

Report to Collaborative Stakeholder Group – for information

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Date: 14 April 2015
To: Collaborative Stakeholder Group
From: Chairman Bill Wasley
Subject: Focus questions for limit and target scenario development
Section: For information

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assist the Collaborative Stakeholder Group (CSG) to prepare for a session about the Vision and Strategy and limit and target scenario development.

Recommendation:

That the report “Focus questions for limit and target scenario development” (Doc 3357173 dated 14 April 2015) be received for information.

Background

The Collaborative Stakeholder Group (CSG) is seeking assistance to define future scenarios for the Waikato and Waipa River Catchments from the Technical Leaders Group (TLG). The CSG has also emphasised the importance of input from Te Rōpū Hautū and river iwi governance representatives because of their special understanding of the Vision and Strategy.

Scenarios

Scenarios are a way of simplifying all the possible combinations of behaviour changes that are needed to achieve different water body targets.

In order for a collaborative group to make sense of the job ahead for them, and for them to acknowledge everyone’s aspirations, they must be able to describe in plain language, a range of alternative futures. This is an essential step in guiding the biophysical and economic modelling for each scenario that results in possible numerical limits and targets in water bodies, as well as the associated overall cost.

Once an overall cost of each scenario is gained, further detail can be investigated: who can change, when by, and how should costs be distributed, to achieve the different futures.

Discussion

The more specific CSG can be about how the Vision and Strategy should be interpreted with regards to biophysical aspects (for instance, where water clarity should be restored and by how much), the more helpful it is in defining a range of future scenarios to be investigated.

Attachment 1 is a useful summary of the CSG workshops on the biophysical attributes, and will help CSG members prepare for the session on future scenarios.

As a group, Te Rōpū Hautū is at an early stage of articulating how the Vision and Strategy could be interpreted in a Resource Management Act limit-setting process. At a Te Rōpū Hautū (TRH) workshop on the Vision and Strategy held on 31 March, participants explored what the Vision and Strategy meant to them and their organisations. A subsequent TRH meeting on 15 April will further this discussion and in doing so will help the technical and collaborative groups define future scenarios. The 23-24th April CSG meeting includes workshop sessions with river iwi and Waikato River Authority staff on the Vision and Strategy and defining scenarios.

At the 31 March Te Rōpū Hautū (TRH) workshop on the Vision and Strategy, the following key points were noted by CSG facilitator Helen Ritchie. In addition, to generate some ongoing discussion, she has also provided a summary of some of the key questions for CSG.

Focus questions to develop scenarios

Safe to swim and take food from

E. coli

Do we want to see the water swimmable at all flows, in all seasons?

CSG thinking on this point is that people might still collect food in winter so apply to all seasons. However, there is probably a high flow when people will not use the river to swim or take food from (i.e. 95thile).

What standard do we use to define 'safe to swim and take food'?

CSG are not using the NOF 'wadeable' national bottom line but are using the more stringent minimum acceptable state for immersion as a bottom line. Waiting to hear from TLG about 'edible' bottom line – expect this could be different for fish (gut and cook) and watercress (usually cooked) than for shellfish (eat whole).

Does the aspiration for swimming apply to tributaries as well as the main stem?

V&S applies this 'over its entire length'. CSG are applying the standards to tributaries as well as main stem, because they are used for swimming and taking food, and because they feed into main stem.

Clarity

Should clarity measures be applied at all flows?

Clarity is not a food safety issue so applies to when people want to get in the water. WRC currently exclude top 10% of flows.

What level of clarity constitutes 'safe to swim in'?

1.6m is the WRC acceptable standard for recreation. The WRISS looked at what it would take to get to 1m in the lower Waikato and found that this would require substantial land use change. The TLG advise that reaching this sort of level of clarity would also be stringent enough to safeguard ecosystem values.

Absorb no further degradation; restore and protect

What do we mean by the statement that the river should not be expected to absorb further degradation?

Does this mean:

- Average state maintained across an FMU/ e.g. over time, the percentage of sites in an FMU in each band (A, B, C, D) does not decline?
- No water quality site anywhere drops into a lower band?
- No water quality site declines anywhere even within a band?
- What about the 'lag' decline still to come – do we mean no further decline other than the in-built decline?

Attachment 1 (document 3357816) is entitled “CSG Facilitators Summary of CSG workshopping on attributes in workshops 8 to 10” and are notes below put together by CSG Facilitator Helen Ritchie and then checked at Technical Leaders Group meeting on 9 April 2015.

Conclusion

CSG will define future scenarios for the Waikato and Waipa River Catchments that will be used in the ongoing technical and policy work.

It is useful for scenarios to cover a wide range so that implications of the different environmental and economic choices are made clear to decision makers. One end of the spectrum could be a water body target which is achieved over decades, and the remainder of the scenarios might be 'stages along the way'.

The more detailed that CSG can be in its guidance, the easier it will be for the technical people to frame up the scenarios for modelling.

Next steps for this to occur is on day 2 of the next CSG workshop which is a combined session (CSG/river iwi/WRA) at CSG11, 24th April, at Te Kauwhata.

- River iwi/ WRA to present to CSG on their interpretations of the Vision and Strategy, and
- CSG to present back to river iwi/ WRA on their current thinking on bands to aim for
- Start the discussion about a range of future scenarios with all present in the room.

Justine Young

Policy work stream Healthy Rivers
Wai Ora
Strategy and Science

Bill Wasley

Independent Chairman
Collaborative Stakeholder Group

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