

## Report on MfE/MPI Freshwater Management Workshop 8/07/2015 (BT Bulloch)

Don Wallace and I attended this consultation meeting in Wellington. A wide range of primary sector organisations was represented.

The National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management was issued in 2014 and set water quality thresholds for freshwater. It also set out the rules that regional councils have to adopt when they are revising their regional plans. A MfE/MPI Water Directorate was set up and in the ensuing 18 months has been giving regional councils guidance on freshwater accounting, monitoring, and information to put on websites. Further guidance to come will be using models (economics), collaboration and ground water.

The objective of the workshop was for the Directorate to widen the focus of their work to encompass primary sector organisations.

Various members of the Directorate reported on what regional councils are doing so far in response to the NPS-FM. Many councils have set up stakeholder groups, some are consulting on freshwater management plans, and some are working on regional policy statements. In all, there are 28 engagement processes going on in 11 councils. Comment from the floor was that engagement processes were already becoming onerous for some stakeholder participants.

The workshop was broken up into smaller groups for a session on the challenges of the NPS-FM for industries. Some problems mentioned included: lack of data, lack of policy support for water storage, demands on participants, perception status quo is O.K., no economic return for achieving environmental value outcomes, need to develop working relationships, social expectations not aligning with economic reality, cross-overs between industry groups.

A session on industry experiences followed – what has worked and what has not.

The comments of the dairy sector spokesman here were interesting. He said they were working through a systematic process: problem definition, followed by supporting farmers, followed by building capacity. Those engaged in the programme were thinly stretched, and a lot of effort was focused on how to achieve change. Comment from the floor was that, if this represents the response from a “well-resourced” group, what hope do the rest of us have?

Further comments on the industry experience session were:

- The approaches described indicate duplication
- Why cannot groups use regional council science
- Currently money is being wasted
- Experts versus experts, but they do not agree with each other
- Need collaboration between sectors starting at the national level
- A lot of things could be sorted out once between the government and the sectors and regional councils
- Be good if that can be done at national level
- Be good if regional council engagement with stakeholders could start earlier in consultation processes
- Wine industry is having to commit to problems which are not of its making

A more structured workshop report will be circulated when the Water Directorate has collated the findings of the small groups.