

15/05/2023

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Tēnā Koe Minister Parker

Providing for vegetable production when implementing the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM)

I am responding to your letter seeking information on Greater Wellington's intentions to provide for vegetable production through NPS-FM freshwater planning instruments.

Greater Wellington's operative Regional Policy Statement (RPS) recognises the importance of safeguarding productive capacity on Class I and Class II land, but it does not provide specifically for vegetable production. Policy 59 states:

- ***“Policy 59: Retaining highly productive agricultural land (Class I and II land) – consideration***
When considering an application for a resource consent, notice of requirement, or a change, variation or review of a district plan, particular regard shall be given to safeguarding productive capability on Class I and II land.”

Chapter 3.11 and Policy 59 have not been reviewed as part of Proposed Change 1 to Greater Wellington's RPS. Greater Wellington is currently considering the timing of further amendments to remaining chapters of the RPS as part of a rolling RPS review.

Policy P68 (Discharges to land) and the associated rules of Greater Wellington's Proposed Natural Resources Plan:

- *Rule R67: Discharge of wastewater from an industrial or trade process – controlled activity*
- *Rule R68: Discharge of treated wastewater from a wastewater network – restricted discretionary activity*
- *Rule R70: Discharge of biosolids to land – permitted activity*
- *Rule R71: Discharge of biosolids to land – restricted discretionary activity*

These provisions manage the discharge of contaminants to land to minimise adverse effects on the life supporting capacity of soils, and they do not provide specifically for soil used for vegetable production.

Greater Wellington is implementing the NPS-FM through the Whaitua Programme and accompanying plan changes. There are five Whaitua in the Wellington Region. Three Whaitua Implementation Plans (WIPs) have been completed: Ruamāhanga, Te Awarua-o-Porirua and Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Currently the recommendations from Te Whanganui-a-Tara and Te Awarua-o-Porirua WIPs are being developed into a plan change to the Natural Resources Plan. Providing for vegetable production has not been specifically identified by the Whaitua Committees in any of the completed WIPs.

Greater Wellington is currently considering programme timing and resourcing as part of giving effect to the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022 (NPS-HPL) in the RPS by October 2025. We observe that the greatest tension inhibiting the protection of highly productive land, including the provision for vegetable production, is urban development (and meeting the requirements of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD) direction), as well as the NPS-FM in terms of managing nutrient run-off.

At present, there is no specific national direction to provide for vegetable production beyond the two vegetable growing areas identified in Appendix 5 of the NPS-FM (neither of which lie within Wellington Region). Providing national guidance on how regional authorities might balance competing objectives in national policy statement direction may aid regional authorities to provide more effectively for vegetable production.

Our whaitua programme is still ongoing and the plan changes are being progressively introduced to implement the NPS-FM. Therefore, it is too early to say how commercial vegetable growing will be enabled through future provisions. Decisions on these matters will be guided by our mana whenua partnerships and subject to a public hearings process.

Yours sincerely



Daran Ponter
Chair

Copy: Nigel Corry, Chief Executive, Greater Wellington Regional Council