

Vision: To unlock one of the most important opportunities in a generation to protect and grow Hawke's Bay's economic resilience and opportunity by progressing a regional vision for sustainable and equitable solutions to water security while giving effect to the hierarchy of obligations in the NPS-FM 2020.

Hawke's Bay's prosperity is heavily reliant on our region's access to, and relationship with, freshwater. Maintaining and enhancing the health and wellbeing of our environment requires healthy rivers and abundant freshwater ecosystems; our human health and social wellbeing depends on access to reliable supply of clean water in both urban and rural communities; rivers and other freshwater bodies have immense cultural significance to tangata whenua, as well as an importance to the wider Hawke's Bay communities; our economic base and regional growth potential – in particular for our primary industries – is predicated on access to reliable, continuous and secure supply of available water.

It is vitally important that our freshwater resource is managed sustainably for the long term. The Regional Council is leading work with the community, Mana Whenua and stakeholders to develop a region-wide freshwater management plan. This vision statement complements that work and focusses on how we progress regional discussions and engage with central government on funding for water storage options to build economic resilience, promote new growth opportunities and implement the hierarchy of obligations in the NPS-FM 2020.

Regional agreement on how we conduct discussions and engagement with central government should allow for recognition that water security issues vary across the region's districts and catchments. Previous allocation decisions mean that parts of the region have different starting points in terms of access, due to factors that may include the environmental considerations informing those allocation decisions. There has also previously been over-allocation of resources in parts of the region, leading to a need to reduce allocations now. This proposed path forward is not for litigation of previous decisions, but rather to feed into a forward-looking approach the acknowledgement that each district may have extant regulatory regimes that don't align with their own unique wants and needs.

Our current freshwater resources are stretched. The *2023 Hawke's Bay Regional Water Assessment* identified that: *"by 2040, the region could experience a shortfall between demand and supply of freshwater of nearly 25 million cubic metres, increasing to 33 million cubic metres by 2060...under medium scenario projections that assume significant improvements in water use efficiency and conservation."*¹

The Regional Council's TANK Plan Change 9 includes proposed reduction of allocations from the Heretaunga Plains groundwater catchment and surface takes from the Ngaruroro River. To ensure sustainability of catchments, new applications for water in many areas will be prohibited, and new standards will prevent transfer of allocated but unused water. The impacts of these proposals can be addressed through improving efficiency and productivity of water use² and reducing certain economic and social activity, ***in tandem with the introduction of a regional management approach to water to ensure new means of supply and greater security of water supply.***

¹ In 2019/20, a total of 138 million cubic metres of freshwater was sourced from rivers, streams, and aquifers for domestic, industrial and irrigation needs, according to the 2023 Assessment.

² including through more efficient retention of water in the landscape improving moisture retention, greater understanding of catchment hydrology and water demand patterns, to provide timely and more robust information on water availability and demand to communities.

This does not only cover economic and social use; water quantity has an effect on water quality and environmental outcomes. Ecosystem resilience relies on security and quantity of flow, as does the migration of taonga species. The reduction of other (non-flow) pressures on our water systems has a role to play in halting further degradation of our water bodies, including waste discharge; our regional agreement to consider a joint approach to *Local Water Done Well* acknowledges this, while identifying that different solutions are required to different issues, in different parts of the region.

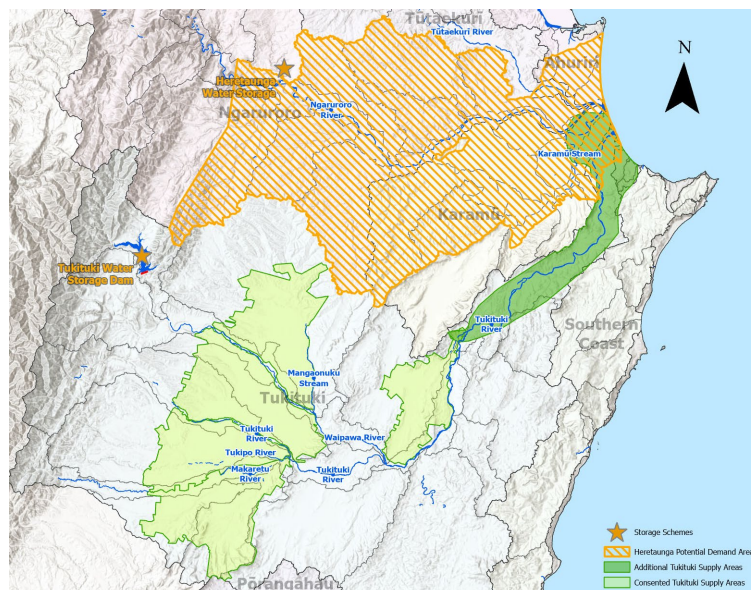
Drought and flood events are becoming more severe and common in our region each year. This is affecting the sustainability of catchments, certainty of supply, and investment decisions. Greater sustainability and reliability of flows and access is required to enhance our environment, protect and grow the health of our communities and grow our economic base, particularly as this resource becomes scarcer as a consequence of climate change. In turn, our region's policy responses to climate change should consider greater water security as a desired outcome.

