about adopting more stringent requirements as there are currently several in place and they seem to be working in the Taupō FMU. In terms of water quality attributes, it was suggested that WRC should only look at other attributes if the benefits of including these extra measures is clear.

It was thought that paying for the planting of natives (arising from the drafting of the National Policy Statement - Indigenous Biodiversity) was a good idea, as the small areas of riparian planting makes it

ineligible for carbon credits. On the topic of trees, it was stated that some local people choose to plant exotics rather than natives, to avoid being caught in provisions for Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) in the future. Group members also thought the forestry industry requires examination – in particular, the issue of setbacks and how forestry roading and harvesting impacts on downstream sediment levels.

In reference to global warming, Taupō CRG members were curious what it would look like to give regard to climate change, and stated that scientific investigations into the effects of warming on the Waikato River are currently underway. That being said, it was also argued that the focus should remain on freshwater for local benefit –not getting distracted by other issues that have global benefit such as emission reductions.

CRG members believed that valleys and basins upstream will contribute to water quality issues during high rainfall events. It was also asked where the unfenced streams are located within the (Taupō) FMU.

Taupō CRG members felt that WRC should be aware of the issues farmers are already/ currently dealing with. It was believed that, to get consistently high standards for Freshwater Farm Plans (FWFP), training certifiers is critical. In particular, experts are needed in pumice country. On the topic of FWFP, it was asked how existing nitrogen provisions will fit with these, and whether WRC is working with various sectors regarding their approaches to FWFP. For this issue, the suggestion was made that setback width should be related to slope. Taupō CRG members also felt that while it can be difficult to define 'drains', provisions on these are needed for water quality gains as well as protecting wetlands and intermittent and ephemeral waterways should be included in the FWFP process.

The importance of urban issues was noted, with CRG members referencing topics such as sewage, infrastructure, and the downstream impacts of roading. In reference to gullies and urban development, CRG members felt that clear guidelines are needed for development. These water courses are ephemeral but essential for stormwater. It was argued that gullies should not be filled in and built on, but they should be left and/ or planted. Consistency in this area was seen to be important, and the suggestion was made to include reference to these gully watercourses as part of the Catchment Context and Values statements prepared for the freshwater farm planning process.

In reference to *E.coli*, it was asked if riparian margins are wide enough (with it being noted that the new central government stock exclusion regulations only apply to new fences). To make more progress with the remaining water quality and ecological health issues, group members wondered whether wider setbacks were needed. Beyond riparian areas, the role of wider land management was also noted.

An email was sent out after this workshop providing the materials covered and questions posed, this allowed those who were unable to attend to provide their feedback and also gave those who did attend an additional opportunity to express their thoughts. Two responses were received, and this feedback can be found in Appendix F.

3 Te Wae Whakahaere Waimāori a te Tai Hauāuru | West Coast FMU

A total of five people were selected for the West Coast CRG. The range of interests include backgrounds and experience in drystock farming, NZ Conservation Authority and Waikato Conservation Board, King Country Rivercare, past Waitomo district councillor, farm consultant, environment consultant, Mirumiru Paa ki Marokopa – Environment team, education, Raglan climate action, NIWA, Department of Conservation, Harbour care, Whaingaroa Environment Group.

3.1 Workshop three

Of the five people selected, only two were able to attend the third workshop held in Te Kuiti in October 2023. The purpose of this session was to briefly discuss the results of the second round of engagement; review and discuss baseline states for different attributes within the FMU and trends for the Waikato Region; and gain feedback on policy direction questions for their specific FMU.

3.1.1 Engagement Round 2 results

At the beginning of the session, CRG members were presented with slides summarising the key findings of the second round of engagement for the Freshwater Policy Review. This included information provided by community, tangata whenua, and sector stakeholders.

The recommendation was made that future engagement should tap into catchment groups as a way to reach more people. West Coast CRG members asked if participants talked about climate change, and noted that this issue will impact water quality and the goals that need to be set. It was felt that the potential impacts of climate change will make it difficult to plan for, and achieve freshwater improvements. While a return to a ‘more natural state’ was seen as desirable, the landscape is currently modified and less resilient to climate change. There is a need for the ecosystem to be healthier and more resilient in order to cope with what might come. A more ‘natural’ state will also assist with catching sediment, nutrients, and flow during storms – which are likely to be an increasing issue in the future.

Regarding engagement feedback about how costs for improving water quality should be borne, comments from the group were that there would be push-back from urban residents if they were asked to fund this work in rural areas. In reference to funding to improve water quality on farms, it was noted that there *“has been a lot of funding, some people didn’t take it, then say ‘don’t regulate us.”*

3.1.2 Baseline attributes and trends

The next portion of the meeting focused on discussing baseline states and trend information for water quality attributes. This included data for the entire Waikato Region using graphs from the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website and data collected by WRC scientists that was specific to the West Coast. The attending scientist briefly described the findings and CRG members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback.

CRG members asked in which areas damage was present and stressed the importance of focusing on rivers which required the most help. An area of concern was the loss of fertile topsoil with the view that this degrades freshwater creating dirty, poor ecosystems, before it ends up in estuaries. The long timeframes to form soil in hill country areas was also noted.

The ecosystem was likened to a ‘very unwell patient’ and the suggestion was made to try a variety of different ‘treatments.’ That being said, it was acknowledged that while different issues will improve over different timeframes, there are some actions that we know we must engage in.

It was questioned whether WRC has sufficient monitoring sites and if local landowners could help. On the topic of water monitoring, it was believed that long-term baseline data will be valuable for the future as variable weather effects occur.

A key topic of discussion was how to ‘take people along’ the journey for freshwater improvement, and to connect everyone up in a ‘mountains to sea’ approach. The suggestion was made to ‘tell the story.’ Since it can be difficult to perceive what is taking place, it was recommended that the cumulative effects of water quality be discussed. Framing the content was seen as important with CRG members believing that the issue should be made relatable (for example, ‘take care of our backyard’). Another suggestion was to rephrase freshwater issues: *“if we don’t have these...we won’t have these [important species].”* It was queried whether any species were at risk of being lost if nothing was done as this could ‘help get the story out.’ Native birds were seen as a topic that many understood, and whether a similar approach to promoting freshwater could be taken.

West Coast CRG members posed several questions about a variety of topics, including: sediment and taking into account extreme weather, the impact of fencing next to streams, spraying drains and the impact on freshwater life, freshwater factors that affect fish, the sensitivity of macroinvertebrates, how to reduce *E. coli*, the worst contaminant for the West Coast and how long it would take their FMU to meet its targets.

West Coast CRG members felt that it was necessary to have all of the available information shared with catchment groups – as opposed to a more fragmented approach. It was viewed as beneficial to share the ‘road map’ for the freshwater journey ahead with the community. CRG members were curious *“what work has been done on past/natural levels?”* It was believed that it is important for farmers to know what the natural condition might have been, as they believe the water has always been muddy. More information about other contaminants attached to sediment would also help landowners understand the issues.

