

## Regional Swimming Targets for the Wellington Region

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (as amended in August 2017) directs all regional councils (including unitary authorities) to set regional targets to improve the quality of fresh water so they are suitable for primary contact more often. The information contained in this document meets this requirement. "Primary contact" includes swimming, and means people's contact with fresh water that involves immersion in the water. Being suitable for primary contact more often includes improvements in water quality from one state to another (for example, orange to yellow, yellow to green, or green to blue).

All regional councils have worked together to use the best information available to identify:

- The improvements that will be made to water quality in rivers and lakes in the Wellington region under programmes that are planned or underway
- When the anticipated water quality improvements will be achieved
- The likely costs of all interventions, and where these costs will fall.

A report on these theoretical improvements and costs, presented region by region, is available [here](#). The assumptions and limitations of the modelling approaches taken are described in the report.

### Regional context and focus

The overall swimmable state of the Wellington region's rivers is currently 65% swimmable (that is, 65% of rivers that are fourth order or larger are in the blue, green or yellow category in terms of *E. coli*). Fourth order describes a river which has been formed by the joining of progressively larger rivers and streams from its origin. For lakes with perimeters greater than 1,500 metres, 75% are in the blue, green or yellow category in terms of cyanobacteria based on the status quo.

The regional priorities for the Wellington region are to continue to implement the proposed Natural Resources Plan, including excluding stock from waterbodies, protection of significant wetlands, ensuring stormwater is appropriately managed, working with partners to reduce sewage overflows and working with industry to implement good management practice for water use and waste storage/disposal and in rural land management.

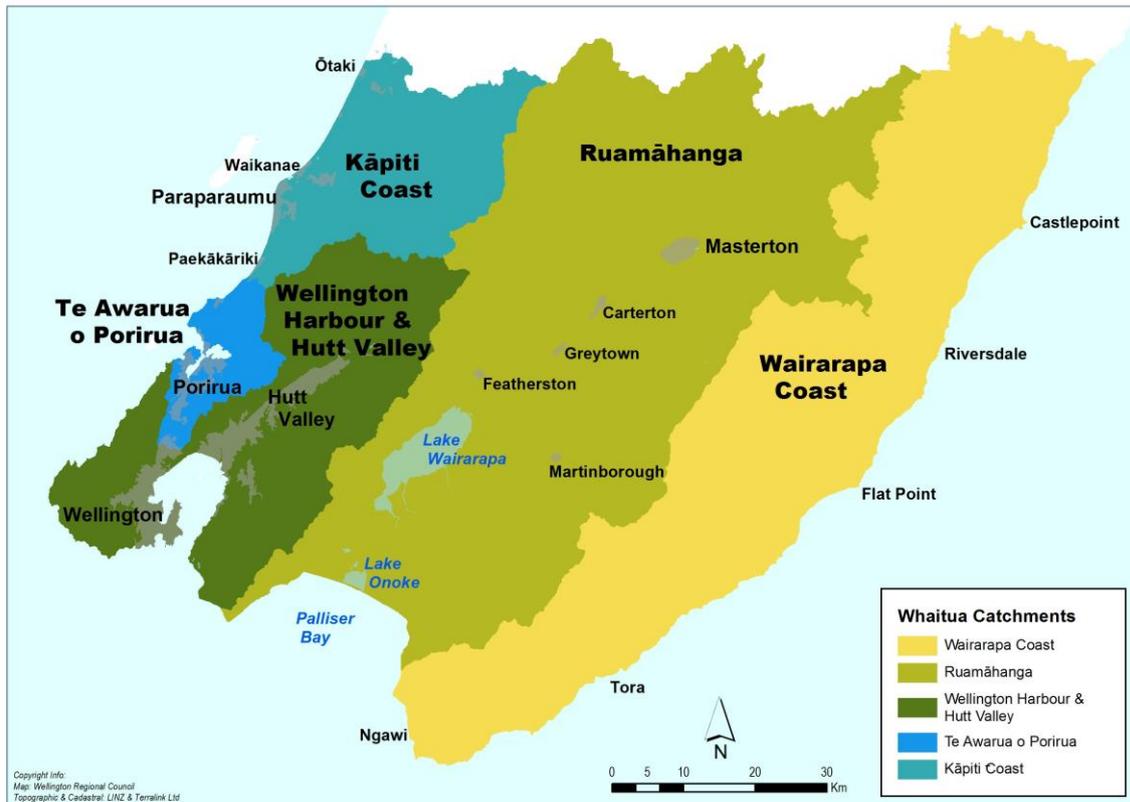
Over the next seven years, we will be introducing environmental limits for both water quantity and water quality. This will affect everyone in the region, urban and rural areas alike. These limits are being delivered via [Greater Wellington's Whaitua programme](#) and the swimming targets will be updated to reflect the limits proposed by the community. The Wellington Region has been split into five whaitua (catchments) with a committee in each making decisions on the future of land and water management in that whaitua, including to deliver recommendations on the implementation of the NPS-FM policy CA2 to set freshwater objectives for all freshwater management units.

