



1 Introduction

Ka ora te wai

If the water is healthy

Ka ora te whenua

The land will be nourished

Ka ora te whenua

If the land is nourished

Ka ora te tangata

The people will be provided for

What defines a place? The features, the natural resources and the people.

What sustains a place? The way we interact with our environment.

The Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region (the Plan) is produced by the Wellington Regional Council (the Council) in accordance with the Resource Management Act 1991 (the RMA). It sets out the objectives, policies and methods for people and organisations that use the region's resources for a variety of purposes.

The Plan has been developed in collaboration with people from the diverse communities that make up the Wellington Region and have economic, spiritual, cultural and environmental interests in the region's air, land, water and coastal resources. The development of the Plan has been informed by an ongoing programme of engagement with stakeholders, mana whenua and the community around the review of the five existing regional plans (Regional Coastal Plan, Regional Air Quality Management Plan, Regional Freshwater Plan, Regional Plan for Discharges to Land and Regional Soil Plan).

Many people living and working within the region have made individual and collective efforts to protect and enhance the natural resources within the region. Examples include: reducing the use of open fires in urban communities; protecting habitat for native animals; and fencing waterways on farms. This plan will assist people in the region to take the next steps in looking after the regional environment. It provides for the sustainable development of the region's natural and physical resources.

Ara Tahi, Council's iwi partnership governance group, has stated that there is the need to care for the mauri, or life-giving properties, of the region, particularly the mauri of fresh and coastal waters on which everyone's well-being is dependent. This issue was identified by Ara Tahi and subsequently expressed in the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region 2013 (the RPS). Kaitiakitanga is a traditional obligation to sustain the ecosystems of the natural world. Likewise, non-Māori groups and individuals in the region also speak of the duty of stewardship and the need to look at the environment as a whole to

achieve sustainable management of its many interconnected elements. In practical terms the common perspective shared by Māori and non-Māori alike is a dominant feature of this plan.

Much has been learned about how human activity affects the region's resources and how a comprehensive and integrated approach to natural resource management can be achieved by working collaboratively and using both regulatory and non-regulatory methods underpinned by scientific evidence. Recognising that there are several distinct catchment areas within the region, the Plan provides for a decentralised approach to establishing priorities and programmes within each of these catchments through the mechanism of catchment groups called whitua committees.

This chapter firstly provides an overview of the geographical and administrative characteristics of the Wellington Region; section 1.2 describes the collaborative approach of producing and implementing the Plan; section 1.3 contains the guiding principles of the approach; section 1.4 presents an explanation and overview of the whitua catchments and collaboration process; section 1.5 details the statutory background and other key inputs into the Plan; and section 1.6 discusses the values of water, the resource of greatest concern in the Plan.

1.1 Overview of the Wellington Region

The Wellington Region covers an area of 7,860km². It is bordered by the Tasman Sea, the Pacific Ocean and Cook Strait, and extends north to Ōtaki in the west and almost to Eketahuna in the east.

Māori who originally settled the Wellington area knew it as Te Upoko o te Ika a Maui, meaning “the head of Maui's fish”. The area was settled by Europeans in the early 1800s and the cities, coastal towns, rural centres and fertile farming districts are now home to around 490,000 people. Over a quarter of the region's population were born outside of New Zealand and consequently a diverse and vibrant culture is a significant aspect of the region.

The major natural features of the region include the rugged Remutaka and Tararua Ranges; Wellington Harbour (Port Nicholson) and Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River Valley; Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour; the rolling hill country of the Wairarapa; the coastal flats, valleys and river plains that surround the Ruamāhanga River; and one of New Zealand's largest fresh water bodies, Wairarapa Moana.

The region has six mana whenua and a large population of Māori from other parts of Aotearoa. With some of the oldest areas of human habitation in the country, the cultural landscape is rich with iconic sites and Māori associations dating back to some of the great explorers: Kupe, Tara, Haunui a Nanaia and others. The mana whenua who have worked as partners with the Council in the development of the Plan, include the following six representative bodies of the region.

- Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa represented by Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Trust

- Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika represented by Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust
- Ngāti Toa Rangātira represented by Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangātira Incorporated
- Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai represented by Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust
- Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga represented by Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki
- Rangitāne o Wairarapa represented by Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated

The region incorporates nine territorial authority areas: Wellington City, Hutt City, Porirua City, Upper Hutt City, Kāpiti Coast District, South Wairarapa District, Carterton District, Masterton District and part of Tararua District.

The region is home to the nation’s capital and has an economy characterised by knowledge-based sectors, including a dynamic information and technology sector, a large public sector, and well-established film and media industries. Manufacturing and construction makes up about 15% of the business activity in the region. The region also hosts a number of national research and education institutions.

Wellington provides the northern link for State Highway 1 and the main trunk railway between the North Island and the South Island. Wellington Harbour (Port Nicholson) is an important New Zealand port, particularly for imports such as fuel oils. Wellington Airport is the third biggest passenger airport in New Zealand.

The region also has a productive primary industry made up of a range of pastoral, forestry, crop and horticultural sectors, focused around the Ruamāhanga River Valley, the Wairarapa hill country and the Wairarapa and Kāpiti coasts.

1.2 Mahitahi – a work in partnership

In developing this plan a new approach has been taken, both through the establishment of Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Management Committee (also referred to simply as Te Upoko Taiao) and active engagement and collaboration with the regional community to incorporate their interests and views in the Plan. This approach is referred to as mahitahi – a work in partnership between Council, mana whenua and the community. It is based on a commitment to active engagement, good faith and a commonality of purpose and is one of the guiding principles of the Te Upoko Taiao (see section 1.3 for the other guiding principles).

Te Upoko Taiao, formed by seven councillors and seven members recommended by the region’s mana whenua, was created in 2009 as an expression of the Treaty of Waitangi relationship at a regional level, enabling a mana whenua perspective in resource management policy direction. Te Upoko Taiao grew from Ara Tahī, the partnership committee formed between mana whenua leaders and Wellington Regional councillors more than two decades ago.

Te Upoko Taiao sets a new standard for recognition of kaitiakitanga in regional resource management. Council delegated the responsibility to oversee the development of the Plan to Te Upoko Taiao and, as a result, the objectives, policies and methods contained in the Plan recognise shared values of both the Council and mana whenua. This is most clearly emphasised in new, shared objectives for regional water quality in this plan. The Plan requires that all water quality is maintained or is improved in order to provide for aquatic ecosystem health and mahinga kai, and for contact recreation and Māori customary use. It is anticipated that the process of achieving these objectives will not only improve water quality but support the role of mana whenua kaitiaki in regional resource management. The committee will also have an active role in implementing the Plan at a local and community level, ensuring an ongoing management partnership between the Council and mana whenua.

In 2010 the process to actively engage the wider community began. More than 1,400 people participated from the start of the process through a series of community workshops and online participation.

There are a number of other important regional partners who have a particular role to play in managing natural resources, including district and city councils, primary industry groups and community and interest groups. They have all played a significant role in the development of the Plan through workshops, and feedback on draft provisions and documents.

1.3 Guiding principles of Te Upoko Taiao

Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Management Committee intends that the Plan will be achievable, practical and affordable for the region. The committee established a set of guiding principles (shown in Figure 1.1) that underpin the overall management approach of the Plan. These are:

Ki uta ki tai (connectedness) – managing natural and physical resources in a holistic manner, recognising they are interconnected and reliant upon one another

Wairuatanga (identity) – recognition and respect for mauri and the intrinsic values of natural and physical features, and including the connections between natural processes and human cultures

Kaitiakitanga (guardianship) – recognition that we all have a part to play as guardians to maintain and enhance our natural and physical resources for current and future generations

Tō mātou whakapono (judgement based on knowledge) – recognition that our actions will be considered and justified by using the best available information and good judgement

Mahitahi (partnership) – partnership between Council iwi (mana whenua) and the community, based on a commitment to active engagement, good faith and a commonality of purpose.

Principles to guide the review of regional plans and whaitua



Figure 1.1: Te Upoko Taiao’s principles to guide the review of the regional plans

The make-up of the committee and these guiding principles reflect an understanding that mana whenua, the Council and the wider community all share the responsibility of caring for the region’s environment. Ongoing collaboration between regulators, resource users, mana whenua, the government and the wider community is already in place and can be further built on to manage the region’s natural and cultural resources effectively.

Te Upoko Taiao has also specified that the Plan must be a document that meets the needs of its users, who are typically a wide range of people ranging from professional planners and consents officers to individual property owners. This means that the structure and content must be readable, functional and accessible.

1.4 Integrated catchment management

Integrated catchment management is the method used to manage resources in a coordinated way, from the mountains to the sea – ki uta ki tai.