Group members suggested maximising the influence of industry and markets, for example working with processors for farm products so there are consistent signals, and encouraging producers to seek out gains from farming with a ‘green tick’.

3.1.3 Policy direction context and questions

The final portion of the workshop presented the CRG members with context and questions regarding the direction of freshwater policy.

CRG members suggested that the West Coast FMU should be divided into sub-catchments. It was stated that community groups such as King Country River Care already use this approach. It was believed that FWFP should reflect (sub)catchment issues. The ‘Catchment Context, Challenges and Values’ must tell the historical story – before people were present in NZ. Local knowledge was recognised as important. For example, weather mapping can identify historical patterns and how these affect run-off. However, WRC must also be aware that using historical data only goes so far and it may not predict future events due to changing climate trends.

It was recommended that the WRC science team should work with other science-based organisations as well as other groups who support rural landowners through change (such as NZ Landcare Trust and

Queen Elizabeth II Trust). On the topic of science, CRG members viewed slope maps as being critical. Although the National Environment Standards already cover forestry harvesting, consent requirements, and mitigations, it was proposed that these should be included in FWFP for smaller woodlots on farms.

It was acknowledged that it will be challenging for people to digest all the available information and it could be particularly difficult getting urban populations to provide their support. The recommendation was made to focus the discussion on positive aspects and what can be accomplished. As stated earlier, the importance of 'telling a story' was emphasised. For Whaingaroa, it was queried as to how to get the community involved. One suggestion was to work with the marae to see what mātauranga or old stories people wished to share. Consideration should be given to 'conservation psychology', which is currently being applied to climate change action models. A recommended approach was asking members of the community 'where do you fit?' and 'where do you want to put in a bit of time?' By sharing different action options, people "*don't have to invent anything/ start something new, just slot in.*" There was the belief that farmers are already taking action and it can be very powerful when they share their results with others who can see the impacts. In this way they can learn from each other what has worked and what didn't work.

Two specific policy questions were asked of West Coast CRG members at this meeting, regarding risk factors for overland flow from farming, and mitigations that could be applied at each risk level. The key underlying risk factor identified by group members was Topography/ Land Use Capability. In terms of activity on the land, the types of stocking (dairy/ heavy cattle or deer) were highlighted as being higher risk. Sensitive receiving environments (estuaries sensitive to nutrients) were the final risk factor pinpointed by the group. Regarding mitigations to put in place in situations of higher risk, ideas from the group included seasonal (winter) stocking rate restrictions, attention to earthworks and tracking, requiring poplar planting for grazing of steeper areas, wider stock exclusion buffers tied to slope (as part of freshwater farm plans) and fertiliser management (including maximum annual nitrogen application, and requirements regarding the timing, form, placement and storage of fertiliser).

An email was sent out after this workshop providing the materials covered and questions posed, this allowed those who were unable to attend to provide their feedback and gave those who did attend an additional opportunity to express their thoughts. Two responses were received, and this feedback can be found in Appendix F.

4 Te Wae Whakahaere Waimāori a Waikato-Waipā | Waikato-Waipā FMU

A total of fourteen people were included in the Waikato-Waipā CRG. The range of interests include backgrounds and experience in sheep and beef farming, dairy farming, Upper Waikato Catchment Committee membership (WRC), Whirinaki catchment group, Mangatangi Maramarua catchment group, Hakarimata Restoration Trust, environmental contractor, education, Federated Farmers, resource consent planner, environmental planner, urban planner, previous role at Department of Conservation, geologist/scientist, and recreational fishing, hunting and other activities, rural/urban mix.

4.1 Workshop four

Five CRG members attended the fourth Waikato-Waipā workshop. The purpose of this session was to briefly discuss the results of the second round of engagement; review and discuss baseline states for different attributes within the FMU and trends for the Waikato Region; and gain feedback on policy direction questions for their specific FMU.

4.1.1 Engagement Round 2 results

At the beginning of the session, CRG members were presented with slides summarising the key findings of the second round of engagement for the Freshwater Policy Review. This included information provided by community, tangata whenua, and sector stakeholders.

While Waikato-Waipā CRG members acknowledged that a lot of work was done by WRC during the second round of engagement, they also stated that the ‘rubber will hit the road’ (actions will occur) when environmental outcomes and rules and regulations are rolled out. WRC will need to explain what Environmental Outcomes will mean on a local basis. It was questioned how workable planning and policy were on a local basis. CRG members could see the need for central government drive as well as the tension between flexibility and workability. WRC was warned not to “*trap people where they can’t change.*” It was suggested that central direction can be used but there should be some flexibility which enables diversification. Waikato-Waipā CRG members stated that the latest policy drafts looked more balanced than their predecessors. It was recommended that other legislation and direction should be taken into account (for example, the Natural and Built Environment Act). They also said that local focus groups need to keep their focus on long-term goals, not just one-off events. It is important that sustained progress takes place. It was emphasised that the important outcome of food production is tied to having use of productive land, water and nutrients.

4.1.2 Baseline attributes and trends

The next portion of the meeting focused on discussing baseline states and trend information for water quality attributes. This included data for the entire Waikato Region using graphs from the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website and data collected by WRC scientists that was specific to the West Coast. The attending scientist briefly described the findings and CRG members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback.

Waikato-Waipā members asked how local and national states can be related, and whether there are areas where it is not possible to move out of the ‘D’ band. There was recognition that there are a lot of opportunities but stressed that in some places it will be very challenging to achieve national bottom

lines, and in light of this, achievable goals need to be set. It was seen as important to halt degradation that is currently taking place.

4.1.3 Policy direction context and questions

The final portion of the workshop presented the CRG members with context and questions regarding the direction of freshwater policy. When asked what factors should trigger classification of high risk categories for diffuse discharges, Waikato-Waipā CRG members expressed that soil type should be the first consideration (for example, free draining-grazing vs. heavier soil and vegetables). It was argued that one activity should not be ‘lumped’ into a category when other factors affect risk. In terms of areas at greater risk, group members commented that WRC will know where high value soils and natural areas are, as well as their vulnerabilities. This should be taken into account and trigger risk classification. After which, priority setting follows, based on the science and clear evidence of issues or change over time (such as peat soil shrinkage). Once in place, the classifications can be checked iteratively by evidence and monitoring to confirm if the correct classification has been used.

When asked what controls should be put in place, CRG members expressed that they felt there was an overwhelming amount of regulatory change currently taking place. The argument was made that if Freshwater Farm Plans incentivise positive change, and people follow them well and it works, there is no need to ‘over-regulate.’ Only when people don’t do it well, should the ‘stick’ be used. It was pointed out that greater regulation will require more compliance effort – and WRC was questioned as to whether such an increase can be resourced. WRC was urged to incentivise ‘doing it right’, for example by not requiring a resource consent if good practice guidelines are followed. On the topic of sub-catchment policy and FWFP, catchment context was cited as being a very important factor.

