

Values, Monitoring and Outcomes Research Programme: An overview

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Freshwater governance and management in New Zealand is highly dynamic. With the Land and Water Forum recommendations, central government freshwater reforms, and growing resource scarcity there is increasing impetus to change how management decisions on our freshwater resources are made. Our research programme supports this on-going programme of reform, retaining flexibility to meet emerging future needs related to our programme's research.

Some of our programmes highlights to date include:

- Recognition that value and values have multiple meanings and that identified values are often constructed in context, i.e. they may not be pre-existing or stable and thus amenable to elicitation and measurement through traditional consultation or survey techniques. This reinforces the move towards collaborative processes for freshwater planning, providing specific fora in which all parties can build a collective understanding of desired outcomes and how to achieve them.
- Our partnership with Hawke's Bay Regional Council to support the collaborative process on managing freshwater resources in the Greater Heretaunga and Ahuriri Estuary in Hawke's Bay (TANK process).
- Our partnerships with Māori organisations to develop principles and frameworks that accommodate the values, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori of different iwi/hapū; and encompassing these into environmental plans and decisions.
- Our involvement in the MfE National Environmental Monitoring and Reporting (NEMaR) project aimed to improve the consistency and dependability of regional water monitoring on which to base national reporting.
- Development of frameworks to help decision-makers identify policy instruments or interventions that are most likely to influence the behaviour of water users (Policy Choice Framework) and track the progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the policies implemented to achieve agreed freshwater outcomes (Performance Reporting Framework).
- Development of a new statistical method to quantify the 'strength-of-evidence' in monitoring data and inclusion of these methods into the Time Trends and Equivalence freeware used by many regional councils.
- Supporting the continued development and use of the RiVAS methodology by regional councils to rank the significance of different water bodies for a range of different values.
- Development of a Policy Brief series to translate our research into recommendations for stakeholders. Current Policy Briefs cover the following topics: principles to underpin decision-making; using mātauranga Māori to inform freshwater management;

understanding conflict over values in a regional plan; and several briefs covering different aspects of collaborative processes.

- Through our Regional Council Forum working with a group of 6 regional councils (Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Hawke's Bay and Horizons Regional Councils, Tasman District Council and Environment Canterbury) to explore and query the historic and emerging approaches for managing freshwater and the challenges being posed by the freshwater reforms.

For the next phase of the programme, we are re-focusing our research on two main themes. The first, *Values and Outcomes*, looks to:

- evaluate aspects of the existing and emerging collaborative processes to identify which approach(es) may work more (or less) successfully in different contexts
- compare collaborative processes with traditional Resource Management Act (RMA) Schedule 1 processes
- continue to support and draw learnings from the TANK process in Hawke's Bay
- continue our work with iwi/hapū to translate their values and aspirations into targets and limits for inclusion in regional council freshwater management plans, using cultural monitoring to track the effectiveness of these plans
- determine how the RiVAS methodology can further support regional council decisions, particularly for those water bodies where collaborative processes will not be used to decide how to manage that resource
- test and further refine the Policy Choice Framework.

The focus of the second theme, *Monitoring and Reporting*, is to:

- identify key socio-economic indicators to track policy performance
- develop new statistical approaches for making use of 'null values' (or values below the detectable level) in monitoring data
- identify how community monitoring can support collaborative decision-making, and investigate the relationships between community, cultural and scientific monitoring
- test and refine the Performance Reporting Framework to enhance the ability of regional councils to track policy progress and effectiveness.

Our Regional Council Forum continues as an integral pathway for involving regional councils in the programme, with the Policy Brief series playing an important role for translating and disseminating our research findings for key stakeholders.