

The Land and Water Forum – where things are at?

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The Land and Water Forum (LAWF) brings together a range of industry groups, environmental and recreational NGOs, iwi, scientists, and other organisations with a stake in freshwater and land management. The Forum's members (see www.landandwater.org.nz) are joined by active observers from local and central government.

The Forum's objective is to develop a shared vision and a common way forward among all those with an interest in water, through a stakeholder-led collaborative process.

LAWF 2009-14

The first phase of the Forum's work lasted from August 2009 to August 2010 and resulted in the report *A Fresh Start for Freshwater*.

On 18 May 2012, the Forum released the *Second Report of the Land and water Forum*. It provides a national framework within which regional councils will work with their communities and iwi to set freshwater objectives and develop limits for its use. It provides a consistent and transparent process for setting objectives and limits, and one that will lead to effective and enduring outcomes, including greater certainty for investment and development.

On 15 November 2012, the Forum released the *Third Report of the Land and Water Forum* which addresses managing within limits. It recommends integrated decision-making in catchments, continuous improvement of management practices to improve water quality and clearer rights to take and use water within set limits.

A number of the recommendations in these reports, but not all of them, have been implemented by the Government. The LAWF reports have been influential in the development of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014. They are all available on the LAWF website (www.landandwater.org.nz).

Third phase

In February this year LAWF received a third mandate, and some funding, from the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Primary Industry. This mandate runs for three years to 2018 and the Government has detailed what specific matters it would like advice on from LAWF over that period, and by when.

To kick off the work under the third mandate, the LAWF Secretariat organised a Science to Policy Workshop to update LAWF participants with the latest relevant

science. This was held over 31 March and 1 April and the papers that were presented (and a video of the presentations?) have been put on the LAWF website.

LAWF continues to operate by having a Small Group thrash out consensus positions that they then report to the Plenary for consideration and final decision. ECO is not a member of the Small Group (but Forest & Bird, EDS and Ecologic are). Fish & Game participates actively in LAWF but, as a statutory body, has formally classified itself as an 'active observer' rather than an active participant.

"How to maximize the economic benefit of freshwater while managing within water quality and quantity limits that are set consistent with the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014 (NPS-FM)" is the issue that the Government is seeking advice on first. And within that mandate the Government has also asked for advice on *"Policy design of a regulatory requirement to fence streams to exclude dairy cattle"* and *"Mechanisms to manage the transition from the current regime to effectively manage within limits"*. The Government has given a deadline of 30 September 2015 for receipt of this advice.

LAWF has approached this work by setting up seven "flexi-groups" that are tasked with unpacking the issues and reporting their findings to the Small Group. Unlike the Small Group, the flexi-groups are not required to reach consensus.

The flexi-groups that have been set up are:

1. Core elements and the nature of rights
2. Water quality allocation
3. Water quality – other management tools; Good Management Practice; mitigation
4. Urban Issues
5. Implementation of water allocation
6. Stock exclusion
7. Over-allocation

A Plenary and a one and a half day Economics Workshop were held back-to-back on 23 and 24 June. At least some of the papers and a video of the presentations have been put on the LAWF website.

Plenaries to consider drafts of the 4th LAWF Report (addressing the issues noted above) will held on 25 August and 24 September 2015.

Future work

The Government has asked LAWF to offer the following further advice:

- By September 2016, contribute to the further population of the National Objectives Framework (NOF) and comment on the overall implementation of the NPS-FM.

- By December 2017, review the overall changes to water policy and its implementation, lessons learned and further work required to achieve the overall objective of improved water management in New Zealand.

Iwi interest in freshwater

All participants in LAWF are keenly aware that separate from LAWF, the Government and iwi are negotiating about how to give effect to the iwi interest in freshwater.

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