

2. Promoting sustainable management in the Wellington region

2.1 A sustainable region

The Wellington region has a long and eventful history, not the least of which is its Maori identification as “Te Upoko o Te Ika a Maui” or the Head of Maui’s fish. The head of the fish, in Maori thinking, is the sweetest part.

Hutia te rito o te harakeke. Kei hea te komako e ko?

Ki mai nei ki ahau. He aha te mea nui o te ao?

Maku e ki atu: He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

If you were to pluck out the centre shoot of the flax bush, where would the bellbird sing?

If you were to ask me “What is the most important thing in the world?” I would reply, “it is people, people, people.”

This whakatauki, or proverb, is a metaphor for nurturing and sustainably managing the environment for the good of all. It can be used to symbolise the role of the environment, family and community in nurturing the individual and environment. When harvesting flax, only the outer leaves are harvested to ensure regeneration of the plant. If the flax is not nurtured and protected, the bellbird, which relies on flax for survival, is threatened. Likewise, people are endangered if our natural and physical resources are not properly cared for. People and our institutions are central in this dynamic, underpinning the role we have as guardians of resources for current and future generations.

The Regional Policy Statement is mandated by the Resource Management Act. Its purpose is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources in the Wellington region. Sustainable management in the Resource Management Act encapsulates the idea of environmental sustainability. In other words, natural and physical resources can be used and developed by people and communities to provide for their economic, social and cultural wellbeing, and health and safety, but in such a way that ensures the potential of these resources are sustained for future generations, and ecological systems retain their life-supporting capacity and are not overly degraded.

Tangata whenua consider that the life force – mauri – of natural systems needs to be protected. If it is compromised by unwise resource use, this would also constitute a risk for the people dependent on those resources. This concept is reflected in the current approach to sustainability, which takes into account the interdependence of the many parts of the ecosystem, including people. The Resource Management Act refers to “safeguarding the life supporting capacity of air, water, soils and ecosystems.”

2.2 The Wellington region

The Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region applies to the whole of the greater Wellington region. The region covers 813,005 hectares of land and has 497 kilometres of coastline. The following city and district councils have jurisdiction in performing the functions of territorial authorities, under the Resource Management Act, within the Wellington region:

- Kapiti Coast District Council
- Porirua City Council
- Wellington City Council
- Lower Hutt City Council
- Upper Hutt City Council
- South Wairarapa District Council
- Carterton District Council
- Masterton District Council
- A small part of Tararua District is also in the region.

The Wellington Regional Council has jurisdiction over the Wellington region, in performing the functions of a regional council under the Resource Management Act. The region shares boundaries with Horowhenua District Council, Horizons (Manawatu-Wanganui) Regional Council and Marlborough District Council.

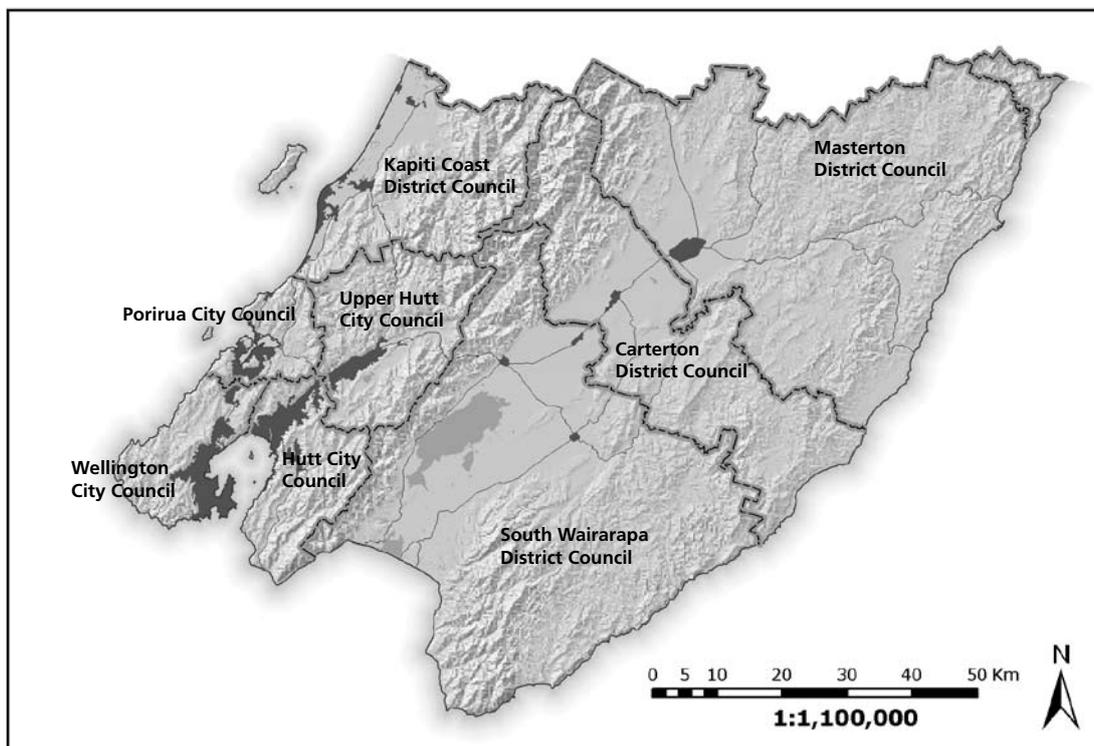


Figure 2: Wellington region and city and district council boundaries

In addition to these representative arrangements, there are five recognised tangata whenua tribal groups in the region. They are Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Toa, Rangitane, Ngati Kahungunu, and Taranaki Whanui, which includes Te Ati Awa, Taranaki, Ngati Tama and Ngati Ruanui. These tribes are currently represented by the following seven iwi authorities.

