

Regulatory Barriers and Frameworks to Promote Better Environmental Outcomes On-Farm in New Zealand June 2023

Introduction

Ensuring better environmental outcomes is crucial in maintaining a sustainable agricultural sector. Given the symbiotic relationship between farming and the environment, agricultural activities can significantly affect water quantity and quality. Dairy farmers, in particular, acknowledge the impact of their practices on the environment, and many are exploring ways to minimise such impacts.

Various environmental mitigation measures are available, with costs ranging from a few hundred dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars. For instance, bioreactors, which are permeable bags filled with wood chips/sawdust and placed in waterways and culverts, can filter water, and remove nitrates. On the other hand, large, constructed wetlands can enhance water quality and promote greater biodiversity. Despite the difference in scale regulatory approvals for these mitigation measures are similar, and there may be low-cost options for farmers in the future that are precluded by this onerous process.

While trialing tools and approaches to improve on-farm environmental performance through the Living Water Partnership and Fonterra Sustainable Catchments programmes, regulatory challenges were identified that might prevent landowners from wanting to carry out improvement actions. We outline some examples from our work and suggest options for improving the process for applications providing environmental benefit in the agricultural sector. By highlighting the challenges and suggesting solutions, we are aiming to primarily assist the regional and district authorities in simplifying their regulatory processes.

Background

Living Water is a partnership between the Department of Conservation and Fonterra that is trialing tools, methods, and approaches to enable farming, freshwater and healthy ecosystems to thrive side-by-side. In addition Fonterra delivered a regionally based Sustainable Catchments programme that provided support and funding to organisations, catchment groups and individuals to complete environmental improvement activities. In a number of instances, like the construction of sediment traps or wetlands, these activities have required resource consent.

Environmental restoration is an essential process for reversing the damage caused by human activities and protecting New Zealand's ecosystems. However, several barriers can hinder the success of environmental restoration efforts. Some of these barriers include:

- **Lack of funding:** Environmental restoration efforts require significant financial resources, and a lack of funding can be a significant barrier to achieving restoration goals. Funding limitations can prevent the implementation of restoration projects, which can lead to the continuation of environmental degradation.
- **Complex regulatory requirements:** The regulatory requirements for environmental restoration can be complex, requiring extensive planning and permits. These requirements can create significant delays and increase the cost of restoration efforts, which can discourage restoration activities.
- **Limited stakeholder involvement:** Stakeholder involvement is essential for successful restoration efforts at landscape scale, but limited stakeholder involvement can be a significant barrier. This is a particular problem with Iwi engagement currently due to the significant expectations of consultation currently placed on Iwi and Hapū. Consultation with multiple agencies, for example, LINZ, DoC, and Local authorities often make

applications in waters ways cumbersome from a consultation point of view the exclusion of stakeholders can lead to a lack of support for restoration projects, which can impede progress.

- Limited expertise and resources: The success of environmental restoration efforts depends on the availability of expertise and resources. A lack of expertise, particularly ecologists currently, and resources can hinder the effectiveness of restoration projects and prevent the achievement of restoration goals.
- Lack of clear regulatory guidance: The lack of clear regulatory guidance has created uncertainty for restoration projects. This uncertainty can make it difficult for restoration projects to comply with regulatory requirements, leading to delays, cost increases and projects simply not proceeding.

Previous Work on Regulatory Barriers

A NIWA report prepared for DairyNZ and MBIE April 2020 [Regulatory barriers to uptake of farm-scale diffuse pollution mitigation measures](#). An assessment of Regional Plan requirements and regional council incentives provides a comprehensive overview of the issues with worked examples. It covers both regulatory barriers and incentives and provides the following conclusion:

Although construction or implementation of a mitigation in or near the beds of rivers and other natural waterbodies almost inevitably will require resource consent, it might be possible to streamline the consenting process. New restricted discretionary rules that specifically target the suite of activities associated with implementing mitigations could be developed as part of plan change/review processes. Researchers and experienced practitioners could provide information to assist with the development of these rules. This information could also serve as guidance to assist council staff with their assessment of resource consent applications, thereby further streamlining the consenting process.

