

## PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL BEST PRACTICABLE OPTIONS REVIEW

### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT AND CONSENT PROCESS

#### THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

The Resource Management Act (the RMA) provides the statutory framework for the management of New Zealand's water, air, soil and land resources. Its aim is to promote the sustainable management of these natural resources, along with the sustainable management of the built environment, which includes wastewater networks and treatment plants.

#### RESOURCE CONSENTS

Resource consents are one mechanism that the RMA uses to help achieve sustainable management. A resource consent is an approval to undertake an activity which is not permitted by the local planning document.

There are various activities associated with wastewater treatment and discharge which commonly require resource consents. These include the discharge of odour from the treatment plant, the discharge of treated wastewater to land, or a river, or to coastal waters, and the construction and maintenance of the treated wastewater discharge infrastructure.

#### DISCHARGE PERMITS

A resource consent for the discharge of treated wastewater is called a discharge permit. The limitations and conditions applied to a discharge permit by the consent authority determine, among other things, where the treated wastewater can be discharged, how much treated wastewater can be discharged, and the level of treatment that must be applied to the wastewater before it is discharged. It also includes necessary monitoring and reporting, and possible ongoing involvement of iwi and other parties.

#### THE RESOURCE CONSENT PROCESS

A person or organisation that wishes to undertake an activity not permitted by the local planning rules, must lodge a resource consent application. This application will be lodged with either the district or city council, or the regional council, depending on the nature of the activity.

A resource consent application must include (among other things) a description of the proposed activity, an assessment of the activity's environmental effects, and an assessment of the activity's consistency with the objectives and policies in the relevant planning documents. It must also record matters consulted on, and the results of those consultations.

Once the application is lodged, the processing council must determine:

- If the application includes sufficient information
- Whether the application should be publicly notified, notified to a limited group of people or organisations, or not notified at all
- If the application should be declined or approved, and if approved, what conditions should be imposed on it.



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## WHAT IS MEANT BY BEST PRACTICABLE OPTION (BPO)?

Nature Calls is a Best Practicable Option Review, or one that will assess various options available for the treatment and discharge of wastewater. The result of this project will be the identification of a Best Practicable Option (BPO).

The term is defined in the Resource Management Act as the best method for preventing or minimising the adverse effects on the environment with regard to:

- a. *The nature of the discharge or emission and the sensitivity of the receiving environment to adverse effects*
- b. *The financial implications, and the effects on the environment of that option when compared with other options*
- c. *The current state of technical knowledge and the likelihood that the option can be successfully applied.*

For the purpose of this project, BPO is further defined in the conditions of the existing resource consent for the discharge of wastewater into the Manawatū River. These conditions require that the BPO prevents or minimises any adverse discharge effects on the life-supporting capacity of the Manawatū River. In particular, the conditions aim at minimising the adverse effects of:

- iv. Excessive growth of cyanobacteria and periphyton
- v. Changes to the structure and/or composition of macro-invertebrate communities
- vi. The migration and habitat of trout and native fish.

The conditions also require that consideration is given to minimising the frequency, magnitude and duration of any breaches of regulatory standards, limits or targets.