A further point emphasised was the need for a shift in viewpoint – from individual property to catchment/ collective scale. There was comment that water quality problems cannot be solved on a property scale, it is a hydrological system. Disseminating information was viewed as a good idea – especially from a catchment scale: *“get info spreading out from a hub, advisors who can help farmers through to finding how to do the right thing. Disseminate info from catchment scale (small groups can be insular).”*

An email was sent out after this workshop providing the materials covered and questions posed, this allowed those who were unable to attend to provide their feedback and gave those who did attend an additional opportunity to express their thoughts. One response was received, and this feedback can be found in Appendix F.

5 Te Wae Whakahaere Waimāori a Hauraki | Hauraki FMU

A total of eleven people were included in the Hauraki CRG. The range of interests include backgrounds and experience in dairy farming, organic farming, East Waikato Stakeholders committee, Waihou-Piako Catchment Forum, Enviroschools, Friends of Waiharakeke stream, Wharekawa River Catchment Group, Dairy NZ, Federated Farmers, recreational fishing and other activities, environmental agricultural science, nutrient management, horticulture.

5.1 Workshop four

Seven CRG members attended the fourth Hauraki workshop. The purpose of this session was to review and discuss baseline states for different attributes within the FMU and trends for the Waikato Region, as well as provide feedback on policy direction questions for their specific FMU.

5.1.1 Engagement Round 2 results

Ahead of the meeting, notes were circulated to the group from the second round of engagement for the Freshwater Policy Review (Hauraki drop-in sessions and online survey responses relating to Hauraki catchments). This included information provided by community, tangata whenua, and sector stakeholders. The CRG member indicated that they had no further feedback to provide and wished to focus their discussion on other aspects.

5.1.2 Baseline attributes and trends

This portion of the meeting focused on discussing baseline states and trend information for water quality attributes. This included data for the entire Waikato Region using graphs from the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website and data collected by WRC scientists that was specific to Hauraki. The attending scientists briefly described the findings and CRG members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback.

Hauraki CRG members were curious at what stage of the process WRC does an economic analysis of policies. Until the costs have been estimated, it was suggested that achieving the minimum targets (i.e. the national bottom line set out by the NPS-FM) should be the goal. It was questioned as to whether it was appropriate to apply national attribute bands for factors such as MCI for the natural conditions of rivers in this FMU.

In terms of water quality, WRC scientists were asked what the biggest issues were for the Hauraki FMU and whether the percentage reductions necessary to move into the 'C' band had been calculated. There were questions about nitrogen and whether there was a need to reduce the amount going into the Firth of Thames and if so, by how much? In addition, with regards to regulation, it was questioned why WRC would apply one limit across the entire Hauraki plains. Given that the groundwater pathways in Piako are shallower and faster, the question was asked if there is greater concern regarding nitrogen in pumice country as opposed to marine clay. The length of the data set for the Firth of Thames was another topic of interest as well as the historic occurrence of algal blooms. CRG members also questioned whether cause and effect had been established for all the attributes being measured - for example, if the deoxygenation in the Firth of Thames was caused by 'river influence' (as opposed to coastal marine water influence). The impact of fish farms being established in the Firth of Thames was also noted.

Hauraki CRG members were also curious if there had been discussions regarding an increase in vegetable production as there can be 'high losses' from this type of farming. It was stated that *"that type of intensification needs to be captured in the policy."*

5.1.3 Policy direction context and question

The final portion of the workshop presented the CRG members with context and questions regarding the direction of freshwater policy. Two topics were selected as the focus for feedback from this FMU: diffuse nitrogen limits and water allocation policies.

In terms of an overall policy approach, the CRG members took issue with 'grandparenting' as it was felt that this approach was not fair to those who have already improved their practices and/ or reduced their losses. It was felt that there is a lot to be gained by having everyone engage in good practice. When asked how long it would take to engage in good practices, Hauraki CRG members explained that this will depend on how much work needs to be done. It was thought that progress could be made by getting everyone moving in the right direction and incentivising faster action. Similarly, there was a view that land-user buy-in will take WRC further than over-regulating.

In this vein, freshwater farm plans or farm environmental plans were seen as an important tool. CRG members said that the overall 'why' and catchment context for these plans is not well understood, and that modelling is required of how much effect a widespread practice change could have. With this in place, there was a view that landowners might better understand that *"if you do your little piece, the modellers can say that the overall effect is..."* The importance of actively checking and ensuring that farm plans are being implemented was also highlighted.

5.1.3.1 What types of mitigations or rules should be implemented if we need to control or reduce the loss of nitrogen in the Hauraki FMU?

When discussing how the issue of nitrogen should be tackled, Hauraki CRG members recommended that WRC conduct a 'broad-brush' assessment of soil types and risks within the catchment. After which, the community needs to be informed of what they need to do to 'manage it well' and what pragmatic solutions are available. It was felt that the best place to start in general was good practice and simple solutions; for example, shading and bank stabilisation. There was comment that these practices would result in MCI improving due to a better habitat, however; these practices do come at a cost. It was thought that good practices could be funded by cutting rates.

CRG members felt that mitigations for nitrogen need to be both practical and pragmatic. An example provided was the application of nitrogen within irrigation. There was comment that the approach taken needed to be output driven, and actions be incorporated into modelled outcomes. Furthermore, the adopted approach should be specific to soil type and topography. For example, stocking rates should be analysed in relation to soil types. It was believed that practical guidelines are needed for nutrient loading over different times and/or seasons.

Hauraki CRG members felt that 'grandparenting' existing activities was not acceptable as it permits existing high contaminant activities to continue while restricting people from capturing opportunities if they currently have low-discharge activities. An alternative approach was to provide for 'offsets' where an increase in nitrogen discharge could occur if other benefits from the intensified system were demonstrated. Group members noted that any introduction of new nitrogen rules would require an appropriate notification period for the change. However, the observation was made that some farm systems would 'up their rates' of discharge in anticipation of a change, in order to start with a higher nitrogen allowance under a 'grandparenting' system. The group felt that starting with 'my right to

reduce' was not an appropriate mindset. Another proposed approach was to incentivise small-scale, regenerative, organic, direct-to-customer models.

The suggestion was made that nitrogen reduction strategies, where necessary, should be absolute rather than percentage based. It was also recommended that the focus should remain on the best management practices (as these will affect profitability as well). It was stated that permitted activities could act as an incentive for best practice. Hauraki CRG members provided some examples of what they considered to be best practices applicable to both urban and rural environments:

- Efficient use of fertiliser containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus can be accomplished *"by soil testing/ matching stocking rate and level of outputs to what maintenance levels are."*
- 'Spreadmark' efficiency using GPS and Geofencing for fertiliser application.
- Effluent efficiency could be improved with GPS monitoring and *"fail safe's tech."*
- eDNA tests could be used to begin building a picture of biodiversity within tributaries (to determine what will make the biggest impact)."
- Stock exclusion and riparian management were also identified as key practices.

