

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Regional Policy Statements and Regional Plans

Introduction

Under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) regional policy statements and regional plans are prepared to help councils manage the environment in their area. This Environment Topic provides an overview of these documents and describes the Hawke's Bay Regional Resource Management Plan.

Regional Policy Statements

Every regional council must prepare a regional policy statement and it must be consistent with any national policy statement prepared by central government.

Regional policy statements serve two key purposes:

- **Regionally significant issues** - To identify the most significant resource management issues in the region.
- **Integrated management** - to identify policies and methods to achieve integrated management of natural and physical resources. Integrated management is the consolidation of policies across media (land, water, air, coasts), as well as between organisations involved in resource management.

Regional Plans

The purpose of a regional plan is to assist a regional council to carry out its functions in order to achieve the purpose of the RMA. Under the RMA, the preparation of a regional coastal plan is mandatory. The preparation of other regional plans are not. Regional plans have legal force under the RMA.

Prior to 2000 Hawke's Bay had a number of individual regional plans each addressing a natural resource. The Regional Air Plan, Regional Water Resources Plan, Regional Waste and Hazardous Substances Plan, and Regional Riverbed Gravel Extraction Plan have been combined into one document: The Hawke's Bay Regional Resource Management Plan. This regional plan also includes the regional policy statement. The regional plans and policy statement were merged into one document to provide a more integrated and user-friendly approach.

The objectives of the Hawke's Bay Regional Resource Management Plan are:

- To achieve the integrated sustainable management of the natural and physical resources of the Hawke's Bay region, while recognising the importance of resource use activity in Hawke's Bay, and its contribution to the development and prosperity of the region.
- To maximise certainty by providing clear environmental direction.
- To avoid the imposition of unnecessary costs of regulation on resource users and other people.

Implementation Methods

There are a number of methods used to implement the policies of the Hawke's Bay Regional Resource Management Plan. These are:

- Non-regulatory methods - such as environmental education and co-ordination, liaison with territorial authorities, economic instruments, provision of works and services,

research and investigation, monitoring.

- Regulation - activities regulated by regional rules.
- Resource allocation - establishes how resources will be allocated
- Decision-making criteria - which are used in making decisions on resource consent applications
- Problem-solving approaches - approaches to solving specific problems.
- Technical procedures - technical or scientific procedures or requirements used for specific elements of resource management.

Rules in Regional Plans

A key approach of the Hawke's Bay Regional Resource Management Plan is to permit minor activities which have little environmental effect, that would otherwise be restricted under the RMA.

Most activities affecting 'public' resources - coasts, air, water, rivers and lakes - are restricted under the RMA. This means that a resource consent must be obtained before these activities can be undertaken unless the plan permits them. In contrast land use activities are not restricted under the RMA unless there are rules regulating them as most land is a 'private' resource. Land use activities remain largely unregulated in the Hawke's Bay Regional Resource Management Plan, but district plans have requirements for land use.

Regional rules have the force and effect of a regulation under the RMA. There are six categories of rules for activities:

- **Permitted activities** - can be carried out without a resource consent provided the conditions in the rule are met;
- **Controlled activities** - require a resource consent but Council must grant it if all standards and terms of the rule are met. Council may impose conditions on the consent relating to matters specified in the rule.
- **Restricted discretionary activities** - require a resource consent. Council has 'discretion' in deciding whether or not to

grant a consent. In deciding whether or not to grant a consent Council is restricted to exercising its discretion over the list of matters specified in the rule.

- **Discretionary activities** - require a resource consent and Council will decide whether or not to grant the consent. Whether or not Council grants consent depends how consistent the proposed activity is with the RMA and the objectives and policies in the plan.
- **Non-complying activities** - require a resource consent which can only be granted if the adverse effects on the environment are minor or granting a consent will not be contrary to the objectives and policies of the plan.
- **Prohibited activities** - are not allowed under any circumstances.

Hawke's Bay Regional Resource Management Plan (Proposed)

The regional plan was proposed in April 2000. Following the release of decisions on submissions it is effectively operative, except for those parts on which appeals have been lodged with the Environment Court. Once these are resolved the plan becomes fully operative and the word 'proposed' is dropped from the plan title.

For further information

For further information or advice on any resource management topics ask for other titles in this series or contact Environmental Regulation staff at the Regional Council on:

Phone 06 835 9200

Fax 06 835 3601

TOLL FREE 0800 108 838

www.hbrc.govt.nz