Although all but one regional council provides funding to support landowners with implementation of diffuse pollution mitigation measures, accessing the funding isn't necessarily straightforward. Application processes are specific to each council and information on websites is not always complete or current. While a land or catchment management officer is the logical point for initial contact, many councils administer multiple funds and landowners may need to engage with other council staff as well (e.g., biodiversity officers).

We are expanding on these conclusions, providing some worked examples where councils could further empower on farm mitigation to occur.

Current Regulatory Processes

Resource Consenting

The resource consent process in New Zealand is a legal requirement under the Resource Management Act 1991 (and any subsequent iteration of the Spatial Planning Bill and Natural and Built Environment Bill) that ensures that any activity or development that may have an impact on the environment is appropriately managed and regulated. The process usually involves several stages and usually takes several months to complete. Below is an outline of the resource consent process in New Zealand:

- Pre-application stage: Before submitting an application for resource consent, the applicant should undertake pre-application discussions with the relevant council, stakeholders, and the community. This stage helps to identify any potential issues, concerns or objections that may arise during the application process.
- Application stage: Once the pre-application stage is complete, the applicant can submit an application for resource consent to the relevant council. The application must include detailed information on the proposed activity or development, its potential effects on the environment, and how these effects will be managed and mitigated.
- Council assessment: After the application is received, the council will assess it to ensure it is complete, and all necessary information is included. The council will then notify the applicant if any additional information is required.
- Notification stage: If the application is complete, the council will notify the public of the proposed activity or development. The notification process may involve public notices, letters to potentially affected parties, and a publicly accessible website.

- **Submission period:** During this stage, any interested parties can make a submission on the proposed activity or development. Submissions must be made within the specified timeframe and should outline any concerns or issues with the proposal.
- **Council decision:** After the submission period, the council will consider all submissions and make a decision on the resource consent application. The council may grant the resource consent, decline it, or grant it subject to certain conditions.
- **Appeals process:** If the council declines the resource consent application or grants it with conditions that the applicant disagrees with, they may appeal the decision to the Environment Court. Alternatively, any submitter who is unhappy with the council's decision can also appeal to the Environment Court.
- **Implementation and monitoring:** If the resource consent is granted, the applicant must implement the activity or development in accordance with the consent conditions. The council may also monitor the activity or development to ensure compliance with the consent conditions.

The resource consent process aims to balance economic, social, and environmental considerations to ensure sustainable development and the protection of the environment, although given the complexity outlined above, the process itself often becomes the single biggest impediment to small scale environmental restoration projects.

Consenting a Wetland Restoration

The proposal for wetland construction in Greenpark involved the restoration or construction of a 4-hectare wetland in the Ararira/LII catchment of Selwyn District. Multiple consents were required for works in the waterway, dam and diversion, and water take, and the process took almost 12 months to complete. The estimated cost for both the consent and consultant needed for the actual construction is over \$40,000. The applicant could have potentially improved their application by providing more detailed information on the wetland's ecological benefits and proposing alternative solutions to reduce costs. The consultation with the Council was positive, but the Consents department had no prior experience with similar applications. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the wetland project will proceed due to the prohibitive costs involved. One factor that contributed to the cost was the inclusion of Niwa wetland guidelines, which increased complexity and added to the project's overall expenses.

