

1. Introduction

1.1 Setting the scene

This chapter provides an outline of the Regional Policy Statement's role within the wider resource management framework.

This is the second such statement prepared for the Wellington region under the Resource Management Act, 1991. Since the adoption of the Act, a lot has been learnt about what is effective resource management and what is not. This experience is reflected in the significantly revised format and the more targeted and directive approach of this Regional Policy Statement, which is more likely to achieve the outcomes sought. These outcomes – described as anticipated environmental results in Chapter 4 – are the measures against which the success of this framework will be measured in the future.

This Regional Policy Statement is not simply a collection of discrete policies. The policies are intended to complement each other and provide a robust, integrated approach to promoting the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

Chapter 1 also outlines the documents which have informed the identification of regional issues and assisted in the development of objectives for the region. It also assists users to navigate between the sections and understand how these policies relate to each other.

1.2 The purpose and content of the Regional Policy Statement

The purpose of the Resource Management Act is to promote sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Natural and physical resources include land, water, air, soil, minerals and energy, all forms of plants and animals and all structures.

The Act requires every regional council to prepare a regional policy statement which is designed to achieve the purpose by providing an overview of the resource management issues for the region, and outlining the policies and methods required to achieve the integrated management of the region's natural and physical resources.

Sustainable management is defined in the Act 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 wellbeing 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.*

The Act defines the 'environment' as including:

- (a) *Ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities; and*
- (b) *All natural and physical resources; and*
- (c) *Amenity values; and*
- (d) *The social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions which affect the matters stated in paragraphs (a) to (c) of this definition or which are affected by these matters.*

Section 62 of the Act sets out the content of regional policy statements, as follows:

- (1) *A regional policy statement must state:*
 - (a) *the significant resource management issues for the region; and*
 - (b) *the resource management issues of significance to –*
 - (i) *iwi authorities in the region; and*
 - (ii) *the board of a foreshore and seabed reserve, to the extent that those issues relate to that reserve; and*
 - (c) *the objectives sought to be achieved by the statement; and*
 - (d) *the policies in regard to the issues and objectives, and an explanation of those policies; and*
 - (e) *the methods (excluding rules) used, or to be used, to implement the policies; and*
 - (f) *the principal reasons for adopting the objectives, policies and methods of implementation set out in the statement; and*
 - (g) *the environmental results anticipated from implementation of the policies and methods; and*
 - (h) *the processes for dealing with issues that cross local authority boundaries, and issues between territorial authorities or between regions; and*
 - (i) *the local authority responsible in the whole or any part of the region for specifying the objectives, policies and methods for the control of the use of land –*
 - (i) *to avoid or mitigate natural hazards or any group of hazards;*
 - (ii) *to prevent or mitigate the adverse effects of the storage and use, disposal, or transportation of hazardous substances; and*
 - (iii) *to maintain indigenous biological diversity; and*
 - (j) *the procedures used to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of policies or methods contained in the statement; and*
 - (k) *any other information required for the purpose of the regional council's functions, powers and duties under this Act.*

1.3 The resource management policy and planning framework

The Resource Management Act provides for a framework of policy statements, standards and plans, each of which must achieve the purpose of the Act – to promote sustainable management. Figure 1 illustrates where the Regional Policy Statement fits within this framework.

The Act also requires planning documents recognised by an iwi authority – such as iwi management plans – to be taken into account when preparing a regional policy statement or plans.

How issues are handled when they cross jurisdictional boundaries is addressed in section 2.5.

