



Tairāwhiti Regional Freshwater Planning Advisory Group – Hui 11

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Title of report: Water quantity management – Direction for Policy Development: Municipal and Community Water Supply

Report no: 2

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Purpose of this report

This report summarises the feedback from the Freshwater Advisory Group on Municipal and Community Water Supplies and outlines the proposed direction for policy development.

Some clarification is sought to inform the development of options to address the issues identified.

Outcomes sought

Members of this Advisory Group:

- Consider the summary of feedback provided and contribute any further thoughts and correct any inaccuracies.
- Consider the specific matters and discuss the potential approaches and options to provide guidance for refining the scope for developing the policy response.

Getting ready for the hui

Please consider the questions in this report ahead of the next hui. This will aid the discussion at the hui.

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1. Background

1.1. Summary of previous feedback

The Advisory Group has discussed the municipal and community water supplies in Hui 9. The feedback from that hui noted:

- Gisborne City needs access to multiple sources for supply.
- The current impact of the municipal supply takes may not achieve Te Mana o te Wai.
- Broad support to minimise the regulation of community water supplies – take rates and volumes should be increased.
- Support for more community education on water conservation and water metering.
- Consideration of re-use of wastewater.

2. Municipal and Community Water Supplies – Policy Development

2.1. Regulations consider the scale of different drinking water supplies

As mentioned in Report 2 for Hui 9, the current TRMP only has two types of drinking water supply:

- **Municipal water supply** – Council-managed, a reticulated drinking water supply that services the City. The reticulated network also extends out to Patutahi, Muriwai and Makaraka. There is no definition in the TRMP for municipal water supply.
- **Community water supply** – Defined as “a reticulated publicly or privately owned drinking water supply connecting at least 2 buildings on separate Certificates of Title and serving at least 1,500 person days per year (for example, serving 25 people at least 60 days per year) but excluding the Gisborne city municipal water supply.” in the TRMP.
 - There are currently two Council-managed reticulated drinking water supplies:
 - Te Karaka (162 households)
 - Whatatutu (43 households, with 17 households unconnected to the network).

The TRMP currently manages Municipal and Community water supplies in the same manner, under the same Restricted Discretionary rule.¹ Therefore, the same assessment criteria apply to both scales of water supplies and both activities require Demand Management Plans. Because there is no differentiation between the scale of water supplies, it may be harder to obtain consent for community scale water systems.

¹ Rule 6.1.2(8)

Proposed option

Table 1 proposes a framework that defines the different scales of drinking water supplies and sets out regulatory frameworks that are scale specific.

Scale and definition	Policy direction and intention
<p>Single household drinking water take</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permitted - Technical evidence to determine rate and volume 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate policy and rule from other permitted water takes • Intention of this is to allow for only common household use, such as drinking water and showers. • Takes for irrigation or other non-household uses will be regulated through the respective activity-based water take rules.
<p>Small community water supply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rate and volume will be waterbody-specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined as reticulated drinking water supply serving less than 50 households. • Example size: Makorori, Waihau, Waituhi • This scale of supply primarily supplies water to residential households, with some allowance for school/marae/dairy connected to the network.
<p>Medium community water supply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rate and volume will be waterbody-specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined as reticulated drinking water supply serving between 50 to 300 households. • Examples are townships such as Tolaga Bay and Ruatoria. • This scale of supply recognises there's a similar type of users as served by a municipal water supply, but at a smaller scale.
<p>Municipal water supply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rate and volume will be waterbody-specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined as reticulated drinking water supply serving Gisborne City and satellite townships within proximity of the established reticulated network.

Questions for the Advisory Group

- ❖ Do you think that the proposed definitions of the drinking water supply sizes have considered the sizes and water user types of townships and communities in Tairāwhiti?

2.2. Managing renewals and compliance with takes under Te Mana o Te Wai

As mentioned in Section 2.1, the current regulatory framework sets out that:

- **Drinking water supply is assessed using the same assessment criteria as non-drinking water takes**
- **Renewing and establishing new municipal and community water supplies is a Restricted Discretionary Activity** – Rule 6.1.2(8) requires renewals to be assessed with the same set of matters of discretion as were used for establishment.
- **Policy enables municipal water supply to take beyond minimum flows** – provided that:
 - there is a Demand Management Plan in place
 - the user complies with water restrictions when other users are restricted
 - takes from the Waipaoa River can only be taken below the minimum flow only for the purpose of domestic use and sanitation purposes.

The hierarchy of obligations prioritises the health needs of people after the needs of freshwater and its ecosystem, but above other water uses. Despite supplying to a range of water user types, the municipal water supply is only partly metered. In Report 2 for Hui 9, the municipal “water usage” is the volume of treated water produced at the treatment plant after factoring in production losses.

Proposed options

Introduce policy direction for metering

Introduce direction for implementing metering in municipal and community water supplies for better management of the drinking water supply in accordance with the hierarchy of obligations. It is expected that the specifics of implementing metering will be provided for in the district component of the TRMP.