Consenting Costs

The cost of consenting can vary widely depending on several factors, including the type of project, its location, and the level of complexity involved in obtaining consent. Some of the key costs associated with obtaining consent include:

- **Application fees:** Most local councils and regional authorities charge application fees for consent applications. These fees can range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars, depending on the type of consent required and the level of complexity involved.
- **Consultant fees:** It is often necessary to hire consultants to assist in preparing and submitting consent applications. These fees can be significant, particularly for larger or more complex projects.
- **Legal fees:** Often legal advice may be required to help navigate the consenting process. Legal fees can be high, particularly if the consenting process becomes contentious.
- **Mitigation costs:** Some consent applications may require mitigation measures to offset the environmental impacts of the proposed project. These measures can be expensive, particularly if they involve habitat restoration, ecological monitoring, or other complex activities.
- **Delay costs:** The consenting process can be lengthy, and delays can add significantly to the overall cost of the project. Delays can occur for many reasons, including public opposition, incomplete applications, or resource constraints.

The cost of consenting can be substantial, consent application fees alone start at \$2000 and can exceed \$250,000 for larger or complex projects. However, the cost of consenting must be weighed against the potential environmental and social impacts of the proposed project. By working closely with regulatory agencies and engaging with stakeholders early in the process, you can often reduce the overall cost of consenting and increase the chances of a positive outcome.

Opihi College Wetland

The proposed Opihi College Wetland project, located in Temuka, South Canterbury, requires multiple consents for works in the waterway, dam and diversion, and water take. The process for obtaining these consents is expected to take several months, and the estimated cost for both the consent and consultant needed for the actual construction is \$25,000. The applicant could have potentially improved their application by providing more detailed information on the project's potential environmental impact and proposed mitigation measures. In terms of consultation with ECan/councils, while they were willing to provide assistance with earthworks, they were limited in their ability to help with the consents. Overall, the project has received outstanding community support, and consents have been identified as the biggest barrier to initiating the works.

Consenting Timeframes

The timeframes for consenting can vary widely depending on several factors, including the type of project, its location, and the level of complexity involved in obtaining consent.

Some of the key factors that can affect the timeframes for consenting in New Zealand include:

- **Type of consent:** The timeframes for obtaining different types of consents can vary significantly. For example, simple land-use consents may take several weeks to process, while more complex consents, such as resource consents for large infrastructure projects, may take several years.
- **Level of complexity:** The level of complexity involved in obtaining consent can also affect the timeframe for completion. Projects that have an elevated level of complexity, such as those involving significant environmental impacts or public opposition, may take longer to process.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Engaging with stakeholders early in the consenting process can help to identify potential issues and address them before they become significant. However, stakeholder engagement can also add time to the consenting process, particularly if stakeholders have differing opinions or concerns.
- **Public notification:** The public notification process is required for some types of consents, and it can add months to the overall timeframe for obtaining consent. The public notification process can also result in opposition or objections, which can further delay the consenting process.
- **Regulatory agency workload:** The workload of regulatory agencies can also affect the timeframe for consenting. If regulatory agencies are experiencing a high volume of consent applications, the processing time for individual applications may be longer than usual.

It is important to allow sufficient time for the consenting process. The exact timeframe will depend on the specific circumstances of the project, and it is important to work closely with regulatory agencies and engage with stakeholders early in the process to help ensure a timely and successful outcome.

National Environmental Standards

The National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-FW) is a set of regulations established by the New Zealand government in 2020 to improve and protect the quality of the country's freshwater resources. The NES-FW sets a national baseline for freshwater management and outlines the minimum requirements for water quality that must be met by all freshwater bodies in the country.

The NES-FW includes provisions for water quality and quantity, and freshwater ecosystem health. Specifically, it sets out standards and requirements for the following:

- **Nitrogen and phosphorus:** maximum levels of nitrogen and phosphorus that can be present in freshwater bodies. These nutrients can contribute to algal blooms and affect aquatic ecosystems.
- **Microbiological quality:** presence of E. coli in freshwater, which can indicate the presence of harmful pathogens.
- **Clarity and light:** clarity of freshwater, as well as the amount of light that can penetrate the water column. These measures can affect the growth and survival of aquatic plants and animals.
- **Dissolved oxygen:** minimum levels of dissolved oxygen required in freshwater to support aquatic life.

