

PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL BEST PRACTICABLE OPTIONS REVIEW

PROJECT BACKGROUND

WHAT IS NATURE CALLS?

Nature Calls is the Best Practicable Option (BPO) Review being undertaken by Palmerston North City Council to identify how Palmerston North's wastewater should be treated and discharged in the future.

At this starting point in the BPO Review, all options are on the table. Before a preferred solution is identified, Council needs to understand the issues and what solutions are available, and which are practical, sustainable and affordable.

The BPO Review is the process Council is going through to be in a position to apply for a new wastewater consents by June 2022.

WHO'S INVOLVED?

Palmerston North City Council is responsible for the collection, treatment and discharge of wastewater from Palmerston North. Council will be the applicant for the future resource consents associated with these activities, and it is undertaking the BPO review as preparation for the resource consent applications.

To assist it with the BPO Review, Council has established a Project Steering Group. Its purpose is to provide overall project direction, leadership and oversight to Council, and assist Council to achieve the outcomes and key milestones required for the BPO Review. The Project Steering Group has also been established to provide a mechanism through which Council can partner with Rangitāne o Manawatū on the BPO Review.

The Project Steering Group comprises Palmerston North City Councillors, senior Palmerston North City Council staff, representatives of Rangitāne o Manawatū and an independent chairperson.

PROJECT HISTORY

The discharge permit for the existing discharge of treated wastewater to the Manawatū River was granted in 2003 for a resource consent duration of 25 years, that is to 2028. Council gained its current consent after a lengthy investigation and consultation that included comprehensive identification and evaluation of a wide range of options, and assessment of these against the Manawatū River water quality standards that applied at the time.

In 2013, the Manawatū-Wanganui Regional Council (Horizons) began a review of the discharge permit granted in 2003. The purpose of the review was to address periphyton growth downstream of the Manawatū River discharge and the effect this was having on the life-supporting capacity of the river downstream of the discharge point. As part of the review process, Council undertook a wide range of environmental and technical investigations to understand the effects of the existing discharge.

Following a public notification process and hearing before independent commissioners, an Interim Decision in February 2015 determined that excess periphyton growth was contributing to a failure to safeguard the life-supporting capacity of the Manawatū River downstream of the discharge.

Following the Interim Decision, Council reached an agreement with Horizons to carry out a BPO Review and apply for a new discharge permit earlier than otherwise would be required. The Council will undertake additional monitoring of the existing discharge. The requirements for the BPO Review were incorporated into the existing discharge permit through a change to its conditions.



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