It was thought that WRC needs to recognise district variation. A suggestion was made to break down catchments into 'zones' that have similar characteristics (for example, soil, slope, receiving waterway) and then develop 'good practice' guidelines for each. When a proposed activity is outside of 'good practice', mitigations are required to reduce outcomes to 'good practice' levels. For example, higher stocking rates might require mitigations – e.g. standoff barns in some zones.

Drain/ small waterway management was viewed as an important topic. It was suggested that these areas should be planted out to hold structure and reduce sediment. Plants such as native Carex sedges could be used for shading drains and to reduce weeds – therefore improving the levels of dissolved oxygen. In addition, plants for shading would also cool the temperature of the water.

CRG members emphasised that it was necessary to *"know your numbers to benchmark to make change and know you're making change."* It was stated that existing baselines should be held. For example, national intensification caps across sectors introduced under the government's Essential Freshwater package.

Freshwater Farm Plans were considered to be a significant tool that could be used to: inform farmers of their site-specific numbers; connect with Land Use Capability to set and manage limits; and assess and manage critical source areas. There was comment that Land Use Capability could also be used for specific management and limits, as long as mapped LUC units were ground-truthed.

5.1.3.2 What other ideas/options would you like WRC to consider to reduce overallocation of water resources?

CRG members were curious about the evidence to demonstrate that current water takes were over-allocated. The Hauraki CRG members stated that fairness was an important factor when considering water allocation. A preference for focusing on incentivising and efficiency was also expressed. In particular, it was important to know what is needed and what is efficient on farms. There was comment that allocation should be based on efficient use, and efforts should be made to maximise efficient water use – including dams, storage, and water take during high flows. CRG members recommended allowing supplementation from water captured on properties (e.g. dams). They also wished to see greater council use of telemetry technology to monitor actual water use, including under permitted takes for reasonable stock and domestic use under the RMA. There was a question as to whether the Permitted Activity take of 15 m³ per day was too high.

WRC policy writers presented some ideas on how to reduce over-allocation. Some CRG members responded directly to these ideas. There was agreement with the notion of not granting new consents for water takes and use where over-allocation has occurred, *“so long as it doesn’t affect existing takes on good practice.”*

In comparison, Hauraki CRG members disagreed with the notion of requiring water consent applicants to surrender a portion of their water, saying that this was a *“shift in goal post”* and saw it as having the potential to significantly affect water use.

Another potential idea was proposed by WRC: *“require applications for replacement take consents or transfers to be limited to the lesser of: 1) records of previous use of water (using recent water metering data) or 2) the rate and volume of water considered to be efficient for the end use.”* CRG members stated that this approach assumed that previous water use can be returned to and there could be issues in using volume to determine what is efficient water use. It was also noted that urban councils will need to consider water takes for increasing populations and that there should be more responsibility for ‘on section’ water capture in urban areas.

An email was sent out after this workshop providing the materials covered and questions posed, this allowed those who were unable to attend to provide their feedback and gave those who did attend an additional opportunity to express their thoughts. No responses were received.

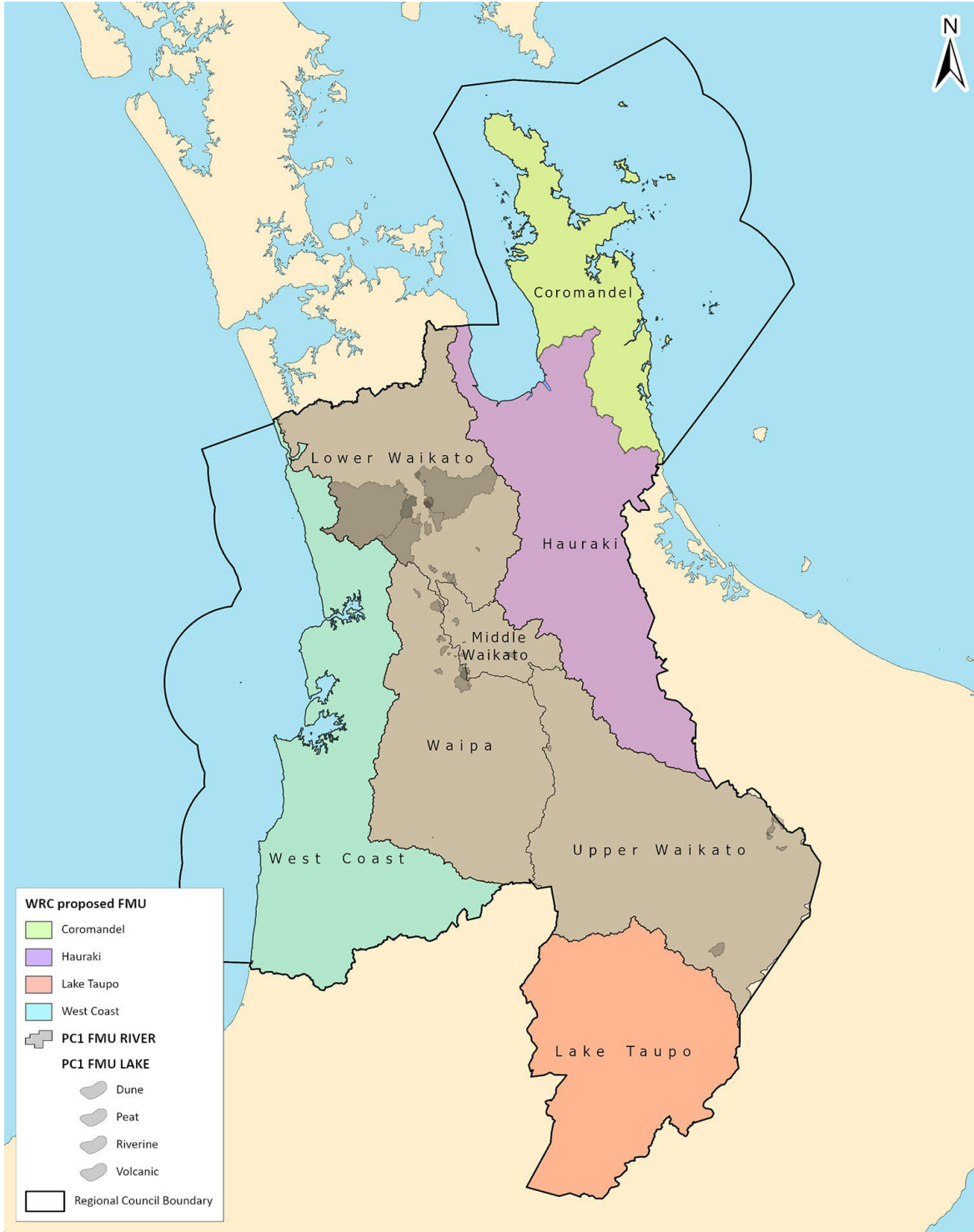
6 Te Wae Whakahaere Waimāori a te Tara o te ika a Māui | Coromandel FMU

The Coromandel CRG included five individuals. The range of interests include backgrounds and experience in dairy farming, harbour care, recreational fishing, hunting and other activities, environmental scientist, Mana Manu Trust (pest management), ecologist, environment chamber representative.