- Temperature: temperature of freshwater, which can affect aquatic organisms and ecosystem health.
- River flow and levels: minimum and maximum river flows and levels to ensure that aquatic ecosystems are not unduly affected by water use.

The NES-FW is implemented through the Resource Management Act 1991 and requires individual regional councils to develop freshwater plans to meet the standards set out in the NES-FW. Regional councils are responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with the NES-FW.

The National Environmental Standards for Freshwater is a valuable tool for managing and protecting New Zealand's freshwater resources. By setting clear standards and requirements, the NES-FW endeavors to provide a consistent approach to freshwater management across the country and ensure that freshwater ecosystems are protected for future generations though can further complicate the consenting process.

Regional Plans

Regional Plans are statutory documents that outline how the region's natural and physical resources will be managed and used. These plans are developed by regional councils in accordance with the Resource Management Act, which requires councils to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources in their regions.

The regional council plans typically include the following components:

- Resource management policies: These set out the overall goals and objectives for managing natural and physical resources in the region. They provide a framework for making decisions on resource management issues, such as water quality, land use, and biodiversity.
- Regional rules and regulations: These are specific provisions that regulate how natural and physical resources can be used and developed in the region. They may include rules for water allocation, discharge of contaminants, and the protection of significant natural areas.
- Implementation methods: These outline how the policies and rules will be implemented and enforced. They may include monitoring and reporting requirements, as well as provisions for consultation with the public and other stakeholders.
- Monitoring and review: These provide a framework for monitoring the effectiveness of the plan and for reviewing and updating it, as necessary. They ensure that the plan remains relevant and up to date with changes in the region's natural and physical resources.
- Regional council plans in New Zealand are developed through a collaborative process involving consultation with the public, iwi (Māori tribes), and other stakeholders. This process ensures that the plans reflect the aspirations and concerns of the community and promote sustainable management of the region's natural and physical resources.

Regional council plans in New Zealand play an essential role in promoting the sustainable management of natural and physical resources in the region. They provide a framework for decision-making and promote collaboration and consultation with the public and other stakeholders to ensure that the region's resources are used and managed in a sustainable way.

In-Line Sediment Traps

As part of the Living Water Ararira/LII project, two sediment traps were constructed on farm. These simple inline structures allow sediment to collect in one point on a stretch of drain and restrict mechanical removal of the silt to this one area rather than the entire reach. The environmental benefits in not disturbing habitat and reducing sediment discharges are significant. The resource application process necessitated three resource consent applications at a cost of \$7500. This is in comparison to the \$2500 cost of the actual works occurring. Ownership of these consents at the end of this trial is also an issue and may require the consents to be surrendered and sediment traps left to fill in naturally.



Status of Activity

Under the RMA (Resource Management Act), activities are classified into three categories: permitted, non-complying, and discretionary these are given effect to under the relevant Regional Plans and are considered in the following way:

- Permitted activities are those that are allowed to proceed without requiring a resource consent. These activities are considered to have minor or no impact on the environment and can proceed subject to certain standards and conditions.
- Non-complying activities are those that do not meet the rules and standards set out in the relevant plan. These activities require resource consent and are assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not they can proceed. Non-complying activities are considered to have a potentially significant adverse impact on the environment.
- Discretionary activities are those that are neither permitted nor non-complying. These activities require resource consent and are assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not they can proceed. Discretionary activities are considered to have an adverse effect on the environment but may be able to proceed subject to certain conditions that mitigate their effects.

Status of Activity - Bundling of Applications

Regional Council bundle resource consent applications for a given activity, for example a wetland restoration project may require a consent for: Works in a waterway, dam and diversion, construction phase sediment discharge and a water take. When applications are bundled the status of the entire application defaults to the strictest status and may require significantly more detail than would be otherwise needed. A recent wetland restoration project Selwyn District required significant more assessment of effects than was likely necessary due to the works the waterways becoming non-complying and therefore the other simpler parts of the process needed to be assessed at this higher standard. It is likely this increased the cost of application by 40-50%.

