

Council: Waikato Region



Regional Population: 387,700 as at 2006 census

Urban/Rural Mix: 70% urban 30% rural 1996 census

Status of RMA Policy/Plans

Waikato Regional Policy Statement – Operative as of October 2001

Waikato Regional Coastal Plan – Operative

Proposed Waikato Regional Plan – Beyond challenge

RMA Monitoring Approach

Monitoring strategy/framework(date, diagram, etc)

Environment Waikato (EW) has produced one comprehensive State of Environment (SOE) Report (1998). Since then a decision was made that instead of regular SOE reports, EW would keep regularly updated indicator information on the web page (www.ew.govt.nz). In addition, adhoc papers and technical reports are produced which provide more detailed analysis and commentary on SOE information. These reports are also available through the web page.

With respect to policy/plan monitoring, EW has traditionally focused on monitoring implementation of policy/plan documents. Recently however, the focus has changed to policy/plan effectiveness monitoring (described in following section).

Resource use in the region is monitored via consent monitoring and permitted activity monitoring. Consent monitoring is primarily carried out by consent holders as required by consent conditions. Such monitoring is generally audited annually. EW is currently developing procedures for electronic consent monitoring data storage and analysis. EW has recently embarked on a range of permitted activity monitoring methods, including helicopter monitoring of dairy effluent discharges. Resource use complaints are also tracked and reported on.

EW is currently considering how best to integrate RMA monitoring with monitoring of community outcomes in the LTCCP and monitoring of Annual Plan commitments.

Links between policy/plan, SoE, resource consent and complaints monitoring

As detailed in the above response.

RMA Policy/Plan Monitoring approach

Policy/plan monitoring capacity (dedicated staff, budget, etc)

EW has appointed a Programme Manager with responsibility for policy/plan effectiveness monitoring. Approximately 50% of this person's time is committed to this task. The annual budget for the Policy/plan Effectiveness Monitoring Project is \$121,000.

Approach to policy and plan implementation/suitability/effectiveness monitoring

EW has undertaken to produce a series of policy/plan effectiveness reports over a 5 year period. The reports are based on areas of the Regional Policy Statement (RPS). The reports focus on determining the extent that RPS objectives are being achieved. The objectives are seen as the key RMA matters that EW is attempting to address. Each report

involves:

- Clarifying the meaning and intent of the objective in question.
- Determining which methods in the RPS and regional plans would help to achieve the objective.
- Determining the extent to which these methods are being achieved (such as through staff interviews/questionnaires, reviews of district plan provisions and so on).
- Constructing a pressure/state/response model for the objectives. For example, for the Biodiversity/Natural Heritage report, pressures on these resources were investigated, the current state and relevant trends were established, and key EW responses to the pressures were identified.
- Conclusions are drawn about effectiveness of the policy/plan provisions and recommendations made about improvements to implementation and about changes that should be made to policies/plans.

Key Issues/Provisions Monitored

The following policy/plan effectiveness monitoring reports are programmed:

- Biodiversity/Natural Heritage
- Natural Hazards
- Air/Energy/Infrastructure
- Iwi Issues and Integrated Management
- Water
- Coast
- Land, Soil, Minerals
- Waste, Hazardous Substances, Contaminated Sites
- Geothermal

How key issues/provisions prioritized

These reports are not prioritized in any particular way as all areas of the RPS are to be reviewed. However, within each report, the intention is to identify what parts of the objectives are being achieved and which parts are not. For those parts that are not, a more detailed analysis of methods and their implementation is undertaken than for those areas that seem to be going well. The more detailed analysis will seek to understand what is going wrong (are the methods the right ones, are they being implemented successfully, are there external pressure that we are not managing, and so on) and will suggest ways to improve progress with respect to the objective.

Information management/capture systems

- Council has an Environmental Information Strategy and an Information Gathering Plan (INGAP).
- EW does a lot of environmental monitoring. This information is supported by data from external sources.
- Information is stored and managed using Metadata and Database Quality Systems.
- Information is summarised and reported via Environment Waikato' web page using Environmental Indicators.
- Increasingly EW is developing better ways of monitoring not just the 'state' of the resource, but also the pressures acting on the resource.
- EW is moving toward more permitted activity monitoring and more electronic storage of consent monitoring data, so that this can be viewed alongside SOE information to better understand pressures.

Costs and Benefits of Policy/Plan Monitoring

Benefits

- Such monitoring tells us a lot about how well we are doing as an organization – the degree to which we are achieving our objectives

- Able to identify what is being implemented and what is not.
- Ability to highlight implementation failings at an early stage rather than at the end of the process.
- Ability to undertake actions to resolve/address implementation failings earlier in the process.
- Provides recommendations for improved implementation and improved policy development

Costs/risks

- Staff time and resources
- Open ourselves to criticism by reporting on what is going well and what is not

Hot Tips for Policy/Plan Monitoring Success

- Need to establish buy in from staff. The process requires a lot of input from a variety of staff who are very busy with their own commitments.
- Early budgeting of staff time (scientists, consent staff, policy staff) helps them plan their time input.
- Keep councilors informed and on-side – they may need to hear conclusions about policy/plan effectiveness that they don't want to hear.
- Be honest and informative, provide constructive criticism if criticism is required.
- Put most effort where it will provide most benefit – a detailed analysis of the extent that each policy/plan method is being implemented may not be that useful – focus on the areas of most risk.
- Try to get external comment as well as internal staff comment on the extent that objectives are being met.

Key Lessons Learnt and Pitfalls to Avoid

- See hot tips

Future Needs

- Greater integration between monitoring under the LGA and monitoring under the RMA
- Improved indicators in some areas
- More emphasis on monitoring of environmental pressures

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