The first step in integrated catchment management is the identification of values and associated outcomes at the catchment scale. Plan and programmes to reach these outcomes are also developed within the catchment context. Te Upoko Taiao has adopted an innovative model to ensure collaborative development of

both regional and catchment-specific programmes and an integrated approach to the management of land and water resources. The emphasis is on the identification of local community values as a basis of decision-making. This model includes the establishment of committees for the five identified catchments which the Council has termed ‘whaitua’ (Figure 1.2). Each whaitua committee will have a majority of members from the local community, along with regional and city/district councillors and mana whenua representatives.

The whaitua committees will each continue to develop sections of the Plan related to their local catchment. This will form the basis of the Council’s programme to implement the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management. The aim is to improve the integration of activities and achieve better resource management practices reflecting local aspirations. The whaitua committees will each develop an implementation programme which will include both regulatory provisions and non-regulatory programmes. The regulatory provisions will be included progressively by way of plan changes or variations in the whaitua-specific chapters of the Plan as the committees make their recommendations.

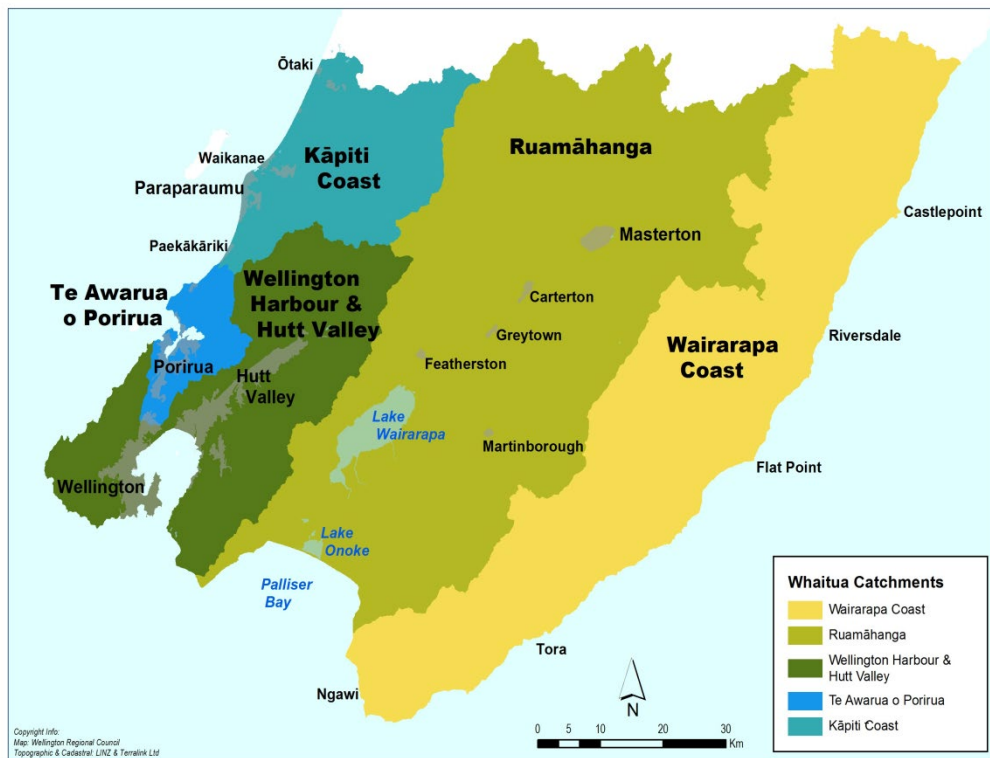


Figure 1.2: Whaitua catchments

1.5 Factors shaping this Plan

The Plan is shaped by the following principal factors:

- the statutory framework and the hierarchy of policy statements and plans provided for by the RMA;
- scientific and technical information on the state of the environment and the impacts of use and development on these receiving environments, and the

views of stakeholders, including individuals, mana whenua, community groups and industry or sector organisations; and

- the guiding principles of Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Management Committee and Council (discussed above).

The first two factors are explained below.

1.5.1 Statutory framework

The purpose of the Plan is to assist Council to carry out its functions in order to achieve the purpose of the RMA. The purpose of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Sustainable management is defined in the RMA as:

“Managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while:

- (a) Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and*
- (b) Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems; and*
- (c) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment” (RMA, 199:65)*

Natural and physical resources in the RMA include land, water, air, soil, minerals and energy, all forms of plants and animals and all structures.

