

# Catchment limit setting process

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014 (NPS-FM) directs the way regional councils manage freshwater. Setting limits is a key requirement of the NPS-FM. Here is an overview of a typical catchment limit setting process.

## Step 1: Establish a baseline

Environment Southland has defined five Freshwater Management Units where limits will be set for the region and we are currently assessing the current state of each of these units. They are roughly based on our major river catchments, so to make it easy we're going to call them catchment areas.

## Step 2: Set freshwater objectives

Next we have to set objectives for all five of our catchment areas. This is where you as community members and water users play a really important role.

We need to:

- identify all the values that community (including tāngata whenua) hold for their waterways;
- identify the measurable characteristics (ie nutrients) of water that need to be managed to provide for those values, then;
- formulate freshwater objectives (based on those measurable characteristics) which describe the outcome Southlanders want to achieve for their waterways.

For example, if the community placed a high value on swimming at their local river, we would then need to know what level of contaminants would be acceptable to maintain water quality suitable for swimming. Once we know that, we can set the freshwater objective.

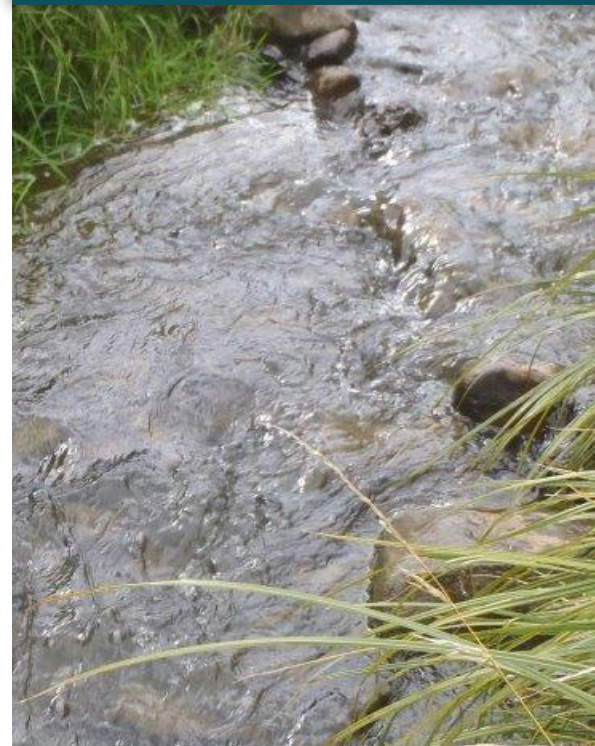
## More information

Further information on the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management is available at [www.mfe.govt.nz](http://www.mfe.govt.nz)

## E-newsletter

Sign up to the *Water and Land 2020 & Beyond* e-newsletter to stay up to date with progress on the project and your chance to be involved.

Go to [www.es.govt.nz](http://www.es.govt.nz)



---

## Step 3: Develop limits

Environment Southland is required to set limits for both water quality and water quantity to achieve the freshwater objectives it has set for each of our catchment areas.

A limit is the maximum amount of resource that is available for use if a freshwater objective is to be met.

- For water quality, a limit defines the amount of a contaminant that can enter the water.
- For water quantity, a limit defines the amount of water that can be taken, and the amount that must be left behind. Water quantity limits in rivers are called 'environmental flows' and in lakes 'environmental levels'.

Environment Southland will need to consider a range of methods for meeting the freshwater objectives and limits it has set and ensuring they continue to be met in the future.

## Step 4: Create scenarios

It is likely that Environment Southland will need a management regime that includes a combination of different limits and methods. To test these we will need to create different scenarios to get a clear understanding of the management options and their costs, benefits and consequences.

Other factors to consider include:

- the implications for people, communities and resource users that could occur as a result of the freshwater objectives and limits
- the effects of climate change and how this might affect water quality and quantity over time
- potential changes in land use in the area that feeds into the catchment area (eg. changes in the urban population)
- the likely future state of water quality as a result of the activities we undertake with our resources today.

The Southland Economic Project and Southland Science Programme form key parts of assessing different scenarios, as they will help us to get a clear understanding of their costs, benefits and consequences, both from a scientific and an economic perspective.

## Step 5: Choose preferred options

Environment Southland will assess the impacts of various management options before deciding on the best set of limits and methods that will ensure we meet our responsibilities set out in the NPS-FM.

This will require:

- analysis of economic and environmental impacts
- analysis of the trade-offs that might need to be made in choosing between different management options
- a documented evaluation of the management option selected.

The decision on which management options are most appropriate for a catchment area should ideally be made with input from water users and the community. Environment Southland will ensure the trade-offs it has identified are ones that the community are willing to make. If not, we may need to consider other management options or review the freshwater objectives.

## Community engagement – what we mean

For the Catchment Limit Setting Process Environment Southland will be talking to the community. There will be opportunities for you to be included at various stages in this process. Engaging with the community will help us identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered, prior to making any decisions.

## Catchment order and approximate timetable

Fiordland and Stewart Island Catchment - Start Date: 2016	Waiau Catchment - Start Date: 2018
Mataura Catchment - Start Date: 2017	Oreti Catchment - Start Date: 2018
Aparima Catchment - Start Date: 2017	