

Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee  
from Stephen Thawley, Resource Advisor, Planning and Resources

## **Draft Water Allocation Plan for Kopuaranga River Catchment (September 1999)**

### **1. Purpose**

To seek approval from the Committee for the proposed minimum flows and allocation levels in the draft water allocation plan for the Kopuaranga River catchment, and to distribute the draft plan to interested parties, consent holders, and the general public for comment.

### **2. How the Plan has Developed**

There is a water allocation plan for the Kopuaranga River catchment currently in place that was first implemented in the late 1970's. Since that time resource use and environmental values have changed and it is appropriate to review the existing plan. Also as the majority of consents to abstract water in the catchment are due for renewal this year, the plan will provide valuable guidance in processing renewal consent applications.

The review and recommendations made have been prepared by assessing legislation and Regional Council planning documents, completing consultation with key interest groups and resource users, undertaking extensive field studies, and analysing water quantity and quality in the catchment. Initial consultation provided varied opinion in how the water resource in the Kopuaranga River should be managed. As a result of assessing statutory requirements and initial consultation, it is considered that any water use in the catchment should avoid or mitigate potential effects on water quality and instream habitat.

### **3. Proposed Minimum Flows and Allocation Levels**

Field studies have shown that the river characteristics required for instream habitat were satisfactory during low flow periods. However, some parameters started showing significant decline when the flow in the Kopuaranga River fell below 300 litres/sec at the Palmers Bridge gauging site. In addition to this it is shown that some water quality parameters in the Kopuaranga River are adversely affected, most likely due to low river flows.

It is proposed in the revised draft allocation plan that the core allocation and supplementary allocation level remain the same as the existing levels specified in the Freshwater Plan. The core allocation is the amount of water that can be abstracted from the river while the supplementary allocation flow level is a flow where additional water can be abstracted when the core allocation is fully utilised. The revised plan recommends that two new minimum flows be implemented:

1. At 300 litres/sec, all abstractions will be required to be reduced by 50% (based on flows at the Palmers Bridge gauging site).
2. At 250 litres/sec, all abstractions are to cease.

The minimum flows will control abstractions more effectively to mitigate and avoid potential adverse effects of abstractions on water quality and instream habitat during low flow periods.

### **4. Proposed Good Practice Guidelines**

There are good practice guidelines that are included in the revised draft allocation plan that will give assistance to resource users and Council staff in processing consent applications.

### **5. Key Implications**

The key implications of the proposed minimum flows and allocation levels in the revised draft allocation plan are:

1. That the Kopuaranga River catchment water resources will be fully allocated at the current allocation level. However, water will still be available at the supplementary allocation flow level.
2. That the minimum flow where abstractions are to cease is less than the current minimum flow,
3. That a new minimum flow be implemented where abstractions are to be restricted. This minimum flow is greater than the current minimum flow.

The revised draft allocation plan will not have statutory backing as a regional plan under the Resource Management Act 1991. The minimum flows and allocation levels will be incorporated into the Regional Freshwater Plan in the future as a variation of the Freshwater Plan.

Attached is a copy of Part 1 of the revised draft allocation plan (Appendix 1). A full copy of the plan (including supporting information) is available on request.

## **6. Recommendation**

- (1) *That the proposed minimum flows and allocation levels be adopted.*
- (2) *That the draft Kopuaranga River catchment water allocation plan (September 1999) be made available for public consultation and comment sought.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

Stephen Thawley  
Resource Advisor

Steve Blakemore  
Manager, Planning and Resources