The RMA provides for a hierarchy of planning and policy instruments to give national, regional and district policy direction. These include national policy statements, national environmental standards, regional policy statements, and district and regional plans. The RMA also sets out responsibilities for the management of natural and physical resources.

Figure 1.3 shows the geographical boundaries of the policy statements and plans within this resource management framework. The Plan combines the regional plan (discussed below) with the Regional Coastal Plan, shown separately in the diagram.

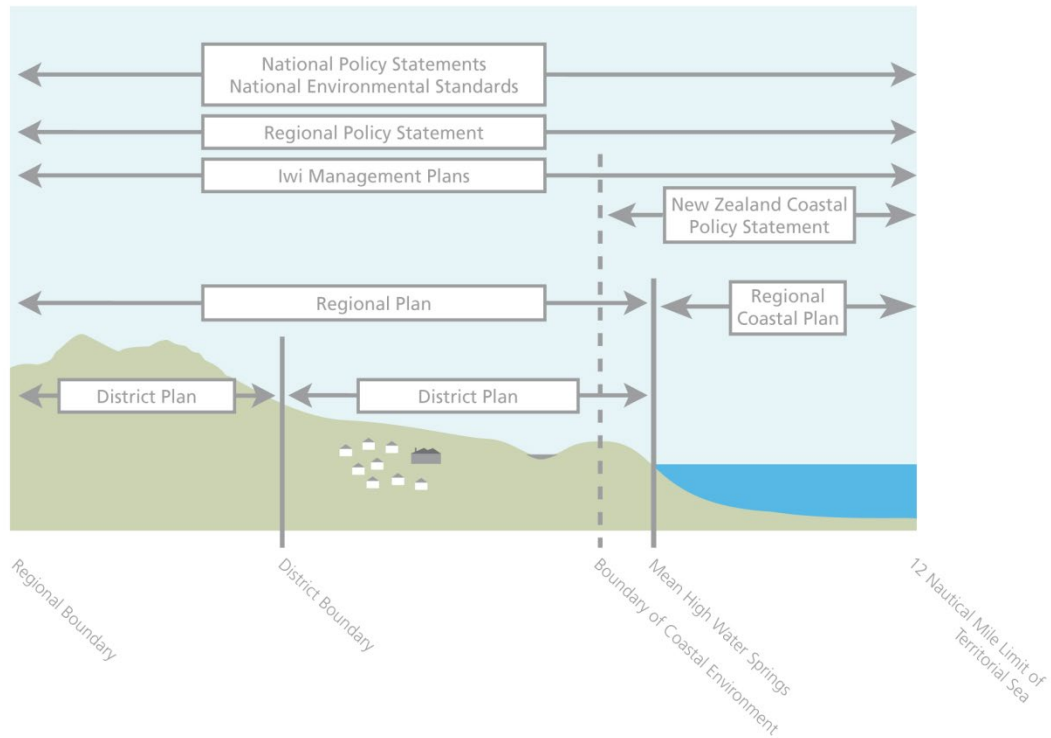


Figure 1.3: The resource management policy and planning framework

The purpose of regional plans as set out in the RMA is to assist regional councils to carry out their functions under section 30 of the RMA. The Regional Coastal Plan is the only mandatory regional plan; other regional plans are prepared at the discretion of the regional council. Regional plans must give effect to the respective regional policy statement, national policy statements and the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement.

The Plan reflects the Council’s functions under section 30 of the RMA and covers the natural resources of fresh water, air, soil, and the coastal marine area. There are restrictions that apply to the use of these resources, as set out in Part III of the RMA. For some resources, any activity affecting the resource requires resource consent unless it is specifically allowed by a regional rule. For other resources, activities are allowed by right unless specifically restricted by a rule in a regional plan.

The restrictive presumption in the RMA applies to almost all activities that regional councils control. These include activities in the coastal marine area, activities in the beds of rivers and lakes, and uses of water, including discharges of contaminants to water or to land where the contaminant might enter water. Any person who wants to do anything covered by the restrictive presumption must obtain a resource consent unless there is a rule in a regional plan that allows the activity as a “permitted activity”.

Discharges of contaminants to land and air are restricted by the RMA only if they are from “industrial or trade premises”. Discharges from domestic premises or from vehicles require a resource consent only if a regional rule specifically requires it.