6.1 Workshop three

The third workshop for the Coromandel FMU was originally scheduled to take place on November 6th. Due to unavailability of members, the decision was made to move this session to February 2024.

7 Āpitianga A – Te Mahere Wae Whakahaere Waimāori | Appendix A – Freshwater Management Unit Boundary Map



8 Āpiti hanga B – Ngā Tikanga Whakahaere a te Rōpū Hapori | Appendix B – Citizen Reference Group Terms of Reference

Freshwater Policy Review Citizen Reference Group - Terms of Reference

September 2022

1) Background and purpose of the Citizen Reference Groups

Waikato Regional Council (WRC) is reviewing its Waikato Regional Plan (WRP) and Regional Policy Statement (RPS), in response to central government direction set out in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM) 2020 and within it, the step-wise process of the National Objectives Framework (NOF). As part of the process, we are interested in seeking input to inform and fine-tune the policy direction for different parts of the region (Freshwater Management Units or FMUs). We are seeking suitably interested, and/or experienced persons to participate in a series of sub-regional Citizen Reference Group meetings. Sub-regional Citizen Reference Groups will be aligned with proposed Freshwater Management Units boundaries in the region.

2) Objectives

The objectives for the Citizen Reference Groups are to:

- Provide input into policy direction, based on the knowledge and experience members bring about the local area, community and resource use, and considering the best available information from a range of knowledge bases (science, mātauranga Māori and community input).
- Consider the issues, current state of the environment, pressures on freshwater systems, obligations, technical information and input from tangata whenua and community engagement, as a basis for input into options to policy outcomes for freshwater and ecosystems.
- Alongside WRC staff, relate this local information and personal knowledge to the requirements and frameworks of the NPSFM and the NOF, including the overarching principle of Te Mana o te Wai.
- For the Waikato-Waipā catchments, Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato – The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River – is the primary direction-setting document for all freshwater policy. This provides direction for the Citizen Reference Group working in these catchments, who will also consider the Waikato and Waipā chapter of the WRP where proposed Plan Change 1 (PC1) changes need to be expanded and aligned to the NPSFM 2020. This process has no input into the PC1 appeals.
- Provide advice about engagement avenues to take emerging policy directions to local communities for further input.
- Consider the input from the community gained through WRC's engagement, and provide further suggestions to refine the policy direction.

3) Number and scope of Citizen Reference Groups:

There will be five Citizen Reference Groups, each considering different catchment areas in the region:

- Hauraki FMU
- Waikato and Waipā (river catchment combined) FMUs
- West Coast FMU
- Lake Taupō FMU
- Coromandel FMU

The scope of these Citizen Reference Groups is to:

- Participate in facilitated workshops to give input on policy direction
- Engage in discussion and provide views and perspectives, with no requirement to reach consensus
- Advise on avenues for local community engagement

Outside of scope of these Citizen Reference Groups:

- The Citizen Reference Group has no policy-making role or powers
- Citizen Reference Groups cannot request new science data or analysis.
- Proposed Plan Change 1 is currently undergoing an Environment Court appeals process. This group does not have any input into the appeals process.

4) Membership

Citizen Reference Groups will comprise up to 12 members each, selected by a panel of WRC staff.

The panel will be selecting Citizen Reference Group members based on their experience and knowledge, while aiming for a range of backgrounds and perspectives.

Members are required to work in a cooperative manner. Members must have access and the technical ability to participate in online facilitated discussions using video conferencing if necessary. Citizen Reference Groups membership will be revoked for disruptive, disrespectful or abusive behaviour or breach of confidentiality.

5) Roles and responsibilities

The Waikato Regional Council will:

- Provide a WRC contact person and staff to attend the Citizen Reference Groups' facilitated discussion
- Organise all face-to-face and online discussion sessions
- Make relevant information available to members at least 3 days before the Citizen Reference Group meeting
- Keep Citizen Reference Group members informed as the project progresses.
- Staff will be actively involved, engaging in the dialogue with Citizen Reference Groups' facilitated discussion

Members will:

- Ensure they can meet the timeframes and attend all sessions of the Citizen Reference Groups in person (unless the entire event is moved online) – no substitutes will be allowed to attend
- Commit to reading and understanding the information provided prior to the meeting
- Attend and actively participate in the facilitated discussions, which may be up to a day each in duration (a total commitment of up to 5 days)
- Act independently as a community member and not advocate for their organisation or special interests
- Declare any conflicts of interest as soon as they arise.

6) Timeframe and process

The Citizen Reference Groups will follow a 5-task process as per Table 1 below. The timeframe for participation in facilitated discussions in person, and online if needed, is between October 2022 and November 2023.

Table 1. Indicative outline of Citizen Reference Group process

Project phase	Group tasks	Includes
Beginning the journey	1. Forming and focusing the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome, hear from tangata whenua Induction Te Mana o te Wai Members' backgrounds and perspectives NPSFM/NOF – the task
Understanding the issues and people's views	2. Sharing information and perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current state vs bottom lines; pressures and current responses Understand results from engagement Round 1 Sharing thoughts and reflections
Identifying and testing options	3. Making sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply what we know to NOF steps Explore/ generate ideas and possibilities
	4. Grappling with options/ directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss options and direction Prepare for engagement Round 2
Refining the policy approach	5. Considering feedback and advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand results of engagement Round 2 Suggest further refinements

7) Payment

Membership of the Citizen Reference Groups is unpaid apart from a koha and contribution to travel costs. Any remuneration would align with council's policies for paying community members on representative groups.

8) Administrative support

The WRC will provide the Citizen Reference Groups with administrative support. Meetings will be facilitated with group notes recorded up front by the facilitator and staff taking more detailed written notes.

9) Free and frank advice

The Citizen Reference Groups will provide free and frank advice to the WRC in good faith, and with regards to the interests of the community and Te Mana o te Wai. Participation will be respectful towards other members and WRC staff.

This process will provide one of many streams of input into the project.

Participation in Citizen Reference Groups does not preclude individuals from also taking part in other community engagement or the formal submission processes under the Resource Management Act.

