
2 Preparation of the Regional Plan for the Tarawera River Catchment

2.1 Introduction

This regional plan has been prepared by Environment Bay of Plenty under Part V of the Resource Management Act 1991. The preparation of this regional plan has involved extensive liaison with the local community, local iwi, special interest groups, and organisations with an interest in the Tarawera River catchment.

In May 1991 a public meeting attended by approximately 250 people was held in Whakatane to discuss the community's resource management concerns with regard to the Tarawera River and its catchment. Many issues were raised at that meeting, in particular major concerns as to the continuing degraded state of the river below Kawerau. In November 1991 Environment Bay of Plenty announced its intention to prepare the *Regional Plan for the Tarawera River Catchment* (then referred to as the Tarawera River Regional Plan) in the *Tarawera Bulletin*, a news sheet sent to homes in the majority of the wider Tarawera River catchment area.

As a result of the November 1991 *Tarawera Bulletin*, which also called for submissions on topics and issues which should be covered in the regional plan, ten submissions were received from industry, environmental and recreational organisations. These submissions, together with the issues covered in the earlier *Tarawera River Management Plan*², formed the basis for initial discussions and technical investigations undertaken by, or on behalf of, Environment Bay of Plenty.

Throughout the plan preparation period, Environment Bay of Plenty has provided information to the public on issues relating to the preparation of the regional plan. Environment Bay of Plenty made information from investigations and research available to the public in editions of *the Tarawera Bulletin*, advertisements in local newspapers, press releases, presentations at agricultural shows and so on.

2.2 Plan Programme Outline

The *Tarawera River Regional Plan Programme Outline* was prepared and adopted by Environment Bay of Plenty in early 1993. The outline identified the issues to be covered in this regional plan and detailed a timetable for the preparation of work modules. The report identified eleven modules specifying investigation, research and analysis required as part of the preparation of the plan, and giving an indication of the resources required in order to deliver the specified outputs.

2.3 Liaison Groups

2.3.1 Technical Liaison Group

In late 1992, Environment Bay of Plenty initiated a Technical Liaison Group with industry and crown research institute representatives, to review issues related to water quality in the Lower Reach of the Tarawera River. This group has been responsible for providing direction for research and further investigation especially the effects of industrial discharges on the quality of water in the Lower Reach of the Tarawera River, and associated wetlands.

² Tarawera River Management Plan prepared in 1985 by the Bay of Plenty Catchment Commission.

2.3.2 Tarawera River Liaison Group

The Tarawera River Liaison Group was formed in mid-1993 by Environment Bay of Plenty. The group brought together some twenty representatives from iwi authorities, industry, environmental groups, community groups and local authorities. Membership of the Tarawera River Liaison Group is shown in Appendix 9. Representatives on the Liaison Group provided a series of presentation on resource management issues facing the Tarawera catchment. The Liaison Group also received technical presentations from scientists, from Council staff and a range of research agencies. These presentations concentrated more specifically on water quality related issues in the catchment of the Lower Reach of the Tarawera River. Before the release of the draft regional plan, the Liaison Group was involved in a series of 15 workshop and discussion sessions, focusing in particular, but not solely on dissolved oxygen, toxicity and colour in the Lower Reach of the Tarawera River.

2.4 Plan Project Team

The Tarawera River Regional Plan Project Team was formed in late 1992 to assist in the preparation of the regional plan. The multi-disciplinary team included staff from Environment Bay of Plenty's planning, environmental monitoring, and operations departments. The project team met regularly to ascertain progress on work modules and identify areas where additional research was required.

2.5 Contact with External Organisations

In addition to the formation of the liaison groups, Environment Bay of Plenty staff were involved in extensive contact with staff from other organisations, most significantly staff from the Department of Conservation, the Eastern Regional Fish and Game Council, the National Institute for Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), Tasman Pulp and Paper Company Limited, Caxton Paper Limited (which became Carter Holt Harvey Tissue), Works Geothermal Limited, Tasman Forestry Limited (now Fletcher Challenge Forestry Limited), iwi authorities, and a number of environmental organisations. In some cases this resulted in the formation of small review teams to investigate specific matters, such as the protection of wetlands.

2.6 Research/Investigative Reports

In the course of the preparation of this regional plan, Environment Bay of Plenty prepared, or commissioned, a series of research and investigation reports into a range of issues. These reports included:

- A survey of community attitudes and perceptions,
- Assessments of dissolved oxygen levels and toxicity in the Lower Reach of the Tarawera River,
- River flow analysis,
- Groundwater and geothermal resource assessments,
- Investigations into colour and visual clarity,
- Land use capability,
- Pulp and paper production processes,
- Resource management investigations.

Research and investigative reports prepared as part of the preparation of this plan are listed in Appendix 2.

2.7 Section 32 Requirements

Section 32 of the Resource Management Act 1991 requires Environment Bay of Plenty to assess the extent to which an objective, policy, rule, or other method is necessary in achieving the purpose of the Act. It also requires other alternatives to be assessed, and costs and benefits weighed up.

Environment Bay of Plenty considers that it has fulfilled its duties under section 32 of the Resource Management Act 1991 with the establishment of the Tarawera River Liaison Group and the detailing of the principal reasons for adopting objectives, policies and rules, as outlined throughout this regional plan. The Tarawera River Liaison Group was established as a “think-tank” to provide a forum for alternatives to be presented and discussed and the necessity of objectives, policies, and rules established. The Liaison Group was provided with working drafts of the regional plan to which members made extensive comments.