Retain the same assessment stringency for new drinking water supplies, but reduce assessment stringency for renewals

This option proposes to retain a **Restricted Discretionary**² activity status when assessing consent application for new drinking water supply.

Renewing existing drinking water supplies will be a **Controlled**³ activity status.

The proposed changes to the Demand Management Plan (discussed in more detail in section 2.4) is expected to provide Council oversight for compliance monitoring and evaluating if the drinking water supply has complied with the consent conditions and giving effect to Te Mana o Te Wai.

² For Restricted Discretionary activity, Council is limited to the range of matters it considers and only sets conditions (if the activity is granted) that are relevant to the matters to which it has restricted its discretion.

³ A Controlled activity requires a resource consent, but which will always be granted by the Council. The consent applications will be assessed according to specified matters over which Council will exercise its control.

Different assessment criteria between drinking water supply take and non-drinking water take

Both municipal and community water supplies are assessed using the same assessment criteria as non-drinking water takes, such as matter (t) on requiring an Irrigation Management Plan.

This option proposes to a more tailored assessment criteria for drinking water and non-drinking water takes.

Taking water below a minimum flow or water level

The hierarchy of obligations requires councils to prioritise the health and wellbeing of freshwater and its ecosystems. As defined in Report 1 that went to the April hui, minimum flow is the environmental flow set to protect particular values, most commonly aquatic habitat to protect ecosystem health. Allowing municipal water supply, when the ratio and volume of drinking water take versus other uses remains unclear, to take beyond the minimum flow does not give effect to the hierarchy of obligations.

This option proposes to take a less stringent approach by only allowing drinking water supply to take water below the minimum flow or water level – if the supply can demonstrate the take is to meet the health needs of the people.

Questions for the Advisory Group

- ❖ Considering the hierarchy of obligations, what are your views on the proposed option to regulate less stringently for drinking water supply to take water below a minimum flow or water level?

2.3. Ensuring the municipal water supply is robust and resilient

In alignment with Advisory Group feedback and theme of [Council's 2024-2027 Three Year Plan](#), this Group and our communities have asked for resilient drinking water supply. The impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle has highlighted the vulnerability of the municipal water supply, [and the 2020 NIWA report projecting the impacts of climate change for Tairāwhiti](#) further emphasised the need for Council to take action in ensuring our people can still have reliable access to drinking water.

Proposed options

Option 1: Enable the investigation of a new source for the municipal water supply

This option looks to introduce policy direction to enable investigation of a new source of drinking water for the municipal water supply. This is in acknowledgement that Council will need to take a cautionary approach to ensure that a new source is only one of several options to meet the demands of the municipal water supply.

Option 2: Increase take limit from the Waipaoa River

The Waipaoa River is currently an augmented supply to the Te Arai/Mangapoike dams. Elevating the Waipaoa source as a permanent supply for the municipal water supply by increasing the take limit is an option to meet the demands of the municipal water supply. However, the increased take must meet the hierarchy of obligations.

2.4. Revise the Demand Management Plan

[Appendix H29](#) outlines the required information for a Demand Management Plan, which is the same for both municipal and community drinking water supplies. The information required currently is insufficient to provide better management of the source and the demand of the drinking water supply.

Staff propose to retain the requirement for a Demand Management Plan for all drinking water supplies, but the level of information required will be different according to the scale of the supply.

Staff also propose to include policy direction on the timeframes for reviewing the Demand Management Plan for each drinking water supply.

Municipal Water Supply	Small and Medium Community Water Supply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the source of the drinking water supply, including the location of take(s), the resource consent • Description of the distribution or reticulated network • Efficiency and effectiveness of the network • The type of water users and proportion of drinking water usage versus non-drinking water usage • The current and projected demand of population on the supply • A drought management plan, including description of seasonality of shortages, water restriction trigger levels and actions to be taken, the communication strategy accompanying these actions • Education strategy 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual audit of non-drinking water users 	

2.5. Implement Drinking Water Protection Zones

The [National Environmental Standards for Sources of Human Drinking Water \(NES-DW\) 2008](#) require councils to ensure that drinking water sources are protected from effects of activities. In 2022, the Government consulted on proposed amendments to the NES-DW to better protect these sources through mapping the risk management areas of these drinking water sources (abbreviated as SWRMA). Regulating activities will vary according to the risk level identified and mapped for each source. At the time of this report, the proposed amendments to the NES-DW are yet to be made operative.

Staff propose to implement drinking water protection zones for drinking water supplies. Activities occurring within drinking water protection zones that may affect the water supply will be regulated according to the level of risk they pose. Further research will be required to inform the appropriate size of these zones for the different drinking water supplies.

Questions for the Advisory Group

- ❖ Do you think implementing drinking water protection zones is appropriate only for freshwater bodies where there is a drinking water supply take? Or should all freshwater bodies be required to have the same high standards of water quality?

6. Next Steps

Technical work is still underway to inform policy development for the Regional Freshwater Plan. This is for both water quantity and water quality topics. We will look to reconvene the Regional Freshwater Advisory Group in 2025 when the technical work has been completed.