

THE ONE PLAN – INTERIM FIXES AND LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

Kate Proctor

Horizons Regional Council

The Manawatū – Whanganui regions regulatory document is the infamous One Plan, it has occupied a lot of press coverage, and has been watched by other regions closely, even more over the past two or so years, as we went through an interesting process off the back of a court case.

Let's take a step back for context. The One Plan was a pioneering attempt at integrated catchment management including trying to manage diffuse nutrient sources. Most of it is actually very effective, but the nutrient management rules proved challenging from the day it became operative in 2013.

The origins behind the plans nutrient management provisions were to:

- Manage diffuse nutrients through a natural capital approach to Nitrogen, and a Nitrogen loss table derived from Overseer in the plan;
- Most farms would meet the intensive land use rules with good management practices;
- Appropriate timeframes where large changes to management practices or high level changes to investment are required.

Where we had got to this time last year when we updated you, was the plan doesn't achieve this balance, and the situation it puts unconsented farmers in created uncertainty. We wanted to resolve things as quickly as possible, and believed a plan change was required.

On the surface, you could say this still is the case, 1 year on! After some investigation we thought we had a straightforward pragmatic solution to some of the uncertainty, but this now requires some further work before its ready to notify.

The Issues we need to address

In the short term we have an outdated table, from more than several Overseer versions ago. There is then the bigger and harder question of how do we manage leaching above the table? Some dairy farms and all horticulture operations fall into this category. Do we resolve these two issues separately or together?

In the long term, how do we manage land use into the future, this is where the scope gets a lot wider.

Progress since then

We have had Massey do the work to update the Nitrogen loss table to version 6.3.0 of Overseer, which increased the numbers in the table between 40-60%. We estimate from base file data

for unconsented farmers collected by Dairy NZ, 60-70% of farms would now meet this table for a period of time (5-20 years).

Updating this table only, we had drafted a plan change application to go the Minister for the Environment as a Streamlined Planning Process at the end of 2018. We felt this was a very uncontentious plan change that could fit within this structure, and become operative fairly quickly, therefore easing uncertainty for over half of those yet to be consented farmers.

Feedback from the Ministry has been we need to address both together, those who can and cannot meet the updated table, and provide a consenting pathway outside of the table. This will require changes to policies and objectives in the plan and the regional policy statement.

It's not completely hopeless though, because the Minister wants this resolved quickly as well, for all affected landowners, and is working with us closely on this.

We are now working on the changes that need to be made to the plan outside of the table, and hope to notify a plan change that covers off both these shorter term issues in mid 2019.

Future Thinking

Running in parallel to this year's work we have the continuation of implementing the NPSFM, through the much bigger scoped 'Our Freshwater Future'.

We believe it is time to take stock of how far our existing plans will get us, and what we should do next. We think the community should be part of that process: it is the community's values that set the direction, and the community that will ultimately need to make changes to achieve

This non statutory body of work will go around the region:

- Catchment based
- Achieving real world outcomes
- Involving the community - in a targeted way

It will be down the similar collaboration track as other Councils, trying to learn from their experience, and what they would do differently next time. Each catchment will be slightly different, partly governed by whether there have already been treaty settlements in that area.

In most places, we anticipate catchment community groups will help us understand different perspectives, explore options, and test proposals. In some of our smaller catchments, establishing a formal collaborative group may not be necessary. We will be involving both community groups and stakeholder groups – in different roles.

We intend to work with communities to develop freshwater management strategies for seven large catchment areas.

These catchment strategies will then inform future regulation and plan changes.

Te Ia O Manawatū

Is the first catchment to kick off, happening early this year. Governance arrangements are currently being ironed out. This catchment is partly first because some structure is already in

place in the form of the Manawatū River Leaders Accord, and in part because we know the Upper Manawatū has issues we need to address.

Concluding comments

There has been a lot of ground work done over the past 12 months to support some big decision that need to be made early in 2019.

This all does take time, which can be frustrating, but it is important to ensure environmental efforts are aligned, and most importantly the community is behind it.

To get through all the catchments within a reasonable timeframe we will have to focus on priority issues, and run several catchments in parallel. This will test us!

As always, the only constant is change, we have experienced a lot of this over the past year and no doubt will continue to do so!