

From: [Andrew Esler](#)
To: [Regional Plan](#)
Subject: Submission on Greater Wellington Regional Council's Proposed Plan Change 1 to the Natural Resources Plan.
Date: Friday, 15 December 2023 3:17:09 pm

From: AJ Esler
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Hi,

I am a packrafter in the Wellington region.

My primary interest in the whitua is whitewater paddling on rivers.

The water bodies and coastal environments I use most often for paddling are the Whaitua are

Te Awakairangi / the Hutt River, particularly:

The section from Kaitoke Regional Park (Rivendell) to Twin Lakes Rd.

The section from the confluence of the Akatarawa and Hutt Rivers to Māoribank Park (particularly the section of river next to the Hutt Valley Canoe Club clubrooms at Hoggard Park)

The rivermouth, including paddling up the Waiwhetu Stream at times

The Whakatikei River

Te Whanganui a Tara / Wellington Harbour, particularly:

Porirua Harbour and Titahi Bay

Lyll Bay

Primarily I value the water quality values of these areas for contact recreation (and ecosystem health by association – as healthy ecosystems support better water quality for contact, such as by limiting algal growth). I also note a huge part of the value of the rivers in the above list for me is their natural form and character. It is the natural form and character that create the rapids and other features of these sections of river that make them so valuable for pack rafting.

Te Awakairangi / the Hutt Gorge in particular is an outstanding run for whitewater paddling, which traverses what we would consider an outstanding landscape with outstanding amenity values. It is regularly paddleable through winter and offers grade 3-5 runs at varying flows that is comparable with some of the best runs in Aotearoa. I would like to see the outstanding value of this section of river recognised in the plan.

Generally, the Hutt Gorge is paddleable at flows above 6-8 m³/s on the Kaitoke gauge. The lower section (confluence of the Akatarawa down) is best at about 15-25 m³/s on the Birchville gauge. Paddling on the rapid at Hoggard Park can generally be done at any flow. The Akatarawa River is paddleable when there has been a lot of rain, as is the Whakatikei.

The natural and wildlife values of these areas are also important to me. I regularly participate in trips with local canoe clubs, one of which runs a trap line along the Hutt Gorge to trap pests and protect native birds.

Issues I see in the whitua

I regularly paddle the Hutt river when flows increase and notice considerable amounts of sediment. This has obvious implications for the amenity value of the river when I paddle it – making it less desirable to be ‘in’ the water as well as making it more difficult to see people through the water should any paddlers ever be in a situation where they are required to rescue someone from under the water. There are also presumably higher e. coli and pathogen loads in this water.

Further downstream, I often notice algae and toxic algae in summer when flows are low. Again, not only does this create an issue for recreation and amenity values, but also for human health and contact with the water.

In some parts of Te Awakairangi, I am aware there are antiquated pieces of river ‘engineering’ (such as railway iron). This degrades the quality of the river in this section and presents a hazard for paddlers. I note willows can also present a hazard to boaters as can forestry slash and logs which can end up in rivers and cause fatalities.

My general position on the plan change

I support Proposed Plan Change 1 and the initiatives GWRC is trying to introduce to improve water quality in the catchment. I would like to see these carried through to the operative plan, particularly where they protect and restore ecosystem health, contact recreation values, natural form and character, and amenity.

I understand these are a priority under Te Mana o te Wai. I support the Te Mana o te Wai concept and the hierarchy of obligations and want to see ecosystem health and contact recreation prioritised.

Key issues for me are water quality (particularly e. coli, sediment, algal growth/periphyton, and ecosystem health); amenity; contact recreation; and natural form and character.

I support the targets in the water quality target tables. I want to see as much done as possible through environmental limits to achieve these targets.

I would like to see the outstanding kayaking / packrafting / rafting values in the Whaitua recognised in the plan, particularly for the Hutt Gorge (which has outstanding kayaking, amenity, and landscape values).

I would like to see GWRC do more to monitor and preserve natural character, and to strengthen objectives, policies, and rules which allow the river to function more naturally, particularly in its reaches influenced by flood protection. I would like to see targets for natural character that are similar to the sorts of targets we set for water quality. And I would like to see objectives and policies that support these.

I would like to see more done to enhance water quality in the coastal environment, so I can use these ‘flat water’ environments for learning and training without worrying about compromising my health if I come into contact with the water. I would like to see coastal water quality indicators/targets retained.