The following whaitua committees have been established:

- [Ruamāhanga Whaitua](#) – established 2013, completed 2018. Whaitua Implementation Plan 2018 is [here](#)
- [Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua](#) – established December 2014 and due to be completed early 2019
- [Te Whanganui-a-Tara](#) – established December 2017, committee selected 2018 and first meeting early 2019.

The following two committees to be established are:

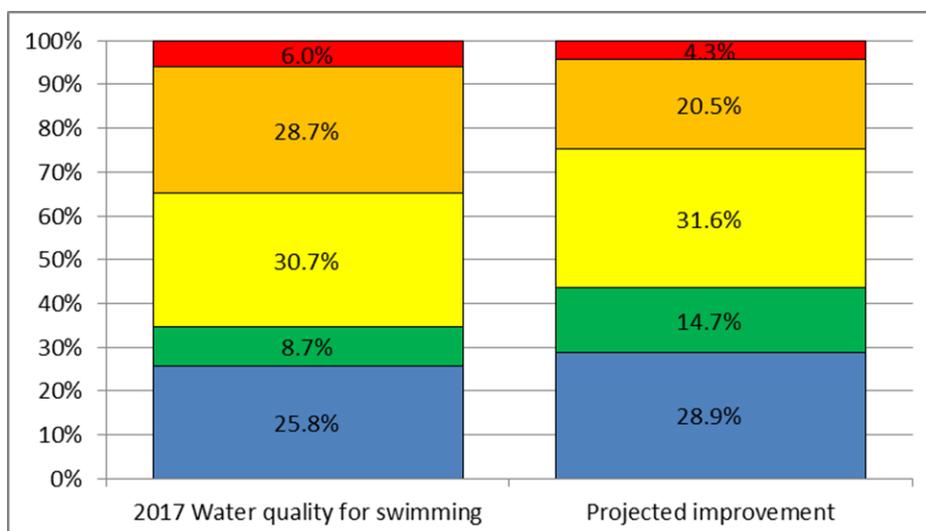
- Kāpiti Coast Whaitua
- Wairarapa Coast Whaitua.



An important aspect to note is that the actions that will result from the limits set by the whaitua programme are not currently included in the regional targets.

### Regional targets – 75% of rivers and lakes swimmable

The primary contact targets for the Wellington region, based on modelling of programmes underway (excluding the Whaitua programme), are for 75% of rivers that are fourth order or larger to be in the blue, green or yellow category in terms of *E. coli*, by 2030 (shown in the graph below).



The work did not model the projected improvement in water quality for swimming in lakes, but the current state is that 75% of lakes in the Wellington Region are in the blue green or yellow category, based on E coli and toxic algae counts.

## Regional process from here

The modelling undertaken shows that we can, with our planned and committed actions over the years, reach a target of 75% swimmable rivers for the region by 2030. This shows that the rules in the proposed Natural Resources Plan do improve rivers for swimming. We can anticipate our whaitua process will improve swimming quality further.

We are assessing how the programmes and projects which are underway, and the new initiatives planned for the future, can further improve the ability of the region to meet the swimming targets. There will be the opportunity to refine where we want the improvements to happen through the whaitua process.

- The proposed Natural Resources Plan has time bound rules for excluding stock from many rural waterways and the Council supports this work with an assisted funding programme and riparian planting in addition to the anticipated national stock exclusion regulations.
- Improvements to our urban infrastructure networks and especially for stormwater discharges will be required through consent processes. These improvements are an expensive undertaking and the costs have not been fully accounted for in the model. To improve urban waterways and the eventual coastal water quality the community will need to recognise and support the funding requirements.
- Municipal wastewater discharges to freshwater are to be improved in quality and increasingly discharged to land over time. Again the community will need to recognise and support the funding requirements.
- Toxic algae in our rivers are a health hazard which affects the public use of waterways. We will continue to research the dynamics of these algal growth and potential mitigation.

31 December 2018