- Te Runanga o Raukawa Inc
- Te Runanga o Atiawa ki Whakarongotai Inc
- Te Runanga o Toa Rangatira Inc
- The Wellington Tenths Trust
- Te Runanganui o Taranaki Whanui ki te Upoko o te Ika a Maui
- Kahungunu ki Wairarapa
- Rangitane o Wairarapa Inc.

2.3 Community outcomes for the Wellington region

There is a wide range of factors – political, social, cultural, economic and environmental -that can influence the region's move towards or away from sustainability. The Regional Policy Statement helps promote sustainability by identifying the significant resource management issues of the region, then setting out objectives, policies and methods to address these issues using the means available under the Resource Management Act.

There are other regional and national policy documents that also play a role in contributing towards sustainability and that address social, economic, cultural and environmental issues for the region. Some of these contribute to the formulation of objectives and policies contained within the Regional Policy Statement, as noted in section 1.3.

Key documents prepared by Wellington Regional Council and the region's city and district councils are the Wellington Regional Strategy (the region's sustainable economic growth framework), the Regional Land Transport Strategy, and the long term council community plans prepared by all local authorities.

So what do these documents suggest our region will be like, if we manage our natural and physical resources sustainably? The outcomes below are identified as key outcomes for the region within the Wellington Regional Strategy (June 2007) and in Wellington Regional Council's Long Term Council Community Plan 2006 – 2016 (amended June 2007).

Community Outcomes

Healthy environment – We have clean water, fresh air and healthy soils. Well functioning and diverse ecosystems make up an environment that can support our needs. Resources are used efficiently. There is minimal waste and pollution.

Connected community – Our connections and access are efficient, quick and easy – locally, nationally and internationally. Our communication networks, air and sea ports, roads and public transport systems enable us to link well with others, both within and outside the region.

Quality lifestyle – Living in the Wellington region is enjoyable and people feel safe. A variety of lifestyles can be pursued. Our art, sport, recreation and entertainment scenes are enjoyed by all community members – and attract visitors.

Entrepreneurial and innovation region – Innovation and new endeavours are welcomed and encouraged. Ideas are exchanged across all sectors, resulting in a creative business culture. We have excellent education and research institutions, and benefit from being the seat of government.

Sense of place – We have a deep sense of pride in the Wellington region and there is a strong community spirit. We value the region's unique characteristics – its rural, urban and harbour landscapes, its climate, its central location, and its capital city.

Essential services – High quality and secure infrastructure and services meet our everyday needs. These are developed and maintained to support the sustainable growth of the region, now and in the future.

Prosperous community – All members of our community prosper from a strong and growing economy. A thriving business sector attracts and retains a skilled and productive workforce.

Healthy community – Our physical and mental health is protected. Living and working environments are safe, and everyone has access to health care. Every opportunity is taken to recognise and provide for good health.

Prepared community – We can cope with emergency events. Individuals and businesses are able to take responsibility for their own well-being. Effective emergency management systems are in place.

Strong and tolerant community – People are important. All members of our community are empowered to participate in decision making and to contribute to society. We celebrate diversity and welcome newcomers, while recognising the importance of our tangata whenua.

This Regional Policy Statement is an integral document in helping the Wellington Regional Council and the region's city and district councils to support the achievement of this region's community outcomes. We can aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the use of fossil fuels for transport – for example, by investing in better public transport, encouraging more walking and cycling, reducing the need for travel, and steering development to achieve more integrated land use. There are policies in this Regional Policy Statement, particularly those under the banner of 'urban form, design and function', to this effect. We can also plan for some of the consequences of climate change and adapt where and how we live to cope with the likely changes. And, there are policies under the banner of 'natural hazards', 'energy, infrastructure and waste', and 'regional form, design and function', to this effect. However, regional policy statements cannot respond to all of the issues and challenges that face our communities in attaining these outcomes. For example, a regional policy statement may not be the best mechanism to manage biosecurity issues, or be the most appropriate strategic planning document in which to speculate about the region's potential future capacity to support environmental refugees as a result of climate change effects in the wider Pacific region or beyond.

2.4 Integrating management of natural and physical resources

The management of activities so that the life supporting capacity of natural and physical resources is sustained can only be achieved if there is consideration of multiple resources and processes. A prime role of the Regional Policy Statement is to integrate management of the natural and physical resources of the region in response to issues of regional significance, including those issues of significance to iwi authorities.

But what does 'integrated management' mean, and why is this approach so important?