Potential Mechanisms for Change

Obtaining resource consents and making plan changes can be a complex and lengthy process that requires careful preparation and engagement with local councils and stakeholders. The following are suggestions for groups to continue to engage with and encourage their councils to consider.



Application Guidebooks/ Checklists

Resource consent application guidebooks are resources that provide information and guidance on how to prepare and submit a resource consent application in New Zealand. These guidebooks are typically published by local councils or government agencies responsible for administering the Resource Management Act (RMA).

Further development of resource consent application guidebooks and checklists are a useful way to enable more groups and individuals to make robust, cost-effective applications. There are a number of these guides available, though more targeted to on farm environmental restoration would be helpful.

Resource consent application guidebooks provide detailed information on the consenting process, including the types of activities that require resource consent, the information required in a consent application, and the steps involved in the assessment and decision-making process. They may also include guidance on how to prepare specific types of consent applications, such as land-use consents or discharge consents.

Guidebooks can be useful tools for applicants, providing a clear and concise explanation of the consenting process and the requirements for a successful application. They can also help to ensure that applications are complete and meet the requirements of the RMA, reducing the likelihood of delays or requests for further information.

In addition to guidebooks, many local councils and government agencies offer pre-application advice services, where applicants can seek guidance on their proposed activities and the consenting process before submitting a formal application. This can be a useful way to identify potential issues and ensure that applications are well-prepared and tailored to the specific requirements of the local council or agency.

A resource consent form in checklist manner similar to the Environment Canterbury onsite wastewater disposal application where the user is guided to the completion of the AEE (Assessment of Environmental Effects) rather than having to write it themselves could be useful mechanism for small scale restoration activities. This would be suitable for small scale mitigation i.e., Sediment traps, wetland restoration and riparian planting where the effects are more than likely to be less than minor and in fact beneficial. This would not cover wetland construction or dam and diversions of waterways as they necessitate a more comprehensive assessment of environmental effects.

The New Zealand Landcare Trust in collaboration with ECan and industry developed a guidebook for on farm wetland restoration. This is a useful resource and further development of this for other aspects such as works in waterways, sediments traps and two stage channels would help the application process for farmers and community groups.

The further use of resource consent application guidebooks and guided applications forms could form a valuable resource for reducing regulatory impediments. By following the guidance provided in these resources, applicants can ensure that their applications are well-prepared and have the best chance of success and regulators can be satisfied they have provided a streamlined process while covering their statutory obligations.



Plan Changes and Submissions

The plan change process in New Zealand is a legal process used to amend a local council's district plan. District plans are the primary documents used by local councils to regulate land use and development within their jurisdiction. The plan change process is intended to be a transparent and consultative process that allows members of the public to have their say on proposed changes to the district plan.

The plan change process typically involves the following steps:

- **Preparation:** The local council prepares a draft plan change, which sets out the proposed changes to the district plan. This may involve technical analysis, research, and consultation with stakeholders.
- **Public notification:** Once the draft plan change is prepared, the local council must publicly notify the proposed changes. This involves publishing a public notice and making copies of the proposed changes available for inspection by the public.
- **Submissions:** Members of the public have an opportunity to make submissions on the proposed changes. Submissions can be made either in writing or in person at a hearing. The submission period typically lasts for several weeks or months.
- **Further submissions:** After the submission period has ended, submitters can make further submissions in response to other submissions that have been received.
- **Hearings:** If there are any unresolved issues or significant concerns raised in submissions, a hearing may be held to allow submitters to present their views in person. The hearing is typically chaired by a commissioner, or a panel of commissioners appointed by the local council.
- **Decision:** After considering all the submissions and evidence presented at the hearing, the commissioner or panel makes a decision on the proposed changes. This decision is typically in the form of a recommendation to the local council.
- **Appeals:** If a submitter or the local council is not satisfied with the decision, they may appeal to the Environment Court.

