

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.