

Applying the Vision and Strategy to setting scenarios for the rivers

This is a summary of perspectives shared by river iwi and WRA at hui in March and April 2015.

1. Perspectives shared by river iwi and WRA on the Vision and Strategy

Defining the V&S:

- Important to read V&S in its entirety – holistic, integrated approach.
- Protect – means not getting worse
- Restore – means making it better
- Expect will need to protect (no further decline), restore, protect again in rehabilitated state.

Focus of the Vision and Strategy to be addressed by the Plan Change:

- Overarching Vision/ Objective A: The restoration and protection of the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River
- Includes tangible objectives e.g. H, I and K - no further degradation; protection and enhancement of fisheries, flora and fauna; safe to swim and take food
- Also includes less tangible or process objectives e.g. C, F, G - relationship to the river according to tikanga and kawa; precautionary approach; cumulative effects
- Healthy Rivers is just part of the V&S, but improving water quality will assist with other objectives e.g. relationship
- Iwi also have development interests. Incorporations are wanting sustainable farming – to continue what we are doing but in a better way. There is support for the idea of 'optimisation'- relates to Objective J: Strategic importance is subject to restoration and protection. Resource users must be accountable. Everyone plays their part. Policy may be needed that particularly applies to river iwi Multiple Owned Maori Land

Timeframe:

- Need to see action occurring now, some actions can take place earlier than others
- Delaying now will cost more later. Status quo not OK
- Acknowledge may not see desired outcomes until longer term – intergenerational timeframe expectation i.e. 80 or 100 years
- 'Intermediate' scenarios can help decide on interim targets along the restoration journey
- May take 10 years to stop the decline (for some contaminants/ places). May be 50 years for lags in groundwater
- So 80+ years may be the general timeline BUT
 - o Can deal with faecal microbes sooner e.g. stock exclusion over 20 years
 - o N will take longest because of lag in groundwater for next x years AND because reductions are harder to achieve
 - o Noting that lake weed affects swimmability – what can be done about that asap?

Who should define, interpret or prioritise aspects of the V&S?

- No-one owns it but we are all tied to it, we all have responsibilities around it
- WRA view is that river iwi need to define what success looks like and timeframes desired. WRA is voice of V&S; what V&S means is up to river iwi; WRA don't want to be 'arbiter'
- WRA offering to test outcomes of these conversations with their Board

2. Alternative interpretations and focus questions to develop scenarios

Devising scenarios:

- a. Could say 'this is what we want to achieve'. To achieve it in 20 years would create this cost/pain; to achieve it in 40 years would create this cost/pain...
- b. OR say 'this is what we want to achieve'. In 20 years we would try for this, in 40 years for this (map out steps along the journey)...

What does success look like?

- Timeframes are informed by 'success picture' and mechanisms to achieve that AND should not allow for complacency. Expect movement, progress, direction of travel. Focus on achieving success as fast as practicable, positive momentum towards a success story
- In summary, this means real and demonstrable progress on agreed indicators.

Safe to swim and take food from

E. coli

The NOF has two measures: median for wading and 95%ile (top 5% of samples can exceed this level) for swimming. Currently most Waikato sites meet median 'wading' state but not 95%ile swimming.

When? *Do we want to see the water swimmable at all flows, in all seasons?* CSG thinking on this point is that people might still collect food in winter so apply to all seasons. However, there is probably a high flow when people will not use the river to swim or take food from (i.e. 95%ile).

River iwi views:

- Relationship is year-round
- Stretches across different flow regimes
- So aiming for safe to swim all the time, but could be different standard at different times

What? *What standard do we use to define 'safe to swim and take food'?* CSG are not using the NOF 'wadeable' national bottom line but are using the more stringent minimum acceptable state for immersion as a bottom line. Waiting to hear from TLG about 'edible' bottom line – expect this could be different for fish (gut and cook) and watercress (usually cooked) than for shellfish (eat whole).

River iwi views:

- Want to head for edible standard over time

Where? *Does the aspiration for swimming apply to tributaries as well as the main stem?* V&S applies this 'over its entire length'. CSG are applying the standards to tributaries as well as main stem, because they are used for swimming and taking food, and because they feed into main stem.

River iwi views:

- Have to work throughout catchment because those farms feed tributaries and main stem (also through groundwater)
- Maniapoto – people's relationship is with tributaries
- Want to make sure there's monitoring and reporting of tributaries, not just main stem
- Main stem still remains important – both point and non-point sources

Clarity

Clarity is not in the National Objectives Framework but is proposed as an attribute for water quality in the Waikato and Waipa.

River iwi views:

- Clarity also important for collecting kai – have to be able to see

When? *Should clarity measures be applied at all flows?* Clarity is not a food safety issue so applies to when people want to get in the water. WRC currently exclude top 10% of flows.

River iwi views:

- Accept that river will be muddier at high flow (top 10% of flow excluded is OK)

What? *What level of clarity constitutes 'safe to swim in'?* 1.6m is the WRC acceptable standard for recreation. The WRISS looked at what it would take to get to 1m in the lower Waikato and found that this would require substantial land use change. The TLG advise that reaching this sort of level of clarity would also be stringent enough to safeguard ecosystem values.

River iwi views:

- Can be aspirational but also have to be practical – 1m will be good progress [Waipā in 1920s was 1m; some streams might reach 2m/ waterholes with 3m clarity]

Absorb no further degradation; restore and protect

What do we mean by the statement that the river should not be expected to absorb further degradation?

Does this mean:

- Average state maintained across an FMU/ e.g. over time, the percentage of sites in an FMU in each band (A, B, C, D) does not decline?
- No water quality site anywhere drops into a lower band?
- No water quality site declines anywhere even within a band?
- What about the 'lag' decline still to come – do we mean no further decline other than the in-built decline?

River iwi views:

- 'Averaging' not acceptable – key concept
- Go with Point 3 – No water quality site declines anywhere even within a band
- Protect-Restore-Protect
- N in groundwater lag a possible exemption. But have to do something now to make sure it doesn't get even worse than degradation from historical practice already in groundwater
- What is the baseline date for 'no further decline'? From time of V&S legislation (2010/ 2012 for Upper Waipa)

And the overarching 'restore and protect'? How much restoration is expected, and over what timeframe?

CSG have considered each key attribute and had a first go at assigning aspirations for bands to be achieved in each FMU. Where condition is currently excellent, they want to see this maintained, with no further degradation within the band. They have identified FMUs where the current state falls below the acceptable level and would need to improve. They expect that achieving this will take different timeframes for different contaminants, and for different FMUs (e.g. lower Waikato and Waipa might take longer to reach the desired improvement). Trends for increasing nitrogen, in particular, will be hard to reverse, and the initial target could be 'no further decline'.

River iwi views:

- Concern that Upper River seen as 'OK' in current state – still room for improvement
 - Cows in river – E. coli spikes locally
 - Weed extent increasing every year
 - Smell and colour at Whakamaru and Maraetai
- Question about FMUs – should there be a split at Ohakuri?
- Should tributaries be a separate FMU?
- Need clarity on implications of setting FMUs