While this process is intended to promote sustainable development and ensure that plans align with changing community needs, there are several risks associated with it including:

- **Delayed decision-making:** The plan change process can be a lengthy and time-consuming process. Delays can occur due to factors such as stakeholder conflicts, legal challenges, and changes in government regulations. These delays can lead to uncertainty for developers, causing them to postpone or cancel projects.

- **Increased costs:** The plan change process can be expensive, especially for parties who need to engage legal and planning experts to navigate the complex regulatory requirements. This can increase development costs, making it difficult to justify the projects proposed.
- **Reduced flexibility:** Once a plan change has been adopted, it can be difficult to make further changes. This can limit the ability of local councils to respond to changing community needs and may lead to the adoption of plans that become outdated quickly.

Given the plan change process is a lengthy and complex process, it will be necessary for community and catchment groups to engage collectively, also considering partnering with industry where there is alignment.

It is important to engage with the local council and other stakeholders early in the process to ensure that concerns are raised and addressed. By participating in the plan change process, members of the public can help shape the future of their local communities and protect the environment, but given the time and complexity involved this is more achievable collectively.



Global Consents

Global consents refer to a type of resource consent that allows an applicant to undertake multiple activities or projects within a defined geographical area under a single consent. This approach is intended to streamline the consenting process and reduce the regulatory burden on applicants by consolidating the consent requirements for multiple projects or activities.

Global consents are particularly useful for projects that may require multiple consents across different activities, such as earthworks, water discharges, and takes. By obtaining a global consent, the applicant can avoid the need to obtain multiple separate consents, which can be time-consuming and costly.

To obtain a global consent an applicant must submit a comprehensive application that includes information on all the activities or projects they intend to undertake under the consent. The application must demonstrate how the proposed activities will be managed and how any potential adverse effects on the environment will be avoided, remedied, or mitigated.

The global consent process typically involves consultation with a range of stakeholders, including local councils, iwi, and other affected parties. If any issues or concerns are raised during the consultation process, the applicant may be required to modify their proposal or undertake further assessments to address these concerns.

Once the global consent is granted, the applicant is required to comply with the conditions set out in the consent. These conditions may include requirements for ongoing monitoring and reporting, as well as specific measures to mitigate or avoid adverse effects on the environment.

While global consents can provide benefits such as streamlining the consenting process and reducing the regulatory burden on applicants, they also pose several risks to the applicant, environment, and community interests.

One of the main risks of global consents is that they can result in a cumulative impact on the environment, particularly if multiple activities are permitted within a single geographic area. This can result in adverse effects on natural resources, such as water quality, biodiversity, and ecosystems. Additionally, the ability to assess and manage the potential environmental impacts of multiple activities under a single consent can be challenging, particularly if the activities have different timelines, scales, and locations.

Another risk of global consents is that they can limit public participation and consultation in the consenting process, particularly if the consent covers a large geographic area and multiple activities. This can limit the ability of affected parties, such as local communities and iwi, to have their say on the potential environmental and social impacts of the proposed activities.

Finally, there is a risk that global consents may not provide adequate oversight and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with consent conditions and environmental standards. This can result in adverse effects on the environment and community interests that may go unnoticed or unaddressed.

To address these risks, it is important to carefully consider the potential environmental and social impacts of multiple activities covered by a global consent, as well as engage in robust consultation with stakeholders to ensure that concerns are raised and addressed. Additionally, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the activities are carried out in compliance with consent conditions and environmental standards.



Permitted Activities

A range of environmental activities can be undertaken without a resource consent if they meet permitted activity standards. Normally this applies to activities where the risk of environmental harm is low and the activity to implement the activity is standardized or relatively simple. Where known solutions for standard on-farm mitigations are developed, there is an option to include these within the permitted activity status to allow the works to process without a consent. This could include activities such as two stage channels, small wetlands and off-line sediment traps.



