

Report 06.1
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Committee Ara Tahī
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Measuring up 2005, the State of the Environment **Report for the Wellington region**

1. Purpose

To present to the Committee *Measuring up 2005*, the State of the Environment Report for the Wellington region.

2. Background

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) requires Greater Wellington to monitor and report on the state of the environment in the Wellington region. Monitoring the state of the environment allows us to:

- observe trends or changes in environmental quality and determine the reasons for these;
- have good information for resource management decision making (resource consents and regional policy statement reviews); and
- convey information about our natural resources to the wider community.

Greater Wellington produces environmental report cards each year, and a state of the environment report (*Measuring up*) every six years. *Measuring up 2005* checks progress towards the objectives set in the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and is the beginning of our RPS review.

Measuring up 2005 is an important document for both Greater Wellington and the regional community. It is our 'school report', bringing together all of our information about the region's environment and enabling us to see whether the environment is getting worse, staying the same or improving.

It's important that we not only understand what's happening in the environment, but why, so that decisions about how best to manage the environment can be made.

3. Measuring up 2005

Measuring up 2005 presents a comprehensive overview of the state of the natural and physical resources of the Wellington region. Each chapter - one for each chapter of the RPS - is based on a background report that contains more detailed discussion and analysis of all available data.

Measuring up 2005 has been prepared for a wide audience, many of whom will be people and interest groups we will be consulting during the RPS review.

In putting together *Measuring up 2005* we have tried to be up-front and objective. The findings tell us that:

- We are doing some things well – for example, water quality has improved in two streams after sewage discharges were removed, and the shift of dairy shed discharges from streams to land has benefited even more streams.
- We are doing other things less well – for example, there is growing evidence that urban stormwater will cause serious long-term effects on aquatic life in streams and harbours.
- We are better informed now about the state of air and soil quality than we were six years ago, but we need to work more with city and district councils on matters such as the assessment and protection of natural character in the coastal environment and the state of ecosystems.

The first chapter of the report is *The iwi environmental management system*. Members of Ara Tahi will recall that writing this chapter involved interviewing representatives of Ara Tahi, some senior staff and a councillor. Ara Tahi members were also interviewed about the achievement of coastal objectives, and some matters to do with fresh water.

In September, Graham Cameron presented the key findings for the iwi chapter to Ara Tahi, and John Holmes presented the key findings for the Landscape and Heritage chapter.

Measuring up 2005 was sent to all members of Ara Tahi in December.

4. Regional Policy Statement review

Measuring up 2005 is the first step in the RPS review – it checks whether we are achieving the RPS objectives. The next step is to assess the effectiveness of the RPS policies and methods in achieving the objectives. Over the next two months we would like to meet with Ara Tahi members to determine their views on how effective the RPS policies have been. The assessment of RPS effectiveness is the second stage of the RPS review.

A discussion document, which will be reported to the Council and Ara Tahi, will be released in April. Staff will consult with iwi and other key groups – like city and district councils – throughout 2006 to prepare a new draft RPS by February 2007.

We will then consult on the draft and later, notify a new RPS that incorporates changes proposed as a result of feedback on the draft. We plan to have a proposed RPS notified by September 2007. As with all policy statements and plans, the notified RPS is then required to go through the First Schedule process of consultation, public submissions and so on.

5. Communication

Each chapter of *Measuring up 2005* has been summarised in a report card, much like the annual environment report cards we have published for the last three years. The report card content is on our web site, and the full document and background reports can also be downloaded from the web site.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. ***Receive the report; and***
2. ***Note the contents.***

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