Our solutions must not only focus on secure supply of water, but also ensure that our environment, communities and businesses are as secure as possible from the devastating effects of water during severe weather events and floods.

This is an important time for securing support for the solutions our region needs, to ultimately strengthen the resilience of our communities and economy. We have been reminded of this need all too often in recent years by the Havelock North water supply crisis, a number of droughts which have affected our primary industries, and the devastating impact of Cyclone Gabrielle.

Regional approach to securing funding and Government support

Progressing a regional approach to discussion and engagement on water security with central government will increase the chance of sourcing funding from central government for water security projects – particularly from the *Regional Infrastructure Fund*. It will also help local decision-makers, including mana whenua and local authorities, consider requests for land use change and determine where ratepayer revenues should be targeted for the greatest regional effects – across environmental, social and economic considerations. Businesses and private investors will know they can provide capital, with confidence that schemes will progress and contribute to greater growth and prosperity. This vision statement is about building resilience and sustainability into how we approach the issue.



Many of the potential solutions for greater Hawke's Bay water security have been discussed and researched for years. To support looking ahead to the opportunities for the region, key options that have previously been identified in each of the main catchment areas are outlined below. The examples show how needs across districts and catchments vary in terms of scale; these differences present an opportunity, in that development of individual options won't require 'one-size-fits all' approaches, decision-making or necessarily compete for production resources:

- Central Hawke's Bay: The headwaters of the Tukituki catchment are in Central Hawke's Bay. The issues of water security and the health of the Tukituki River, its tributaries and its people have become more urgent given the effects of recent droughts and the impact of climate change in the area. Access to water is currently significantly restricted to try and improve catchment sustainability. The issue of water security is also significant for hapu along the length of the river and for residents in the wider Central Hawke's Bay community. But, as illustrated on the map above, the benefits of this solution are not limited to one part of our region. The downstream benefits of this solution may go across district boundaries, potentially benefiting food production and industrial activities in the lower parts of the Tukituki River, thereby contributing to the prosperity of the region as a whole.
- Heretaunga Plains: Work continues on options for significant water storage for the Heretaunga Plains, with work funded by central Government and HBRC in the pre-feasibility stage. The Hawke's Bay Regional Water Assessment 2023 indicates that "the primary focus of any viable and community-supported project would be to supplement environmental flows through the dry periods as a partial offset for cumulative impacts of irrigation." This indicates that the main focus would be to protect existing production in this area. However, greater certainty of supply in dry periods will provide greater confidence for growers to invest in efficiency enhancing technology, allowing for increased production.
- Wairoa: The Hawke's Bay Regional Water Assessment 2023 indicates supply exceeds demand in the Wairoa area, and suggests policies that would promote and support "taking industry to water instead of moving water to industry." Localised storage schemes would likely be required to harness this supply of water; the 2019 report '[Whakarauora - The regeneration of Long Water](#)', funded by the *Provincial Growth Fund*, highlighted that proposals to convert high-value Wairoa flat land to intensified horticulture were likely to require localised water storage (as the areas identified were more than 90 kms apart).

The regional agreement sought in this vision statement includes that the way we go about suggesting, progressing and agreeing to solutions must contribute to the viability and security of the solutions themselves. This includes giving effect to the hierarchy of obligations in the NPS-FM 2020, and also represents the ability for solutions to survive changing political, social and environmental cycles over time, providing certainty and confidence to people needing to make long-term investments and decisions.

Aiming for resilience and sustainability also recognises that enhanced water security is not exclusively about 'growth' – we must be able to maintain our base of environmental, community and economic health and not let these go backwards. Ensuring equitable access to reliable flows of water across environmental, community and economic considerations will support this as we uphold the mauri of our region's waterways.

In progressing a regional approach to the resilience and economic opportunities from greater water security, we must acknowledge that:

- There will be different individual visions for what is required to achieve necessary water security and why the region must progress certain solutions.
- reaching the greatest possible regional unity over which projects to progress, when and how, may require timing and investment trade-offs.
- while there might be an ability to progress some solutions due to particular support at a point in time in the short-term, doing so without regional unity regarding water security could put the viability of such solutions (or future solutions) at risk when political, social or environmental cycles change.
- we shouldn't look at different issues as 'in competition' with each other. Rather, acknowledge that each issue may have features that will support the sustainability of regional solutions.

Agreement to this vision does not require specific agreement on what a greater and more secure supply of water is used for economically. That will be determined through separate legislation and planning rules, and the operation of markets. But we agree that to protect and enhance the health of our environment, improve community health and preserve and grow our region's economy, while upholding hierarchy of obligations in the NPS-FM 2020, we must take a regional approach to proposing, engaging on, agreeing to, and managing sustainable and equitable solutions to water security issues across Hawke's Bay.

