

30 January 2018



Name  
Address

Dear Name

**Further information on potential water allocation changes and opportunities for discussion with the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee**

In mid-January, you will have received a letter advising the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee is reviewing the current water allocation policies in the Ruamāhanga catchment.

In this letter you will find further information about the potential changes to water allocation policies and details of how to share your feedback with the Committee at a series of meetings and drop in sessions.

*Developing water allocation policies*

In developing these water allocation policies the Committee has been considering how the Ruamāhanga catchment can be resilient and respond to future challenges. The Committee recognises the importance of the catchment's environmental, economic and cultural values. We have a responsibility to all be efficient users of our water resource.

We have considered how the whaitua community has told us they value flows in our rivers that protect ecosystem health. We also know that climate change will affect the catchment so that in the future we can expect more extreme weather, higher temperatures and lower flows in our rivers more often. The Committee has also had to consider the requirements in national regulations to ensure that taking water is sustainably managed and that over allocation of water resources is phased out.

The potential water allocation policies discussed in this letter are only one element of a suite of conservation measures affecting both rural and urban dwellers, and only part of an overall catchment approach that we'll be putting together into a Whaitua Implementation Programme report in mid-2018. The aim of the overall approach is to manage the catchment in a way that provides for both the ecology and economy of the Wairarapa.

*Potential water allocation policy: Changing minimum flows in two rivers*

Minimum flow levels are used to identify when taking water should change in order to look after the flow of the river. At minimum flow, water use is restricted or ceases.

The Committee is considering:

- Over a period of time, raising the minimum flow level on the Upper Ruamāhanga River from 2,400 litres per second to 3,250 litres per second.
- Over a period of time, raising the minimum flow level on the Waipoua River from 250 litres per second to 340 litres per second.

Raising the minimum flow levels would better protect the rivers' ecological health and other values, and provide consistent habitat protection in rivers across the whole Ruamāhanga catchment. Both the Upper Ruamāhanga and Waipoua River's minimum flow levels currently provide for a relatively low level of instream habitat protection.

The table below provides some information on the potential impact on water reliability if the potential changes to minimum flow levels were introduced without any other management options to reduce the impact on people taking water. The table shows the difference in the number of days these rivers would be below the minimum flow level for three different scenario years as examples. Please note this information is a general guide, and is not specific to individual consent holders.

		Days below minimum flow (Current conditions*)		
		Days per year in an average year	Days in a drought currently experienced once every 10 years	Days experienced over dry 2015/16 summer
<b>Waipoua River</b>	Current minimum flow of 250 l/sec	18	47	41
	Potential new minimum flow of 340 l/sec	32	72	72
<b>Upper Ruamāhanga River</b>	Current minimum flow of 2400 l/sec	8	47	40
	Potential new minimum flow of 3250 l/sec	23	93	69

\* This does not include the projected impacts on river flows from climate change.

*Potential water allocation policy: Changing restrictions on Category A groundwater takes*

Category A groundwater is groundwater directly connected to surface water.

The Committee is considering:

- Over a period of time, changing the restrictions on Category A groundwater takes from a 50% reduction at minimum flow to a full cease take at minimum flow.

Making this change would better protect river values and be more equitable by providing consistent restrictions at minimum flow for surface water users and Category A groundwater users.

*Potential water allocation policy: Phasing in changes to water allocation*

The Committee is considering phasing in these changes to the minimum flow levels and Category A groundwater takes over a period of time in order to allow for adaption.

We would like to hear your thoughts on the timeframes over which potential changes could be implemented in your catchment, and what other solutions could assist a transition. When making a final recommendation on timeframes we will take the following into consideration:

- Ecological health and cultural values
- Climate change impacts
- Economic impact (loss of revenue)
- Capital investment (infrastructure costs)
- Equity with and the needs of other water users.

*Meetings and drop in sessions*

The Committee will be holding a number of meetings and drop in sessions in mid-February so you can have detailed discussions with committee members and for them to hear your feedback. The dates, times and venues are below.

At the meetings we will provide further information on the potential changes followed by an opportunity for discussion. The drop in sessions will be more informal and another chance to talk with Committee members face to face.

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date and time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Meeting	Thursday 8 February – 7-9PM	Makoura College Hall, Masterton (Access from Makora Road)
Meeting	Monday 12 February – 7-9PM	Auditorium – Carterton Events Centre
Meeting	Wednesday 14 February – 7-9PM	Kiwi Hall – Featherston
Drop in session	Monday 12 February – 2-4PM (Drop in anytime between these times)	Foyer – Carterton Events Centre
Drop in session	Friday 16 February – 2-4PM (Drop in anytime between these times)	Sport Wellington Wairarapa Office, 101 Chapel Street, Masterton

If you can't make any of the meetings or drop in sessions you are welcome to email feedback to [ruamahangawhaitua@gw.govt.nz](mailto:ruamahangawhaitua@gw.govt.nz) or call 04 830 4237.

*Next steps following discussions*

We will use your feedback and feedback from the wider community to develop a final set of recommendations around water allocation. These will make up part of our Whaitua Implementation Programme (WIP) report to Greater Wellington Regional Council.

If you have any questions you can email us at [ruamahangawhaitua@gw.govt.nz](mailto:ruamahangawhaitua@gw.govt.nz) or see our website [www.gw.govt.nz/ruamahanga-whaitua](http://www.gw.govt.nz/ruamahanga-whaitua).

Yours sincerely



**Peter Gawith**  
Chair - Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee