

Report to the Environment Committee
from Murray McLea, Section Leader, Policy Development

The First Five Years: A Report on the Performance of the Regional Policy Statement in its first Five Years

1. Purpose

To report on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the provisions of the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region (RPS).

2. Background

The RPS is the foundation document for promoting the sustainable management of natural and physical resources, not just for the Council but also for territorial authorities in the Region. When preparing regional and district plans, local authorities must not be inconsistent with the RPS. When considering resource consent applications, they must have regard to its provisions. Most importantly, the RPS includes policies and methods that set the course for the Council's involvement in non-regulatory initiatives with the community.

The RPS became operative in May 1995. It requires the Council to report in this financial year on:

- (1) the appropriateness of significant issues and objectives in the statement; and
- (2) the effectiveness of the policies and methods in meeting the objectives.

The Resource Management Act 1991 requires the Council to commence a full public review of the RPS no later than ten years after it became operative.

3. *The First Five Years*

A report, *The First Five Years*, has been prepared. It looks at each provision of the RPS in its context. A copy is lodged in the Councillors' lounge and/or can be obtained from Murray McLea. A copy will also be tabled at the Committee meeting.

The First Five Years does not set out to rewrite the RPS. It is a check on how well the RPS is performing and whether it is setting the Council in the right direction. Recommendations to change the RPS were only considered in the following circumstances:

- provisions of the RPS are preventing the Council from promoting sustainable management
- there are new significant issues in the Region.

We took this approach because the policies and methods of the RPS enable rather than require or prevent action. Just because a method of implementation is not mentioned in the RPS does not mean the Council cannot carry it out through our other strategy and planning documents. At this stage it will be more cost effective and of greater benefit to everybody for the Council to concentrate on RPS implementation projects rather than revert to further work on its policy development again.

4. Findings

The key findings of the *First Five Years* are outlined in the *Executive Summary and Recommendations* that are included as Attachment 1 to this report. Overall, the RPS has performed well in its first five years of use. Some policies and methods of the RPS target other statutory documents and resource consents. These provisions are satisfactorily reflected in regional and district plans. Other policies and methods of the RPS are aimed at implementation through non-regulatory means. If we were writing the RPS now we would probably write some of these provisions differently. It is unnecessary to change them now because variations in approach can be accommodated without the need to change the RPS.

The First Five Years identifies some important non-regulatory methods in the RPS that we have not yet implemented, but new initiatives by the Council in its proposed 10-Year Strategy will help address these. The *Executive Summary and Recommendations* in Attachment 1 also highlight some parts of the RPS that we will need to pay particular attention to when the RPS is reviewed.

Only one recommendation is made to change the RPS. As has been previously pointed out at the Council's Policy and Finance Committee (Report 00.127, 9 March 2000), the landscape provisions of the Landscape and Heritage Chapter require amendment because the provisions are based on the notion of "regionally outstanding landscapes" that the Council has been unable to identify.

5. The Resource Management Act Amendment Bill

An amendment to the Resource Management Act 1991 was introduced to Parliament in 1999. The Amendment Bill includes changes that could affect our responsibilities for landscape and the contents of the RPS. The Council has made submissions to Parliament on the Amendment Bill. Select Committee Hearings have now been scheduled. At this stage the outcome of changes heralded in the Amendment Bill are uncertain. Until the Amendment Bill is passed into law, it would be premature to begin considering changes to the landscape provisions of the RPS.

6. **Communication**

The *First Five Years* is an internal evaluation of the RPS rather than a public statutory review. During its preparation discussions were held with some territorial authorities and most iwi in the Region. The Report could lead to greater public involvement if the Council decides to change the RPS. At this stage any further communication with people about the report on the RPS is unnecessary.

7. **Recommendations**

- (1) *That “The First Five Years: A Report on the Performance of the Regional Policy Statement in its first Five Years” be received and its contents noted.*
- (2) *That staff report back to the Environment Committee on proceeding with changes to the landscape provisions of the Landscape and Heritage Chapter of the RPS following passage into law of the Resource Management Amendment Bill.*

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Attachments: 1