2013

Monitoring Steps

Review and Reporting

Review and Reporting

The purpose of monitoring, as required under section 35 RMA, is to provide information to feed into development and review of policies, strategies and actions. Effective communication of messages from monitoring results is an important part of this. The way in which monitoring is to be used needs to be considered early to ensure that monitoring is appropriate for its purpose. Reporting on the results of monitoring also needs to be designed to cater for specific audiences and purposes.

The feedback loop is crucial

There is no point in spending effort on monitoring unless you use the results. The purpose of monitoring is to provide information to feed into development and review of policies, strategies and actions (including the actions of resource users and people in the community). It is also important in relation to the monitoring of conditions on resource consents. If the effectiveness of conditions on resource consents, or rules in plans, are not monitored, then the credibility of these can be lost. Effective communication of messages from monitoring results (ie, reporting) is an important part of this.

- Think about how you are going to use the results of monitoring before you start collecting information (for example as part of a monitoring strategy). This will help ensure you get the kind of information you need for policy development and influencing people's actions.
- Identify which policies, strategies and programmes you need to link monitoring results to. For example monitoring might feed into:
  - development of priorities for work programmes
  - development of the Long Term Plans and other strategies
  - review of the regional policy statement, regional or district plan
  - section 32 reports
  - assessment of effects of resource consent applications
  - public awareness and education programmes.
- Consider the timeframes within which you need the feedback from monitoring (which might be prescribes by regulation (see s.360(hl)), and build these into your monitoring programme to make sure you get the information at the right time.

Using monitoring information for plan and policy review

- Review of policy or plan effectiveness should answer the following questions:
  - Is the plan or policy statement addressing the right issues? Have the significant issues changed?
  - Do the environmental results expected still reflect what the community wants? Check this against community outcomes described in the Long Term Plan.
  - Are the plan's or policy statement's objectives still appropriate?

- o Are the policies, rules and other methods effective in achieving the objectives and environmental results expected?
- o Are the policies, rules and other methods efficient means of such achievement? (This may include consideration of both cost-effectiveness and time-effectiveness.)
- State of the environment monitoring and consent, compliance and complaints monitoring will provide valuable information about how effective the plan or policy statement is. For example, state of the environment monitoring or complaints monitoring might identify a significant issue that the plan does not currently address; information from consents monitoring might indicate that the plan's rules are not well targeted towards environmental effects.
- Consider what other information you can use to supplement the results of monitoring. Other inputs to plan/policy review could include consultation, specific research, case law and issues raised by consent planners, field staff or other practitioners.
- It may be more effective to review parts of a plan or policy statement rather than the entire document. Timing of policy review will depend on a number of factors. Questions to consider include:
    - o Is there enough information available (especially baseline data)?
    - o Are cause and effect apparent?
    - o Would it be better to wait for more results?
    - o Would it be better to investigate in more depth?
    - o Can we deal with the consequences? eg, are there enough resources and political commitment to initiate a plan change process?

Reporting

- Think about what reporting will be useful, and what is required by statute. There is no statutory requirement for detailed reports on everything you monitor, although the nature of some monitoring may be specifically prescribed by regulation (s.360). Reporting on policy and plan efficiency and effectiveness is required at least every five years in accordance with Section 35(2A), and reporting on regional coastal issues may be required by the Minister of Conservation (s.28A).
- Reporting should aim to stimulate action on the part of council decision-makers, other organisations or individuals.
- Try to incorporate reporting timeframes into formal decision-making and planning cycles to provide feedback for review at the appropriate times.
- Use targeted reports to highlight a particular issue that needs action.
- Think about the priorities for reporting and don't develop a reporting programme you don't have the resources to deliver on.
- Look for opportunities to integrate with reporting requirements under the Local Government Act to save costs, avoid duplication of effort and get the message out to a wider audience.
- Target your audience and use a reporting style to suit. Focus on what will be most useful and interesting to the specific audience and ensure that the format suits

their needs eg, public reports need to use non-technical language, whereas those targeted to scientists need to use language that provides a high degree of precision.

- Use relevant real life examples to bring issues alive.
- Communicate visually (and attractively) where possible - people like colour, maps, pictures, graphs and diagrams.
- Think about different ways of presenting information. Possible formats include:
  - three- to five-yearly comprehensive written report
  - summary reports
  - annual update report
  - report cards
  - issues-based reports
  - resource user reports
  - web reporting (to provide greater use of links)
  - pamphlets, flyers and newsletters.
- It can add weight to the information (and build support for the benefits of monitoring) to brand reports on different issues, or directed at different audiences, as part of the same overall monitoring package.

RMA provisions

Section 28A of the Resource Management Act enables the Minister of Conservation to require regional councils to provide monitoring information on their coastal permits, regional coastal plans or the exercise of protected customary right. Councils must provide this information within 20 working days, unless a longer timeframe has been set by the Minister of Conservation.

Section 35 of the RMA specifies the duty to gather information, monitor and keep records and to take appropriate action when monitoring indicates this is necessary.

Section 35(3) requires every local authority to keep reasonably available at its principal office, information which is relevant to the administration of policy statements and plans, the monitoring of resource consents, and current issues relating to the environment in the area, to enable the public:

- to be better informed of their duties and of the functions, powers and duties of the local authority
- to participate effectively under the Act.

Under section 35(2A) local authorities are required to prepare a report at least every five years on the results of their monitoring of the efficiency and effectiveness of their policies and plans (as required under section 35(2)(b)).

Section 62(1)(j) requires that a regional policy statement must state… the procedures used to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the policies or methods contained in the statement.

Sections 67(2)(e) and 75(2)(e) provide that a regional plan and a district plan respectively may state... the procedures for monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the policies and methods in the plan.

Section 360(hk), (hl) and **(hm)** allow regulations to be made that specify requirements for indicators, standards, methods, thresholds and the timing of reporting.