Uses of land such as earthworks, vegetation clearance, drilling, or building or demolishing structures follow the permissive presumption. These are allowed unless specifically restricted, and the restriction may be in a regional and/or district plan. Land use functions covered by regional councils relate to soil conservation and maintaining and enhancing water quality or water quantity, whereas district council functions cover all land uses.

Regional rules are therefore the main means of delivering policy in regional plans. They either allow something that the RMA regulates, or restrict something that RMA allows. Regional rules can be adopted only in regional plans; they cannot be adopted in a strategy or any other kind of plan.

National policy statements provide guidance on matters of national significance and are prepared by central government. New Zealand currently has four approved national policy statements: the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014, the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 and the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission 2008. Under the RMA, Council must give effect to all relevant national policy statements when undertaking a plan review.

Of the existing national policy statements, the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014 (NPS-FM) is unusual in that it allows regional councils until 2025 to develop a plan to give effect to its requirements. In accordance with policy E1(c) of the NPS-FM, Council has a programme to progressively implement the requirements of the NPS-FM by 2025. The key feature of this programme is the catchment-based, collaborative community approach – the whitua process (as outlined in section 1.4).

Whaitua committees will work with their catchment communities to develop recommendations for objectives and limits related to water quality and quantity, as directed by Policy CA2 of the NPS-FM. Recommendations made by the whitua committees will be considered by Council for inclusion in the Plan by way of plan changes. By running two whitua processes at a time, Council plans to have all five whitua processes complete by 2023. In the interim, the Plan is not inconsistent with the NPS-FM and contains provisions that take the first step towards giving effect to the NPS-FM on a regional scale. The Plan provides a regional, transitional regime through which whitua-specific plan changes made between 2015 and 2025 will ultimately give full effect to the NPS-FM.

National environmental standards are also prepared by central government. They can prescribe technical standards, methods or other requirements for environmental matters such as electricity transmission, air quality, assessing and managing contaminants in soil to protect human health, and managing sources of human drinking water. The same standards are enforced by all councils, both regional and district. In some circumstances, councils can impose stricter standards than the national standard, if the standard provides that a rule may be more stringent. The RMA stipulates that a regional plan must not conflict with a provision in a national environmental standard.

The Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region (RPS) provides an overview of the significant resource management issues for the region, along with objectives to address these issues, and policies and methods to achieve the objectives. The RPS includes four different types of policies. The first group of policies direct local authorities and require provisions to be included in district or regional plans. The second group needs to be referred to when changing, varying or replacing city, district or regional plans. The other two types of policies are as follows: policies that allocate responsibilities for indigenous biodiversity, natural hazards, and hazardous substances, and policies that outline non-regulatory actions.

Natural and physical resources and processes do not stop at city, district or regional boundaries. Use, development and protection can also require compliance with rules in district plans, as well as rules in a regional plan.

Iwi management plans have been prepared by the treaty partner iwi in the Wellington Region. These do not have any statutory weight in their own right, but they must be, and have been, taken into account in the preparation of this Plan. The jurisdiction of the iwi management plans is shown in Figure 1.3.

The RMA requires that the regional plan give effect to both national policy statements and the RPS. These documents have been key drivers in the development of the objectives and policies within this Plan.

1.5.2 Community views, scientific and technical information – identifying issues

A range of methods and tools have been used to identify the natural resource issues of the region, including environmental monitoring and research programmes, scientific research, community engagement, resource consent monitoring, mana whenua perspective, Māori and community consultation and rulings of the Environment Court.

The key natural resource management issues identified across the region relate to:

- the quality of fresh water in both urban and rural areas;
- the allocation and efficient use of water, including groundwater;
- the state of the coastal environment, particularly the impacts that land-use and degraded fresh water systems have on coastal and estuarine ecosystems; and
- the management of natural hazards, including earthquakes, flooding hazard and coastal erosion.

Other natural resource management considerations such as soil conservation, air quality, heritage protection and managing sites of significance are also addressed in the Plan.

How the objectives, policies and rules in the Plan address these considerations is described in the issues and evaluation reports (known as section 32 reports) associated with the public notification of the Plan.

