

How to Co-operate on Water Management in New Zealand.



It would be easy to assume that New Zealand is a land blessed with an infinite supply of water. In fact the Waikato area in the North Island has experienced some crippling droughts, the latest being for 5 months over the summer of 2012/2013. While, once again, 5 months may seem nothing (especially to Australians), in a dairying intensive area the results are serious and long-lasting.

For many years there has been a lack of co-operation by users of water (farmers, power generators etc) and those aware of water's critical importance to the sustainability of the natural environment. But now, at last, reason (and co-operation through listening to each other) is coming into play thanks to the establishment of a round of meetings throughout the country held over the last 6 years under the banner of the Land and Water Forum.

The **Land and Water Forum** brings together a range of industry groups, environmental and recreational NGOs, iwi (tribe), scientists, and other organisations with a stake in freshwater and land management. The Forum's members are joined by active observers from local and central government.

The Forum's objective is to develop a shared vision and a common

way forward among all those with an interest in water, through a stakeholder-led collaborative process.

The first phase of the Forum's work lasted from August 2009 to August 2010 and resulted in the report "A Fresh Start for Freshwater".

On 18 May 2012, the Forum released the "Second Report of the Land and Water Forum". It provides a national framework within which Regional Councils will work with their communities and iwi to set freshwater objectives and develop limits for its use. It provides a consistent and transparent process for setting objectives and limits, and one that will lead to effective and enduring outcomes, including greater certainty for investment and development.

On 15 November 2012, the Forum released the Third Report of the Land and Water Forum on managing within limits. It recommends integrated decision-making in catchments, continuous improvement of management practices to improve water quality and clearer rights to take and use water within set limits.

The result: A Common Direction for Water Management in New Zealand.

Visit <http://www.landandwater.org.nz> for more details.