



WATER QUALITY - Summary of Community Feedback

Issues

- Some people and groups questioned the extent to which the Issues and Option papers indicated land use change and intensification was the main driver of water quality decline.

Some argued more detailed scientific analysis needed to be done to link land use with water quality.

However, most people and groups argued intensification and land use change were clearly having a negative impact on water quality in the Southland region. Land use change and intensification was the most common issue.

- Cumulative effects on water quality from land use were highlighted as a major issue by a large number of individuals, groups and organisations.

Some of the land use practices thought to add to negative cumulative water quality issues included stock access to water, effluent disposal to land or water and increasingly intensive farming. The effect of non point source discharges was thought to contribute heavily.

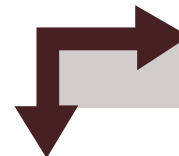
- There was a general acceptance from most submitters that there is an issue with water quality in our region, but a number of submitters wanted more quantification done through benchmarking and comparison against other regions.

- A number of submitters brought up the need to deal with different water body classifications with different levels of regulations as some are viewed as being more important than others.

A few submitters brought up the need for our water bodies to meet the drinking water and bathing standards.

Overall there seemed to be a feeling underground aquifers needed to be given highest priority as Southland gets most of its drinking water from this source.

- There were also a number of submissions highlighting water quality was being negatively affected by an increase in number and age of private wastewater systems on farms and on new lifestyle properties being developed.
- Riparian planting of all streams and rivers was brought up as being a very important step in protecting water quality. But there were some submitters that thought land owners should have the right to manage their own land as they see fit.
- Inconsistencies between regional and district councils when dealing with land use was raised by a number of submitters.



Please see the reverse side of this card for Water Quality options and Councils' commentaries.



WATER QUALITY - Summary of Community Feedback

Options

- Most submitters strongly supported adopting whole catchment management schemes. Some suggested activities include mass nutrient balances at different scales, identification of hotspots, tracking of water quality trends over time and the integration of water quality and other resource issues.
- A large number thought that water quality issues should be joined with water quantity issues in a freshwater section. It was also commented that Environment Southland should become more explicit in detailing what is happening to our water resources. This could enable transitional or medium-term goals linked together with specific water quality targets and dedicated research into the cause and effect of land use practices. Further scientific evidence was seen as a key link to substantiate councils' rules.
- The RPS should promote the use of standards (or guidelines) relative to water body classifications. These should be applied to best reflect the use of the water-body.
- Support for a risk based approach with a focus on hot-spots with low water quality will ensure areas of immediate concern are given priority.
- Strong support for fencing and riparian planting of streams and rivers. Both support and opposition to rates relief or other monetary funding. Fencing of all water ways was supported as potentially achievable. Some support for rates relief for fenced off or protected areas.
- Support for industry driven initiatives as they are perceived to be more successful. Support for Councils to promote and encourage where appropriate industry initiatives.
- There was wide ranging support for any non-regulatory means of improving water quality.
- Support for non-regulatory measures, promoted by Regional Policy, that focus on promoting farm and nutrient management planning tools and industry-based codes of practice.
- Councils are encouraged to take an active role in facilitating the integrated development of rural water infrastructure.

Councils' Commentary

Councils should note that scientific investigation and analysis is currently being undertaken on the cumulative effects of land use intensification as part of the current Regional Discharge Plan project.

Also of relevance is the Southland's State of the Environment Report for Water, which should provide a clear indication on areas of concern.

It is recommended that whole catchment planning tools are promoted and encouraged through the Regional Policy Statement, with this flowing through to existing rules in the regional and district plans which in turn feed into catchment specific goals and standards.

It should be noted this is occurring in a number of catchments through Environment Southland's living streams programmes at a non-regulatory level. The scientific investigation and analysis referred to above will assist with whole catchment planning.

It is recommended that combinations of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches are developed to address water quality issues.

It is proposed to support industry initiatives where possible and appropriate. Education and information sharing initiatives based on the potential effects of different land uses on water quality should be developed.

It is recommended where possible that non-regulatory approaches aimed at improving water quality are developed.

This would link in with the public view that there is more scope to come up with innovative solutions through these approaches. An example of this is the partnership approach in the Balfour area that has been set up to address elevated nitrate levels in ground water.

It is recommended the councils strengthen the use of economic incentives such as rates relief to encourage fencing of waterways and planting of riparian margins.