1.5.3 The NPS-FM 2020 and Te Mana o te Wai

When the provisions of the Plan were first drafted the applicable national policy statement for freshwater management was the NPS-FM 2014 which was replaced by the NPS-FM 2017 during the final stages of hearings of submissions on the proposed Plan. Decisions on submissions were released in July 2019 and the period for lodging appeals closed in September 2019. The NPS-FM 2017 was replaced by the NPS-FM 2020 in September 2020, part way through mediation of appeals on the proposed Plan. The NPS-FM 2020 includes new obligations and material changes to the national policy framework for freshwater management, compared with the NPS-FM 2014. In particular, the NPS-FM 2020 introduces an explicit hierarchy of obligations for freshwater management, clarifies the principles of Te Mana o te Wai and intends that freshwater is managed to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai. The Plan has been amended to the extent practicable, within the scope of appeals, to give effect to the NPS-FM 2020. However, the Plan may not give full effect to the concept of Te Mana o te Wai as expressed in the NPS-FM 2020 and should be read in conjunction with the NPS-FM 2020.

Similarly, the NPS-FM 2020 includes a wider range of compulsory attributes than previous NPSs-FM. Not all those attributes are currently identified within Tables 3.1 to 3.8 of the Plan.

The Council will notify changes to the Plan by 31 December 2024 to give full effect to the NPS-FM 2020.

1.6 Values of water in the Plan

Values of water in the Plan are defined as the worth or desirability to the community of a particular set of qualities, uses or outcomes. The values of water that have been identified during the development of the Plan are set out in Table 1.1 below, and in some cases are expressed more specifically elsewhere in the Plan including in Schedule B (Nga Taonga Nui a Kiwa) and Schedule C (Sites of significance to mana whenua).

The plan reflects a wide range of values from across society. Values have been brought into the Plan through consultation with the community, mana whenua and other stakeholders. The concept of shared values expressed by the committee is also fundamental to the Plan. Key directions on providing for values of water are also given in the objectives and policies of the RPS.

The discussion and development of the values is further informed by the way values are expressed in the NPS FM. The NPS FM is particularly important in describing values, and provides a framework for establishing freshwater objectives in respect of fresh water resources. It provides a management framework to guide the allocation of fresh water so that it may be used in a way that contributes to economic growth and at the same time maintains environmental integrity.

Key to the framework as specified in the NPS FM is the setting of national bottom lines (water quality outcomes or minimum standards) for two compulsory values ecosystem health and human health for recreation. The NPS FM also has additional national values and minimal acceptable states, which are less prescriptive, for other values and uses of fresh water, such as for municipal and domestic water supply and navigation.

Table 1.1 illustrates shared values, intrinsic values, direct use values (that is, associated with a utility but not associated with opportunities for financial returns), and commercial/economic use values.

The values that have been identified are given practical application through the different objectives, policies and methods of the Plan, including rules and non-regulatory programmes.

In the table, the values have been sourced from the following: NPS FM; policies in the RPS; the RMA; mana whenua; and community and stakeholder engagement.

Table 1.1: Values of water

Shared values—recognising common values between Māori and non-Māori relating to the quality of water

Ecosystem health and mahinga kai

Contact recreation and Māori customary use

Intrinsic values – the inherent values of water bodies

Ecosystem health and ecosystem function

Biodiversity

Waterway form and character

Use values - direct

Human sustenance, health and well-being

Wai tapu

Infrastructure integrity

Active recreation

Waste removal and dilution

Transportation and navigation

Use values – commercial/economic

Food and fibre production

Commercial enterprise

Industrial processes

*Mai te kakano ka tipu te purapura, i ruia mai i Rangiātea
Mai ngā pūtake ka ū mai te waiora, i ū mai i a Papatūānuku
Mai i ngā raureka ka ū mai te hau ora, i ū mai i a Ranginui
Ka puāwai, ka pū ngā hae. Ka pua ngā hua, ka kākano ano*

Ko tātau rā i tenei wā

Tihei mauri ora

Tihei mauri ora

From a seed a sapling grew, that was sown from Rangiātea
Through the roots flowed the waters of life, that came from Papatūānuku
Through the sweet leaves, came the breath of life of Ranginui
It blossoms and is pollinated it fruits and seeds again, hence as today to
continue the cycle

Rangiātea is the house of Io the Supreme Creator from where the kits of knowledge were given to Tāne the god of the forest. Ranginui is the Sky Parent and Papatūānuku is Mother Earth. This song is about the important role that people particularly young ones play in ensuring the survival of the culture.

Nā Hirini Melbourne