10) Confidentiality

The aim of Citizen Reference Groups is to have free and frank conversations between community members and Council staff. We ask that group members respect the confidentiality of views shared by individuals on the group when communicating with others any insights or information from the

process. As this is a regional council project, it falls under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act, as well as the Privacy Act. This means that papers and notes generated through the process may be requested by members of the public, and released to them. Any information that is appropriate to be shared will not be publicly attributed to individual participants unless legally required. If any information is being considered for release under these Acts the WRC may consult with the person who provided the information before making a final decision on release.

11) Media

The Citizen Reference Groups, and Citizen Reference Group members acting in that capacity, will not make media statements or comment on social media about the process without the prior agreement of WRC.

If the Citizen Reference Group members are asked to provide comment on any issue relating to the process, the group member will forward the question or request to the WRC.

12) Conflicts of interest

Members of the Citizen Reference Groups will be required to declare conflicts of interest relating to the work of the Citizen Reference Group and using the WRC's conflicts of interest form. Conflicts may be real, potential or perceived.

The WRC will assess any declared conflicts, determine and advise the appropriate management of that conflict.

9 Āpiti hanga C – Ngā Rā me ngā Wāhi o ngā Hui | Appendix C – Dates and Locations of Citizen Reference Group Workshops

FMU	Session No.	Date	Time	Location
Coromandel	1	02/03/23	3:00pm-6:00pm	Thames War Memorial Civic Centre, Conference room, 200 Mary Street, Thames
	2	12/03/23	1:30pm-3:00pm	Online (Microsoft Teams)
CANCELLED	3	08/02/24	10:00am-3:00pm	Tairua Community Hall annex 210 Main Road, Tairua
Hauraki	1	27/02/23	1:30pm-5:00pm	Paeroa War Memorial Hall, 144 Normanby Road, Paeroa
	2	28/03/23	1:30pm-5:00pm	Paeroa War Memorial Hall, 144 Normanby Road, Paeroa
	3	09/05/23	1:30pm-5:00pm	Paeroa War Memorial Hall, 144 Normanby Road, Paeroa
	4	18/10/23	1:30pm-5:00pm	Paeroa War Memorial Hall, 144 Normanby Road, Paeroa
CANCELLED	5	28/02/24	1:30pm-5:00pm	Paeroa War Memorial Hall, 144 Normanby Road, Paeroa
Taupō	1	14/03/23	9:30am-1:00pm	Waikato Regional Council's Waitoitoi Room, 100 Horomatangi Street, Taupō
	2	10/05/23	10.00am-12.00pm	Online (Microsoft Teams)
	3	26/10/23	9:30am-1:00pm	Waikato Regional Council's Waitoitoi Room, 100 Horomatangi Street, Taupō
Waikato/Waipā	1	20/02/23	9:30am-1:00pm	Trust Waikato, Te Koorero meeting room, 4 Little London Lane, Hamilton Central
	2	22/03/23	9:30am-1:00pm	The Plaza Theatre, Pavilion Room, 50-56 Kensington Street, Putaruru
	3	16/05/23	9:30am-1:00pm	Taupiri War Memorial Hall, 16 Greenlane Road, Taupiri
	4	11/10/23	9:30am-1:00pm	The Link, Purdie Room, 4 Te Aroha Street, Hamilton
	CANCELLED	5	08/03/24	9:30am-1:00pm
West Coast	1	08/03/24	9:30am-1:00pm	The Raglan Sunset Motel Conference Room, 7 Bankart Street, Raglan

FMU	Session No.	Date	Time	Location
	2	11/05/23	10.00am-12.00pm	Online (Microsoft Teams)
	3	30/10/23	9:30am-1:00pm	Les Munro Centre Supper Room, 8 King Street East. Te Kuiti
CANCELLED	4	14/03/24	9:30am-1:00pm	Waikato Regional Council Kahawai Room, 160 Ward Street, Hamilton

10 Āpiti hanga D – Whakarāpopototanga o ngā Hui | Appendix D – Overview of Citizen Reference Group Session Plan

Session Plans for Citizen Reference Groups for the Freshwater Policy Review

Overview of 5 sessions for Waikato-Waipā and for Hauraki

BEGINNING THE JOURNEY	1. Forming and focusing the group <i>W-W 20th Feb Hauraki 27th Feb</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome and introductions National freshwater direction and our task Te Mana o Te Wai Understanding the results from Engagement Round 1
UNDERSTANDING ISSUES & ASPIRATIONS	2. Sharing information and perspectives <i>W-W 22nd Mar Hauraki 28th Mar</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term Visions & Values Current state vs bottom lines
IDENTIFYING & TESTING OPTIONS	3. Making sense <i>W-W 1st May Hauraki 9th May</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test attribute target states to support values Consider change needed to meet targets
GRAPPLING WITH OPTIONS/DIRECTIONS	4. Grappling with options/directions <i>W-W 11th Oct Hauraki 18th Oct</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding results of Engagement Round 2 Discuss options and direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test rules and action plan methods to meet targets
REFINING THE POLICY APPROACH	5. Considering directions and advising <i>W-W 15th Nov Hauraki 22nd Nov</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss options and direction Test rules and action plan methods to meet targets Region-wide approaches & what is specific to this area

Overview of 3 sessions for West Coast, Coromandel and Taupō (middle session online)

FORMING, SHARING INFORMATION & PERSPECTIVES	1. Forming; sharing information and perspectives <i>Coromandel 2 Mar West Coast 8 Mar Taupō 14 Mar</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome and introductions Te Mana o Te Wai National freshwater direction and our task Understand results from Engagement Round 1 Members' thoughts and perspectives
UNDERSTANDING ISSUES & ASPIRATIONS	2. Apply what we know to NOF steps <i>Taupō 10 May West Coast 11 May Coromandel 12 May</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attribute target states to support values What change would be needed to achieve targets
GRAPPLING WITH OPTIONS/DIRECTIONS, CONSIDERING & ADVISING	3. Grappling with options/directions; considering and advising <i>Taupō 26 Oct West Coast 30 Oct</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand results of Engagement Round 2 Test rules and action plan methods to meet targets and address topics Preferred options and directions

11 Āpitiwhanga E – Ngā Pātai i Whārikihia | Appendix E – Questions Presented to Citizen Reference Group Members

11.1 Hauraki

Policy Directions: Hauraki

Potential approach

- Limit-setting must consider sensitive receiving environments, including coastal
- Categorise sub-catchments based on the contaminant issues present e.g. overland flow reductions required, nitrogen reductions required, 'maintain' catchments
- All farms will need to implement GMP – this will be the starting point for all low-risk farm activities
- Additional mitigations implemented depending on the risk the land use poses to the relevant contaminant (recognises the proportional reductions principle)

Policy direction question 1

- *What types of mitigations or rules should be implemented if we need to control or reduce the loss of nitrogen in the Hauraki FMU?*

Policy directions: Hauraki

- Some catchments have been identified as having allocation pressure.
- There are some mechanisms available to regional councils to reduce over-allocation of water takes over time. Here are some ideas:
 - a. To ensure no further allocation, do not grant any new consents to take and use water, except where non-consumptive or for drinking water supply
 - b. Require applications for replacement takes and transfers to be limited to the lesser of:
 - Records of previous use of water (using recent water metering data) or
 - The rate and volume of water considered to be efficient for the end use
 - c. In addition, require applicants to surrender a portion of water.

