

Southland Science Report

Executive Summary



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Executive Summary

Thriving Southland is a community-led group that is working with the community to drive positive change in the primary sector in Southland, by working with farmers and supporting catchment groups. Thriving Southland commissioned this report to provide an understanding of the background state of the environment relating to freshwater quality, risks and pressures that catchments in the region are facing, the implications for farmers, and gaps in information that need to be filled to assist farmers meet the future challenges.

Freshwater quality in Southland has been declining in developed parts of the region, and is under threat from various sources, both urban and rural. Southland's 23 catchment groups provide a local, community response to water quality issues specific to their area.

In response to the declining freshwater quality nationally, central government has recently announced changes to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM), new National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES) and changes to the Resource Management Act.

Environment Southland, in partnership with Te Ao Marama Inc, is currently working on a Progressive Implementation Programme that will result in a new proposed change to the current proposed Southland Water and Land Plan that will establish freshwater objectives and set limits to implement the NPSFM by 31 December 2025.

These changes will result in additional controls in Southland that will be focussed on reducing the loss of contaminants (particularly nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), microorganisms and sediment) from land to groundwater and surface water. This means that in most parts of Southland there will be new rules that directly or indirectly will set limits on the amounts of N and P that can be lost to water. There are also likely to be new rules aimed at reducing losses of sediment and microorganisms to water.

Catchment groups are in the ideal position to collectively work together on strategies that can be designed to address specific catchment challenges. While the focus of general strategies outlined in the report is on individual farms, catchment groups will be in the best position to tailor packages that enable adjoining landowners to work together.

Catchment groups need to be provided with tailored information and advice as soon as practicable to ensure that as many people in the catchment as possible understand the nature of our current water quality issues, the changes that are coming, the scale of the likely changes that will be needed, and the measures that can be taken individually and collectively to ensure that communities are moving towards the achievement of agreed objectives.