Resources co-exist and interact with one another and are impacted on by the activities people undertake. Kaitiakitanga, the environmental guardianship practiced by tangata whenua, has its foundation in the world view that all life and the elements within the natural world which support life – such as land and water – are connected. People are a part of the natural order, not superior to it. The land and everything within and upon it is interrelated. Land management, river management, and maintaining and developing transport or housing infrastructure all utilise resources and can have an effect upon natural processes.

Integration must occur at a range of scales and in a variety of contexts. The effects of activities can be localised or extensive, or they can be temporary or permanent. For example, an industry may subject a local community to objectionable odour, while runoff from rural land into streams can have adverse effects throughout the catchment or in the receiving environment

in the coastal marine area, some distance away. Similarly, visual effects may be significant for some distance, perhaps even in a neighbouring region. Water catchments are often an appropriate scale for assessing effects because many effects are generally contained within a catchment and assume relevance to a definable community of interest. In an urban context, specified distances or travel times to essential services – such as transit nodes, a central business district, fire station, school or hospital – often provide an equivalent to ‘catchment’ in considering the inter-relationships between where people live, work and play, and how they access various places and services in going about their life. Integrated management is relevant to managing the inter-relationships between infrastructure and its associated services and any natural resource associated with it. It is also relevant to productive enterprise in rural areas and the natural resources upon which these enterprises rely.

Taking a whole of catchment approach is promoted within this Regional Policy Statement. It means considering the full mix of purposes, uses or activities within a catchment, in terms of how these interact and contribute to outcomes within the catchment and for receiving environments beyond – such as in relation to indigenous ecosystems, soil productivity, water quality, erosion and stormwater control, or natural hazards. This approach suggests a need to work with multiple parties to establish shared objectives for a catchment and to ensure uses and activities are working towards the same goals or at least are not working against their attainment.

Just as it is essential to recognise and manage resources in an interconnected way, it is also vital to involve people in a meaningful way. Natural and physical resources are better managed when the social, economic and cultural factors that surround and drive their use or protection is taken into account. Decisions made about the management of resources are more effective and lasting if they reflect choices made by the community in terms of what it is best or most able to do. If integrated management is to be successful, it must recognise differing community and customary values, interests, skills, capacity and aspirations.

Many agencies share responsibility for providing direction to ensure resources are sustainably managed. To ensure that their objectives and policies are coherent and mutually supportive, it is essential that a common understanding of resource issues and sustainable management is shared. The processes adopted in dealing with day-to-day issues need to be closely aligned.

Wellington Regional Council and the region’s city and district councils oversee the management of natural and physical resources on behalf of the community. Although legislation such as the Resource Management Act directs councils to perform certain functions and to manage defined resources, there is considerable discretion in terms of how this is to be achieved. In practical terms, councils make judgements about the appropriateness of a particular activity in a particular place. All places are part of a wider context and community. It is for the community to provide direction to the council on many of the effects arising from new activities. In attributing value to the environment, councils need to engage with communities and provide appropriate opportunities for comment about the management of resources. The Resource Management Act also charges councils with the responsibility of taking into account the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi when managing natural and physical resources. This includes the right of Maori to retain rangatiratanga and manage resources according to kaitiakitanga.

This Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region has a key role in integrating the management of natural and physical resources. It identifies the resource management issues of regional significance, recognising the shared responsibility and the need for a common understanding of issues. It then sets out objectives, policies and methods that recognise the interaction and connection between different resources, the range of scales in which an issue can be addressed and the need to consider the social, economic cultural and environmental factors alongside one another. Ultimately, the Regional Policy Statement focuses on the matters that it can influence to make progress towards a sustainable region.

2.5 Application of the Regional Policy Statement across physical and jurisdictional boundaries

Natural and physical resources and processes do not stop at city, district or regional boundaries. Wellington Regional Council, the region's district and city councils, and neighbouring councils need processes to address issues that cross boundaries. These issues can be geographic or jurisdictional.

Wellington Regional Council and the region's district and city councils will promote consistent and integrated application of the objectives, policies and methods contained in this Regional Policy Statement. To this end, they will:

- Encourage agencies in the region to make provision, where appropriate, for the management of regionally significant issues in a manner consistent with objectives and policies stated in this document
- Review district and regional plans to give effect to the Regional Policy Statement
- Consult neighbouring regional councils over the preparation of plans prepared under the Resource Management Act
- Promote a collaborative approach to managing resource consent applications where the request for a consent involves decisions to be taken by a district or city council, or Wellington Regional Council
- Promote an integrated approach to managing resource consent applications where the application site or effects arising from the proposed activity cross regional or district boundaries and have implications for adjoining local authorities
- Investigate transferring and delegating powers, functions and duties to other authorities, including iwi authorities, where this will result in more effective or efficient resource management.

Wellington Regional Council and the region's district and city councils share some functions in accordance with the Resource Management Act. This is for the control of the use of land for the avoidance or mitigation of natural hazards; maintaining and enhancing indigenous biodiversity; and preventing or mitigating any adverse effects of the storage, use, disposal, or transportation of hazardous substances. The policies which describe how these responsibilities have been allocated are in chapter 4.3