MEMORANDUM

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| To: | **Kaituna Catchment Control Scheme Advisory Group** |  |
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| From: | **Pim de Monchy** **Coastal Catchments Manager**  | Date: 14 August 2019 |
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| Subject: | Focus Catchments Programme Update  |



1. **Background**

The Focus Catchments programme was developed in response to Council’s new KPI to improve swimmability in the Long Term Plan 2018-28, and to better align land management work programmes with the emerging Essential Freshwater policy framework from the Ministry for the Environment. It is also likely to provide better value to the regional community in terms of water quality outcomes for each ratepayer dollar invested. The programme aims to provide a more refined approach to guide the Integrated Catchment Management group’s work on water quality in key areas, and help prioritise Council’s grant funding incentives to community. Following on from its presentation in May 2019, the Focus Catchments programme was approved by the Regional Direction and Delivery Committee at their 25 June 2019 meeting.

Over the past two decades, Land Management Officers have engaged with landowners anywhere in the region to offer advice and co-funding grants for activities such as riparian and biodiversity protection, pole planting, erosion control, stock races/crossing, pest management, grazing regimes, land use and nutrient management through Environmental Programme (EP) agreements. While many landowners have improved their property’s environmental performance through the implementation of these EPs, the effectiveness at a catchment-scale is not known. Landowners implementing these agreements are often surrounded by others who may not necessarily be working towards water quality improvements, and monitoring improvement in water quality has generally not occurred. Much of this work has occurred during a period of gradual land-use intensification.

Council now understands that some of the region’s streams, rivers, lakes and estuaries need specific reductions in contaminant levels in order to meet ecological, cultural or human health values. These range from swimming or shellfish gathering sites with too much bacterial risk, to estuaries with excessive nutrient inputs and algal growth, to streams with high sediment yields. Some catchments in the region are not under the same pressures as others. It seems logical to focus on the catchments that need our attention most.

1. **The Focus Catchments**

12 ‘Focus Catchments’ have been selected (Table 1, Map Appendix 1) based primarily on known water quality monitoring data and an understanding of how this affects ecological and human use values in these catchments. This focus catchments approach will also assist in meeting the Long Term Plan’s KPI around improving swimmability, for example in the Kaiati Falls catchment (Waitao).

*Table 1: List of the first 12 proposed Focus Catchments*

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| **Focus Catchment** | **Primary water quality issue(s) as currently understood** |
| Rotorua Lakes Catchment Area | Various, including specific TLI targets for each lake and other targets where required |
| Uretara, Katikati | Reduce *E. coli* for swimmability |
| Te Mania, Katikati | Reduce sediment and *E. coli* |
| Kopurererua, Tauranga | Reduce sediment and *E. coli* |
| Waitao, Tauranga | Reduce *E. coli* and sediment for swimmability  |
| Kopuaroa, Te Puke | Reduce N, P, sediment and *E. coli* |
| Ford Rd/ Waitepuia, Maketū | Reduce N, P, sediment and *E. coli* |
| Waihī Estuary, Pongakawa  | Reduce N, P, sediment and *E. coli* |
| Awakaponga, Matatā | Reduce N, P, sediment and *E. coli* |
| Upper Rangitāiki, Taupō | Halt increasing nitrate trend |
| Ōhiwa Harbour, Ōhope / Ōhiwa | Reduce sediment (and nutrients in Nukuhou)  |
| Waiōtahe, Waiōtahe  | Reduce *E. coli* for shellfish gathering  |

The philosophy behind the approach is that Council’s co-funding through grants and EPs is preferentially applied to the highest priority actions in each of these Focus Catchments for a defined period of time, to achieve both engagement and improvements in water quality or trend (as monitored in the attributes of concern), before moving on to the next tranches of priority sub-catchments in years to come (ie the preferential funding for the currently identified Focus Catchments will shift to others after a defined period to incentivise uptake of behaviours and practices to improve water quality ahead of a more regulatory approach which will inevitably follow). This will complement any regulatory approach arising from the NPS-FM and the impending Essential Freshwater programme, as these regulatory efforts would almost certainly be easier to implement if the community was already invested in achieving the required changes to water quality.

Land Management staff are in the process of developing monitoring plans for each of the 12 Focus Catchments. These will detail the monitoring required to measure changes in water quality - they also have the purpose of enabling better, more informed conversations with our communities. In most cases monitoring will include water quality samples taken throughout the catchment to create a spatial picture of water quality issues at a higher resolution than possible using only the NERMN data, as well as a time series to enable tracking of changes over time.

Depending on the catchment, ecological monitoring and monitoring of receiving environments may also be included. These monitoring plans will inform the catchment action plans which will be developed immediately afterwards. Some Focus Catchments already have good monitoring and a catchment action plan in place. The current process will ensure that we are adopting a reasonably consistent approach across these catchments.

The Focus Catchments programme does not affect our support for Care Groups such as Coast Care, Estuary Care and Biodiversity programmes. The resourcing for these Focus Catchments will come from a reduction in the number and value of EPs outside of Focus Catchments, although existing EPs will be honoured and implemented through until their expiry.