Promoting Funding Sources

There are various environmental restoration incentives available in New Zealand, aimed at encouraging and supporting individuals, communities, and businesses to undertake restoration projects and protect the environment.

- **Funding:** There are government and non-government funding sources available to support environmental restoration projects in New Zealand. These can include grants, loans, and other financial incentives that can help cover the costs of restoration activities, such as planting trees, controlling pests, and restoring wetlands.
- **Community conservation initiatives:** There are numerous community-led conservation initiatives and programs in New Zealand, such as Trees That Count, which encourages the planting of native trees across the country, and Predator Free 2050, which aims to eliminate rats, stoats, and possums from New Zealand to protect native biodiversity.
- **Conservation covenants:** Conservation covenants are legally binding agreements between landowners and a conservation agency, such as the Department of Conservation, QEII Trust or a regional council. These agreements aim to protect and restore biodiversity values on private land, providing long-term protection for important habitats and species.
- **Certification and accreditation schemes:** There are a range of certification and accreditation schemes available in New Zealand that are beginning to recognize and reward environmentally sustainable and responsible practices. For example, Toitū carbonzero certification, which recognizes organizations that have achieved net zero carbon emissions.
- These incentives aim to encourage and support environmental restoration activities in New Zealand, recognising the importance of protecting the country's unique biodiversity and natural resources for future generations though applications can be onerous and often require third party assistance to complete.



Community Group Engagement Process

Facilitating groups to undertake environmental restoration projects can be a valuable way to engage communities and promote environmental stewardship. Here are some steps to facilitate groups in undertaking environmental restoration:

- **Identify the need and opportunity:** Identify the environmental restoration needs and opportunities in the community. This could include restoring a wetland or removing invasive species.

- **Build relationships:** Build relationships with local community groups, environmental organizations, and government agencies to establish a network of stakeholders interested in environmental restoration. This can help to identify potential partners and volunteers for restoration projects.
- **Plan the project:** Develop a project plan that outlines the restoration goals, objectives, and timelines. This can include mapping the restoration area, identifying the required resources and materials, and developing a budget.
- **Engage volunteers:** Recruit and engage volunteers to help with the restoration project. This can include community members, schools, businesses, and local organisations. Provide clear instructions, training, and safety guidelines to volunteers, and ensure that their contributions are recognised and appreciated.
- **Monitor and evaluate the project:** Monitor and evaluate the restoration project to assess its success and identify areas for improvement. This can include measuring the impact on the environment, tracking the number of volunteers and hours contributed, and gathering feedback from stakeholders.
- **Celebrate success:** Celebrate the success of the restoration project by recognizing and thanking volunteers, sharing project outcomes with the community, and highlighting the positive impact on the environment.

By facilitating groups to undertake environmental restoration projects, we can often derive alternate funding and in-kind assistance to reduce the regulatory burden.



Advocacy

There is the need for ongoing advocating for policy changes and other initiatives that protect and conserve the environment but allow appropriate processes to occur in a cost effective and timely manner. Advocacy can take place by:

- **Advocacy groups:** There are a range of environmental advocacy groups in New Zealand that work to influence policy and public opinion on environmental issues. Examples include Forest and Bird, Nature Conservancy, Landcare Trust. Outline this regulatory issue to them to include in their think pieces and conversations would assist facilitating an ongoing conversation.
- **Submissions to government:** The government frequently seeks public input on proposed policies and legislation. Environmental groups and individuals can submit their views and evidence to government consultations and select committee inquiries.
- **Lobbying MPs:** It may also be appropriate in some instances to meet with Members of Parliament to discuss concerns and advocate for policy change.

Ongoing advocacy can be a powerful way to promote change and further enable environmental restoration in New Zealand. By raising public awareness of environmental issues and the ongoing regulatory impediments and engaging with policymakers and industry leaders, advocacy can help to shape policies and practices that can protect and enhance our natural environment in a timely and cost-effective way.



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