Policy direction questions 2:

- *Looking at options that might require existing users to surrender water when transferring water, or replacing expiring consents*
 - *How should we determine how much water should be surrendered?*
 - *Could it be proportionate to the level of over-allocation?*
- *What other ideas/options would you like WRC to consider to reduce over-allocation of water resources?*

11.2 Coromandel

Policy Directions: Coromandel

1. How should WRC categorise low, medium and high risk land uses/ activities for overland contaminant loss (run-off)? For example, what soils, topography, land use activities or combinations of these factors would constitute low, medium or high risk?
2. What types of mitigations should be applied to reduce overland contaminant loss (run-off) in low, medium and high risk areas?
3. Different mitigations may be appropriate for different land uses or industries (e.g. farming vs forestry). What could this look like?
4. What measures do you think are needed across Coromandel to control land use intensification (switching to more intensive land uses)?
5. Should additional controls apply in certain sensitive catchments? If so, what would this look like, and where?
6. Apart from controlling run-off and land use intensification, what other types of actions should be required to improve freshwater aquatic habitat conditions for ecosystem health?
7. What else is needed from freshwater management in order to protect marine receiving waters?

11.3 Taupō

Policy Directions: Taupō

Focus:

- Generally, the existing plan provisions for Taupō seem to be working well for managing nitrogen.
- E. coli indicates that microbial pathogens are at acceptable levels
- There is still some work to do to reduce phosphorus and improve indicators related to freshwater ecosystems and habitats in the Taupō FMU.

Policy direction questions:

- What mitigations or actions should be either required or encouraged (on-farm or at a catchment scale) to:
 1. Reduce phosphorus in Taupō waterways?
 2. Improve freshwater habitats and ecosystems?

11.4 Waikato-Waipā

Policy direction - principles

Waikato-Waipā: Key principles for policy approach to non-point source discharges

- Use PC1 is the starting point for policy direction
- Implement good management practices (GMP) across the board
- Proportional reductions (highest emitters reduce the most)

- Determine the likely level of non-point source discharges from a property/ area (low, moderate or high). This categorisation could then be used in policy to require applicable reductions in discharges.
- Combination of property and community (or sub-catchment) scale responses
- Implementation of farming standards and reduction at a property scale, plus policies to work with stakeholders to develop sub-catchment scale planning and sub-catchment specific policies and methods.

Policy direction - questions

1. What activities do you think should trigger classification of high, medium and low risk categories for diffuse discharges (e.g., run-off)?
2. Where are the areas or places of greater concern if high-risk activities take place there?
3. For high risk activities or places, what controls should be put in place?
4. How should WRC go about planning and tailoring policy at a sub-catchment scale? To what extent should we have tailored policies?

11.5 West Coast

Policy directions: West Coast

Potential approach

- All farms will need to implement GMP – this will be the starting point for all low-risk farm activities.
- Categorise sub-catchments based on the contaminant issues present e.g. ‘maintain’ catchments, catchments where overland flow reductions are required, any nitrogen reductions required.
- Additional mitigations implemented depending on the risk the land use poses to the relevant contaminant (recognises the proportional reductions principle).

Policy direction questions:

For sub-catchment approaches to freshwater policy:

1. What is a good process to prepare a Catchment Context, Challenges and Values (CCCV) picture?
2. What kind of mātauranga can be applied?
3. What kind of science and local knowledge can be drawn on?

For categorising risk and applying mitigations:

4. What do you consider to be low, medium and high-risk factors for overland flow (i.e. sediment, phosphorus and microbes) from farming?
5. What types of mitigations should be required to manage overland flow for each risk level?

12 Āpiti hanga F – He Kōrero Anō mā te Īmērā | Appendix F – Additional Feedback Received via Email

CRG members were sent an email after their third (Taupō & West Coast) or fourth (Hauraki & Waikato-Waipā) workshop. This contained the material covered as well as the policy-direction questions. This allowed those who were unable to attend to provide their feedback and gave those who did attend another opportunity to express their thoughts. Below are the responses received.

12.1 Waikato-Waipā – General Policy Direction Feedback

Subsequent feedback from one CRG member, in an email document:

What activities do you think should trigger classification of high, medium and low risk categories for diffuse discharges (e.g., run-off)?

CRG Member 1

- Recognition that human activities and climatic conditions influence the environment, and their combined affects must be monitored and regulated to provide clear ongoing information to be able to prioritize and calculate and mitigate the risks where necessary.
- Need to consider how sedimentation loading will be affected by climatic changes (incl. global warming and extreme weather events).
- Human activities such as industrial waste, urban sprawl, and primary industry discharges will negatively impact freshwater quality.
- *“Those emitters who discharge large quantities or those who have a high inherent risk of chemical or biological content are the highest risk and must trigger the most stringent control measures. Heating of water and discharge into the river is also in this category. Large scale earthworks especially in high rainfall/ erosion areas which exacerbate high sediment loadings also present a high-risk scenario.”*
- Forestry and the slash and sedimentation loading is causes must be screened and monitored.
- *“Local councils must also play a part in protecting runoff from sediment ponds and stormwater outflows.”*
- While the risks of farming were acknowledged, it was felt that the remedial work done so far has been positive and our current approach should be to maintain this momentum.

Where are the areas or places of greater concern if high-risk activities take place?

CRG Member 1

- A CRG member identified four areas of greatest concern when high risk activities take place. This included high density population areas; Māori cultural sites; national and regional parks as well as significant natural areas; and areas that have a high risk of soil erosion, high annual rainfall, topography is steep, and where pristine water is going to be impacted.

For “high-risk” activities or places, what controls should be put in place?

CRG Member 1

- Clear, trusted scientific methodology should be used to identify high-risk categories and provide baselines for legislation. If such an approach identifies a high degree of risk to

ecosystems, then regulation and punitive action will be needed to ensure compliance – though it was acknowledged that compliance costs can be high and can create tension between otherwise collaborative parties.

- *“Sectors should attract the highest part of the R and D budget to find technological and adaptive solutions that may not yet be in place and will ultimately make a far greater impact of reducing the impacts on the freshwater resource than any of the traditional methods we are now using.”* A given example of this was the development of roading infrastructure disrupting fish migration patterns.
- The suggestion was made that attention should shift from spending resources on remedial work on culverts and overpasses to cleaning up the waterways by supporting the introduction of farm plans and associated education packages.

How should WRC go about planning and tailoring policy at a sub-catchment scale? To what extent should we have tailored policies?

