

IMPROVING WATER GOVERNANCE – STAKEHOLDER VIEWS OF FIVE SOUTH ISLAND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

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Aim

Water governance refers to the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems in place to develop and manage water resources and the delivery of water services at different levels of society. Based on stakeholder views, this presentation identifies and discusses 20 attributes for achieving good water governance in New Zealand, based on the second author's MSc thesis research.

Methods

Twenty Good Governance Attributes (see table 1) were derived from questionnaire responses and structured interviews of 56 stakeholders, each involved in one of five Resource Management Act (RMA) catchment management planning and implementation processes. The interviews covered water allocation and water quality management in the following South Island catchments: the Waimea Catchment in Tasman; the Awatere Catchment in Marlborough; the Waimakariri Catchment in North Canterbury; the Waitaki Catchment in South Canterbury; and the Pomahaka Catchment in Otago.

Questionnaire results provided a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis of the likely effectiveness of each of the five water management planning processes achieving their Environmental Results Anticipated (ERAs). Follow-up structured interviews explored stakeholder views about the barriers to achieving ERAs and institutional shifts that could achieve better outcomes through both planning and implementation phases.

Results

Stakeholders were grouped into government, environmental, iwi, water users and instream sectors. Their responses led to development of a 3-D governance evaluative matrix allowing assessment of the degree of overall *satisfaction with each plan* and each sector's degree of *satisfaction with the planning process*. Stakeholder views about why they were satisfied and their views about what changes would make them more satisfied with these plans and planning processes were synthesized into the 20 Good Governance Attributes presented in Table 1.

Following are some specific observations from stakeholder sectors from which the more generic attributes in Table 1 were developed:

- Plan for land and water together at catchment scales; more holistic planning is sought especially by iwi who mostly do not feel well engaged in water management processes
- Land-water (catchment) management requires not just water body standards and limits, but also direct limits on some land-based activities and uses ('Emission Limit Values')
- Planning processes are not keeping up with management needs, especially in addressing water quality decline
- Stakeholders need confidence in the science upon which plans are based; making science widely available in an understandable and concise form helps engagement

- Water users need to have formalized involvement in planning and implementation; but engage other stakeholders too, to avoid marginalizing other stakeholder values – examples cited were landscape, spiritual and amenity values
- Better approaches are needed for balancing diverse values in catchment planning
- Engagement of stakeholders in planning processes needs continuity and focus; fragmentation and long planning processes can erode trust among the parties, while tight timeframes can also disenfranchise some stakeholder groups
- Communication and engagement of water users and key stakeholders in decision-making during low flow periods creates cohesion and confidence in the water management regime
- Water users would like consent renewals to be made less bureaucratic

Conclusion

Table 1: Good Governance Attributes for NZ water management planning

1	Determine the actual carrying capacity of water bodies and the desired carrying capacity to meet the present and future needs of the community
2	Good and timely communication between the full range of stakeholders and the regional council at the early stages of planning
3	Attuning to the whole instead of segment of the whole in catchment management decision making
4	Clearly connected and defined objectives, policies and methods/rules in the plan
5	Clear and concise allocation framework through the three principles of sound water management: environmental flows, flow sharing above that bottom line, and allocation caps
6	Avoid political bias in environmental decision making
7	Regular consultation and continuous two-way communication with stakeholders during plan process and implementation phases
8	Peer review of science and sharing of intellectual knowledge
9	Use up-to-date science and monitoring in decision making
10	Plan for and incorporate transition between planning process phase and implementation phase
11	Facilitate buy-in to plan from anyone administering or implementing it
12	Team approach to water planning and management needed within councils
13	Over-arching resource management vision needed, with generic national priorities on sustainable water management
14	Devolve monitoring to stakeholders within a defined management framework to achieve shared goals
15	Build in flexibility in the plans and planning processes to respond to new pressures and achieve defined objectives
16	Help achieve planning goals through adaptive management
17	Monitor effectiveness and efficiency of plans by measuring them against identified values
18	Regional councils held accountable to higher regulatory authority for effectiveness and efficiency of plans and implementation
19	Water quality targets should influence land-based planning
20	Spread the burden of water management costs among users