



Te arotake i te whakahaeretanga o ngā wai ariki i Te Moana a Toi **Reviewing the management of geothermal in the Bay of Plenty region**

Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana is reviewing how geothermal in our region is managed. We will be doing this through a regional plan change to the geothermal chapter of the Regional Natural Resources Plan (Plan Change 11). We know that these unique geothermal systems need careful management.

We are in the early stages of the plan change process and want to know what you think is important, where changes are required and whether we are heading in the right direction.

This summary provides some background on the geothermal systems in the Bay of Plenty region, our current management responsibilities, and an overview of our plan change process and broad timeframes.

For more information visit boprc.govt.nz/geothermal

Ngā wai ariki i Te Moana a Toi

Geothermal in the Bay of Plenty

The geothermal resource in the Bay of Plenty region is made up of many geothermal systems – most are in the Taupō Volcanic Zone (TVZ).



Science plays a big part in informing the way we manage geothermal. You can find out more about our current understanding of the different geothermal systems in the Bay of Plenty Geothermal Systems Science Summary report and in the Geothermal Systems of the Bay of Plenty region - Inventory and Extent publication. While we have lots of data and information already, we are continually adding to our kete of knowledge – the more we know, the better decisions we can collectively make.

Te whakahaeretanga onāiane i raro i te RMA

Current management under the RMA

The geothermal resource is managed under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The RMA gives regional councils the role of managing how we use, take, dam and / or divert geothermal water, discharges of geothermal water and gas, and the use or take of geothermal energy. Regional councils also manage discharges of geothermal water to land, air and water. Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana does this through the Bay of Plenty Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and regional plans.

BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT (RPS)

The RPS sets the overall direction for geothermal management in our region. It classifies geothermal systems into management groups based on their unique values, current uses and development potential. A management purpose is set for each system. Some systems, such as the Waimangu System, are managed to protect their unique geothermal surface features, while others, such as Kawerau, are used for electricity generation and industrial use.

The six different management groups and systems classified within each group in the RPS are as follows:

Management group	Geothermal systems
Group 1: Protected systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waimangu-Rotomāhana-Tarawera Whakaari (White Island) Moutohorā Island (Whale Island)
Group 2: Rotorua system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotorua city
Group 3: Conditional development systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tikitere-Ruahine Rotokawa-Mokoia Island Rotomā-Tikorangi Taheke
Group 4: Development systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kawerau Lake Rotoiti (outflow is in the bed of the lake) Rotomā-Puhi Puhi
Group 5: Low temperature systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor Island (Tuhua) Tauranga/Mount Maunganui (Mauao) Pāpāmoa/Maketū Awakeri Pukehīnau (Rangitāiki) Manaōhau (Galatea)
Group 6: Research systems	These are systems that have not yet been discovered or classified and include areas outside of known systems.

The RPS has policies directing how the geothermal resource should be managed, such as:

- Development of System Management Plans (SMP) for certain systems
- Getting and using the right information
- Managing takes and discharges, for example through a discharge strategy
- Assessing and protecting significant geothermal features
- Managing hazards
- Recognising and providing for the relationship of tangata whenua with their resources, taonga.

The Regional Policy Statement is not being reviewed as part of the PC11 plan change process.

REGIONAL PLANS

Regional plans must give effect to the RPS. This means that they must follow the direction set in the RPS. We do have some flexibility in how we do this, so we can add detail and look at different options to achieve what the RPS requires. We can also identify new issues that are not covered in the RPS.

Regional plans set the framework for the use of geothermal. They include objectives, policies, rules on activities, allocation of resource use within limits, and things that must be considered in resource consent applications.

Geothermal policies and rules for all geothermal systems in the region are currently included in the **Regional Natural Resources Plan**, while the **Rotorua Geothermal Regional Plan** only covers the Rotorua Geothermal System.

Council is reviewing the geothermal provisions in both regional plans and will then combine these into a single geothermal chapter in the Regional Natural Resources Plan.*

**Some provisions relating to the allocation of geothermal water in the Tauranga/Mount Maunganui and Pāpāmoa/Maketū systems (all in Group 5) will be addressed in the freshwater plan change process for these areas because management of these aquifers must be integrated.*

Te arotake i te whakahaeretanga: Te panonitanga o te mahere wai ariki

Reviewing management: The geothermal plan change

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS PLAN CHANGE?

The Resource Management Act requires regional plans to be reviewed every 10 years. The geothermal chapter of the Regional Natural Resources Plan was last updated in 2008. The Rotorua Geothermal Plan became operative in 1999.

Additionally, the Rotorua Geothermal Regional Plan is being integrated into the geothermal chapter in the Regional Natural Resources Plan (RNRP), so it makes sense to check the existing region-wide provisions at the same time.

Council is reviewing the geothermal provisions in both [Regional Natural Resources Plan](#) and the [Rotorua Geothermal Regional Plan](#) and will then combine these through [Plan Change 11 \(PC11\)](#) into a single geothermal chapter in the [Regional Natural Resources Plan](#).

WHAT ISN'T CHANGING?

We don't think that any fundamental changes are required to the current management approach for geothermal systems outside of the Rotorua Geothermal System. We are not proposing any:

- Changes to the existing Geothermal Management Group system classifications.
- Allocation limits for systems (aside from the Rotorua geothermal system).

WHAT COULD CHANGE?

The Regional Policy Statement (RPS) has identified the management purpose for each system that we need to work towards (our end goal). We need to check whether the provisions in the regional plan are the best way to achieve this.

Most of the changes that we are considering relate to updating the existing provisions as per best practice principles for policy drafting, simplifying and streamlining where possible, and updating the formatting and numbering to be consistent with the National Planning Standards.

Although we don't anticipate a large degree of change from what is in our existing plan, areas where we think substantive changes may be needed are to:

- Provide more guidance within the policies to help applicants and consenting staff understand each system's management purpose, including the requirement for and use of System Management Plans/strategies.
- The inclusion of new provisions to better protect significant geothermal features from use and development.
- Streamlining provisions relating to the drilling of wells.
- Provide more guidance relating to geothermal natural hazards roles and responsibilities.

We want your feedback about whether there are other parts of the plan where improvements are required.

Ko te aha te tukanga me te angawā?

What's the process and timeframe?

We will develop a draft regional plan for public feedback, before publicly notifying a formal proposed regional plan change for submissions and hearings under Schedule 1 of the RMA. There will be several chances for people to tell us what they think before we get to the end.

We're still in the early stages of this process, and we don't expect to release a draft plan until later in 2024 with a notified proposed plan to follow in early 2025.

It's important to note that recent changes signalled by Central Government may impact our timeframes. However, we are currently working towards the timeframe below. We are sharing this to give you an idea of what we're thinking and start the conversation.

MARCH/APRIL 2024

Early discussions on Draft Regional Plan Change

JULY 2024

Draft Regional Plan Change released for public consultation

MARCH 2025

Notification of Proposed Regional Plan Change

MID 2025

Submissions on Proposed Regional Plan Change

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