CRG Member 1

- A CRG member expressed support for WRC’s monitoring and regulatory role in implementing national environmental policy, with a focus on lifting water quality where it is currently below bottom lines (Band D).
- It was suggested that efforts should be focused on creating working bodies within industry and peer groups who can actively disseminate information and provide a local forum for problem-solving and support.
- Farm plans were seen as a valuable tool for farmers and growers, but it was questioned how this approach would look for the wastewater discharges of larger industrial emitters and district/ city councils.
- It was believed that farmers in the lower Waikato catchment are generally well informed and agree with the goal of protecting and cleaning up freshwater systems. However, they are wary of the availability and future costs of having access to the freshwater resource for plant and animal production, since this is critical to their future production.
- *“The advantage in breaking down the regional structure to peer group and tailored policy is the client group who I think are on board, can remain motivated to continue on the good fight for a cleaner future. One on one conversations and farm visits can provide working solutions to an industry where help is often too slow in coming... if at all...”*

12.2 Taupō – General Policy Direction Feedback

What mitigations or actions should be either required or encouraged (on farm or at a catchment scale) to:

Reduce phosphorus in Taupō waterways?

CRG Member 1

- In reference to phosphorus loss, it was stated that soil structure should not be disturbed. A total ban on cultivation was seen as ‘the easiest thing to do’ with farmers still able to crop using direct drilling or broadcasting which allows them to keep nutrients, carbon, and soil structure intact. Furthermore, this approach does not kill worms and rain infiltration remains unaffected.

CRG Member 2

- Acknowledgement that phosphorus occurs naturally in pumice soils but it also enters Lake Taupō via overland flow and/or weather events via flooded rivers and streams, this can lead to localised algal growth and localised nutrient enrichment.
- The maintenance of retired riparian areas was seen to be a priority and excluding stock from these areas is essential. In addition, riparian areas are vulnerable to pests (e.g., possum and wallaby), so increased pest management is required.
- River flow management can help to avoid blockages/silt 'plug' from entering Lake Taupō during (extreme) weather events.
- Recognition that the pumice geology of gullies requires specific policy. It was suggested that ephemeral and natural gully policy should be consistent in the Taupō District Council's approach, to ensure best practice for the management and protection of gully systems in urban areas (including greenfield development).
- It was thought that all earthworks in the Taupō catchment require policy to prevent overland flow of sediment to waterways.

Improve freshwater habitats and ecosystems?

CRG Member 1

- Plantings and shading northern and western edges of waterways to keep water temperatures cooler was seen as important and it was thought it could help to reduce algae blooms.

CRG Member 2

- It was recommended that there be ongoing support for the management and prevention of invasive species – for example, freshwater gold clams and pest fish such as cat fish and goldfish.
- Riparian management could help by improving the habitats of invertebrates.
- Lake weed needs to be cleared from priority waterways such as boat-launching areas and recreational beaches.
- It was suggested that the Lake Taupō Protection Project should be continued indefinitely to control nutrient input into waterways.

12.3 West Coast – General Policy Direction Feedback

For sub-catchment approaches to freshwater policy:

- 1. What is a good process to prepare for a Catchment Context, Challenges and Values (CCCV) picture?**
- 2. What kind of mātauranga can be applied?**
- 3. What kind of science and local knowledge can be drawn on?**

CRG member 1

- Surprise was expressed in relation to these questions by one CRG member, who was expecting that WRC would just provide this information from known facts – this relates to mātauranga, science, and local knowledge.

- There was a concern that seeking further information could cause delays in forming catchment context, challenges and values, that would have a knock-on effect and hinder the progressing of Freshwater Farm Plans (that has already begun in this catchment).

Farming Risk Activity 1. What do you consider to be low, medium and high-risk factors for overland flow (i.e., sediment, phosphorous and microbes) from farming? + 2. What types of mitigations should be required to manage overland flow for each risk level?

CRG member 1

- It was believed that mitigations should be farm-specific and Freshwater Farm Plans will be able to address issues on a 'farm-by-farm' basis (i.e. not the role of the CRG to specify these matters). It was also advised that the FWFP process should avoid becoming too prescriptive in its detail.

CRG member 2

- A CRG member noted that a lot of information and advice is readily available and has been for some time from sector sources (e.g. Beef and Lamb NZ, Dairy NZ and Fonterra). Local Catchment Groups also have information and knowledge as well as results of their own water testing and monitoring.
- It was stated that farmers (in the West Coast) have been practicing environment mitigation for a number of years and have seen improvements in their waterway quality.
- The point was made that progressive farmers are wanting to do the right thing, and they are getting signals and incentives from their Meat Processors and Dairy Companies, that they need to be environmentally responsible. The Farm Assurance Plus programme was cited as an example of a quality assurance document and audit, which they said covers the essentials of a Farm Environment Plan and provides financial rewards from Meat Companies.
- A CRG member noted that communities and regions have a lot coming at them with water regulation and climate mitigation, and the costs that will go with it, and that it was necessary to prioritise *“what is essential and what is realistic and affordable.”* Farming needs to be profitable to allow investment in infrastructure (fences, reticulated stock water and silt dams) which improve environmental outcomes.
- Generic rules and region-wide planning can be very expensive and of limited value, for example requiring farmers to drop stock numbers was seen as a very blunt tool which may have no impact on sediment loss. A more nuanced approach to improving waterways in farming regions requires an understanding of farming systems. *“It is imperative that WRC staff and consultants and auditors of farm environment plans have a sound knowledge of and a practical and pragmatic approach to our primary industries.”*
- One CRG member provided examples of mitigations that they had used in their own farming experience. *“We have developed grazing systems with high pre-winter covers, rationing that feed and allowing strong regrowth through rotational grazing. We minimise pugging of soils and have excluded cattle from our significant streams and the majority of our drains. All stock has access to reticulated water.”* A practical farm plan was recommended, including grazing policies. For example, *“Don’t put 2yr bull winter rotations on south facing hill country or on clay soils”*.
- This individual also provided their own observations regarding farming land use management and risk of diffuse discharges.
 - Sound fertiliser policy and disciplined grazing systems over winter will lead to fertile pastures which then acts as a filtering system of sediment and microbes.

- Grazing management (such as limiting pugging and pasture damage) has a significant impact on sediment loss.
- Set stocking during winter on low fertility pastures can be detrimental to soils and run-off.
- Using new technology to assess fertiliser proof of placement and variable rate aerial spreading on steep areas provides greater accuracy and results in less fertiliser being used.
- Concerns that large, planted set-backs from streams become corridors for weeds (for example, Japanese walnuts and blackberries) and do not necessarily result in improved water quality.
- Water quality is affected by localised soil types and stream bank formation. It is essential to understand soil types when planning mitigation. Some localised soil types will naturally give rise to greater silt loadings e.g. mudstone soils