

Summary Document:

Drinking water and wastewater network environmental performance

Introduction

The Water Services Act 2021 (the Act) includes requirements to monitor and report on the environmental performance of drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater networks and their operators (Part 3, Subpart 8).

These requirements are designed to provide greater transparency about the performance of networks and the impacts they have on the environment and public health. They will contribute to the continuous and progressive improvement of the quality of water services in Aotearoa New Zealand.

These requirements also complement the general functions and objectives of Taumata Arowai under the Taumata Arowai-the Water Services Regulator Act 2020, which include giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai to the extent it relates to the functions and duties of Taumata Arowai.

Environmental performance measures, targets and standards are being introduced in tranches. In early 2022, Taumata Arowai consulted on a three-year phased approach to introduce drinking water network environmental performance measures (drinking water measures). This year's consultation provides more detail on the second year of drinking water measures, including suggestions from submissions earlier in the year. We intend to introduce the second year of drinking water measures in early 2023 and they will become mandatory from 1 July 2023.

The full discussion document also outlines the approach for introducing wastewater environmental performance measures (wastewater measures). We introduce three years of wastewater measures, with the first year of measures based on the Water New Zealand National Performance Review (NPR) approach. We intend to introduce the first year of wastewater measures at the same time as the second year of drinking water measures (1 July 2023).

Who needs to report against network environmental performance measures?

Network performance reporting applies to drinking water, wastewater, and urban stormwater networks, owned, or operated on behalf of, councils and government departments. This includes networks operated by the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Education, Department of Corrections, and the New Zealand Defence Force.

Giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai

Taumata Arowai has commissioned a separate piece of work on how the measures should be explored with regard to Te Mana o te Wai and what key considerations need to be taken into account when designing Te Ao Māori informed measures and associated processes.

We are still interested in hearing your thoughts on how we may consider and implement Te Mana o te Wai, te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori perspectives through this consultation period. We also ask that you let us know if you wish to be involved in the consultation of these measures, early in 2023, so we can ensure that you receive all further communications.

Drinking water measures

This discussion document focusses only on the year two drinking water measures, noting that the year one drinking water measures became mandatory on 1 July 2022. We intend to consult on the detail of the year three drinking water measures next year.

Note that any drinking water network that supplies a peak population of less than 100 people (including usual consumer numbers) or where the source of the network is from rainwater collection tanks only are excluded from the reporting requirements.

The information that must be collected for each measure is provided in Appendix 2 of the full discussion document.

Table One: Drinking water measures

Outcomes	Performance Measure
Environmental and public health is protected	Drinking water treatment by-products
	Fish passage and screening
	Resource consent compliance
Services are reliable	System interruptions
	Water pressure
Resources are used efficiently	Use of water resources
	Alternative water use
Services are resilient	Disaster response planning and preparedness
	Water security
	Water restrictions
Services are economically sustainable	Expenditure
	Forecast expenditure
	Revenue

Defining wastewater treatment plants

The definition of a wastewater network under the Act is very broad and captures small wastewater systems, such as small on-site wastewater systems (where they are operated by a network operator such as a council).

Our focus remains on those networks which are likely to have the greatest environmental impact. For this reason, we are proposing that the wastewater measures will apply, in the first instance, to wastewater treatment plants and their associated networks only. We have proposed a preliminary definition of wastewater treatment plants as:

‘...facilities where centralised treatment of wastewater received occurs, in which physical, biological and/or chemical processes are employed to recover the used water for released to the receiving environment, land or water, or reuse. Typical treatment processes comprise ponds, reactor tanks or package systems to remove contaminants. Some of these facilities are additionally designed to provide resource recovery from the solids component of wastewater’.

We are seeking your feedback on this proposed definition.

Wastewater measures

We are proposing to follow the same format for the introduction of wastewater measures as we have followed for the drinking water measures. That is, the wastewater measures will be introduced over three years. We are seeking your feedback on the proposed timeframes and the measures themselves.

The information that must be collected for each measure is provided in Appendix 3 of the full discussion document.

Table Two: Wastewater measures

Outcomes	Performance Measure	2023	2024	2025
Environmental and public health is protected	Wastewater network connections	✓		
	Resource consent compliance	✓	✓	✓
	Wastewater overflows	✓	✓	
	Inflow and infiltration	✓		
	Trade waste	✓		
	Fish ingress		✓	
	Environmental monitoring		✓	✓
Services are reliable	Fault attendance and resolution	✓		
	System interruptions	✓	✓	
	Asset condition	✓		
	Capacity to accommodate growth			✓
Resources are used efficiently	Energy efficiency	✓		
	Process emissions	✓		
	Biosolids	✓		
	Wastewater reuse		✓	
	Greenhouse gas emissions			✓
Services are resilient	Critical assets	✓		
	Return to service post disaster		✓	✓
	Climate change adaptation			✓

Outcomes	Performance Measure	2023	2024	2025
	Resilience to cyber threats/terrorist attack			✓
Services are economically sustainable	Expenditure		✓	
	Forecast expenditure		✓	
	Revenue		✓	
	Cost and revenue allocation		✓	

Next steps

Following public consultation, we will update the year two drinking water measures and year one wastewater measures and undertake targeted engagement to develop the detailed definitions which will set out how the information should be provided to us.

We expect to begin work on year three drinking water measures and year two wastewater measures in the second half of 2023.