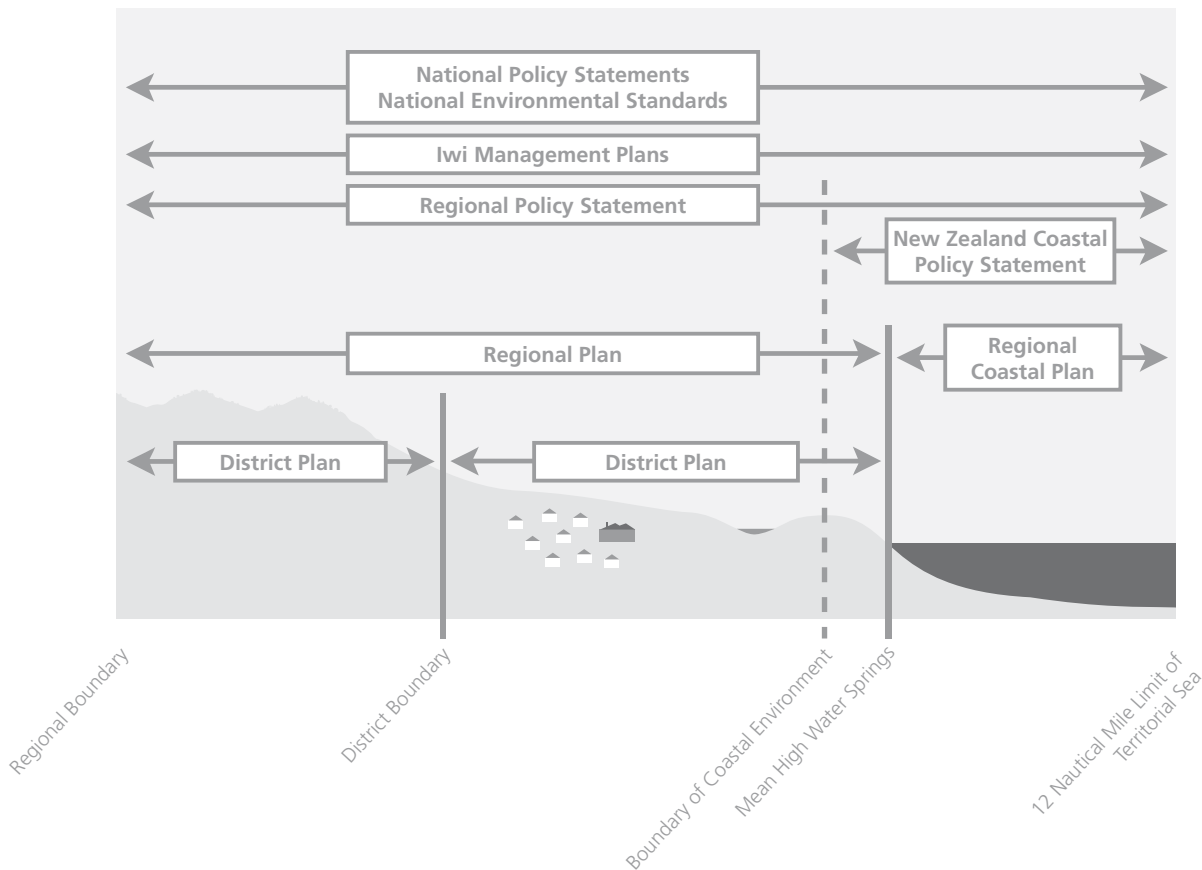


Figure 1: The resource management policy and planning framework

National policy statements and national environmental standards

National policy statements provide guidance on matters of national significance and are prepared by central government. Regional policy statements must give effect to national policy statements.

New Zealand currently has two approved national policy statements: the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, 1994 and the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission, 2008. The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement is currently under review, with a revised statement proposed and hearings before a Board of Inquiry now completed.

Two other National Policy Statements have also been proposed. One concerns renewable electricity generation, the other is about freshwater management. Both have been released for public consultation and Boards of Inquiry have been appointed to hear submissions.

Within this Regional Policy Statement, policies and methods relating to the coastal environment, natural hazards, regional form, iwi management, landscape and heritage give effect to policies in the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement. Similarly, policies and methods within this Regional Policy Statement that relate to infrastructure and energy are drawn from the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission.

Central government may also prepare national environmental standards. These provide central government with an opportunity to promote the use of consistent standards, requirements or recommended practices.

National Environmental Standards for Air Quality and about Sources of Human Drinking Water have been adopted. Other standards proposed or in development include standards on electricity transmission, measurement of water takes, ecological flows and water levels, and for telecommunications facilities.

Iwi management plans

An iwi management plan is a general term given to any planning document recognised by an iwi authority and lodged with a regional, district or city council. Where relevant, councils must take these into account when preparing a regional policy statement, regional plan or district plan.

Regional plans

Regional plans must give effect to a regional policy statement and any national policy statement. Regional plans can contain rules that:

- control the use of land
 - for soil conservation
 - for quality or quantity of water, or for ecosystems in water bodies and the coast
 - to avoid or mitigate natural hazards
 - to prevent or mitigate adverse effects from the storage, use, disposal or transportation of hazardous substances
- control the taking, use, damming, and diversion of water, and control the quantity, level and flow of water in any waterbody
- control the discharges of contaminants into or onto land, air, or water
- control the harvesting or enhancement of aquatic organisms to avoid, remedy or mitigate effects
- allocate a natural resource.

The Resource Management Act requires each region to prepare a regional coastal plan. Rules in a regional coastal plan promote integrated management of the coastal marine area.

All regional plans are prepared by regional councils.

District plans

All district and city councils must prepare district plans. Rules in district plans control the use of land, including subdivision. District plans must give effect to a regional policy statement and any national policy statements and national environmental standards.

Other strategies and companion statutes

There are a number of other national strategies promulgated by central government and its agencies that are not prepared under the Resource Management Act and have no statutory bearing on the content of a regional policy statement. However, they assist in the identification of natural and physical resource management issues, choices made at a national level, priorities for action if New Zealand is to reach goals for the future and often contain objectives. Some of these choices, actions and objectives are reliant upon implementation of resource management activities by local authorities.

Documents which informed this Regional Policy Statement include the New Zealand Energy Strategy to 2050 (2007), the New Zealand Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy (2007), the Regional Renewable Energy Assessment for the Wellington Region (2006), the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol (2006) and National Priorities for Action for Protecting Biodiversity on Private Land (2007).

The Wellington Regional Strategy – a sustainable economic growth strategy for the region – provided the basis for the policies and methods on regional form, design and function. Similarly, the Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy has contributed to policies and methods on energy, infrastructure and regional form, design and function. Long term council community plans, developed by Wellington Regional Council and the district and city councils, have also informed the development of policies and methods in this Regional Policy Statement.

There are also a number of statutes that can be thought of as companions of the Resource Management Act, in that their purpose can be interpreted as further supporting the sustainable management of natural and physical resources (e.g. the Conservation Act, the Reserves Act, and the Local Government Act), or have some other relationship with resource management functions (e.g. the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act, the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act and the Biosecurity Act).

In considering the appropriateness of objectives, and the efficiency and effectiveness of specific policies and methods for inclusion in the Regional Policy Statement – in other words, when undertaking an ‘assessment of alternatives’ and costs and benefits (as required by Section 32 of the Resource Management Act), these other statutory frameworks are relevant and they may provide alternative and better means for addressing some issues.