

2. FURTHER SUBMISSIONS ON VARIATION 6 (CHRISTCHURCH GROUNDWATER PROTECTION ZONES) TO THE PROPOSED NATURAL RESOURCES REGIONAL PLAN

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Strategy and Planning, DDI 941-8177
Officer responsible:	Programme Manager – Healthy Environment
Author:	Jenny Ridgen, Programme Manager – Healthy Environment

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek retrospective adoption by the Council of the attached further submissions (Attachment 1) on Variation 6 (Christchurch Groundwater Protection Zones) to the Proposed Natural Resources Regional Plan (PNRRP) - Chapter 4: Water Quality. The submission was lodged with Environment Canterbury prior to the closing date of 28 March 2008.
2. For the Council to decide to either endorse or withdraw the further submissions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. Variation 6 aims to strengthen provisions protecting the quality of Christchurch groundwater, while still allowing for urban development when the effects on groundwater can be avoided or mitigated. In areas where groundwater is vulnerable to contamination, discharges of stormwater to the ground are restricted to roof runoff and discharges from stormwater treatment systems designed to avoid contamination of groundwater. Sewerage systems are required to be designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with best management practices.
4. The Variation establishes three Groundwater Zones: Zone 1 (high vulnerability); Zone 2 (transitional); and Zone 3 (low vulnerability). Four Sub-Zones are established within Zone 1 (Sub-Zones 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D) which recognise areas of existing activities on the shallow soils and stony gravels of the unconfined aquifer to the west of the city.
5. The Council's original submission (October 2007) supported the intention of the Variation which is consistent with a need to protect Christchurch groundwater resources and maintain its high quality into the future. The Council's concerns were that the provisions should be targeted appropriately to achieve the overall objective and that in protecting the resource ECan does not excessively constrain the ability for well designed development to continue.
6. A Summary of Decisions Requested on Variation 6 was notified on 23 February 2008 and the period for making further submissions closed on 28 March 2008. The further submissions process provides the Council with an opportunity to support or oppose submissions made by other individuals and organisations.
7. The majority of submitters on Variation 6 are industry groups, developers, residents and landowners, with particular interests in the city's urban-rural boundary, or the rural area beyond it within both the City and Selwyn District. The major focus of submissions were restrictions on the development of Zone 1 and Sub-Zones 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D, and the affect this new zoning regime would have on present and further development. There are concerns that the status of some activities, particularly those relating to stormwater, are too restrictive. Other areas of concern include the policies and rules relating to the management of hazardous chemicals, landfills and quarrying.
8. In summary the main points of the CCC further submissions:
 - Oppose requests for amendments that would allow for additional development beyond that already provided for (with an associated increase of risk to groundwater quality).
 - Oppose requests for amendments that would allow increases in the scale and type of lawfully established industries with regard to their use of hazardous substances through Policy WQL14 and Policy WQL15 and Policy WQL19 within Christchurch Groundwater Protection Zone 1, or Sub Zones 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D.
 - Oppose requests to amend Policy WQL14 to allow for the establishment of new municipal or hazardous landfills within Christchurch Groundwater Protection Zone 1, or Sub Zones 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D.

- Oppose changes to Rule WQL5 (Stormwater onto land) which seek to amend conditions of discharge, from a specified roof area to a gross impermeable area for any site, and to amend the activity status so that discretionary activities are removed.
- Oppose submissions on Rule WQL7 (Stormwater onto land or into a river) to delete Sub-zones 1A and 1B from the conditions which trigger the requirement for a discretionary activity.
- Oppose submissions on Rule WQL55 (Use of Land for Mineral Extraction, Use of Specified Hazardous Substances, or the Discharge of Stormwater in Sub-Zones 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D) where submitters have requested to have the rule deleted, or to have Activity (3) (2) (a) and (c) deleted in relation to the non-complying status of the use of land for the storage of hazardous substances and mineral extraction.
- Support submissions that request clarity on terms used in the Variation, and changes that would better allow for strategic transport infrastructure consistent with implementation of the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The Council supports the intention of the Variation, which may have significant cost implications for Council, and which were discussed in the report on the main submission in October 2007. Council will need to demonstrate a best practice approach for storm water and sewerage infrastructure in areas where groundwater is vulnerable.

Maintaining high quality groundwater, which requires no treatment, has cost advantages. Also, while there is no guarantee that the submissions or further submissions will be accepted, if successful the amendments sought would reduce the cost of preparing resource consent applications for stormwater management and other Council infrastructure. On the other hand, policies requiring best management practice for the design, construction and maintenance of stormwater and sewerage systems in new urban developments, may mean that costs increase for some of these activities. These cost implications will need to be assessed as part of the LTCCP.

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2006-16 LTCCP budgets?

10. The cost of preparing and presenting submissions is covered by existing unit budgets.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

11. The RMA 1991 (First Schedule, Part 1 (6)) allows Council to make further submissions on a variation to a Regional Plan.

Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?

12. A legal review was carried out for the Council's original submission on Variation 6. The key recommendation was to seek better recognition of the balance required by Section 5 of the RMA which allows for a three-pronged approach of: "avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment." The further submissions were prepared in light of this advice.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

13. The submission seeks to make the Variation more practical and effective and is consistent with achieving the LTCCP objective "To conserve and protect the long-term availability and quality of the city's water." (p. 166).

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2006-16 LTCCP?

14. By providing a planning framework to protect the quality of Christchurch groundwater, Variation 6 helps to achieve a number of measures associated with the Council's water supply including: achievement of the highest Ministry of Health water supply grade possible without treatment of the water; and 90% customer satisfaction with water quality and taste, as set out on page 167 of the LTCCP process.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

15. This submission process supports work being done in preparation of Council Strategies on Surface Water and Water Supply. In particular, maintaining the high quality of the Christchurch municipal water supply, so that treatment remains unnecessary, supports the goals of the Water Supply Strategy (in development).

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

16. As above.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

17. A presentation on Variation 6 was made to the Joint Council/Community Board seminar on Monday 17 September 2007.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee endorse the proposed further submissions (Attachment 1) on Variation 6 (Christchurch Groundwater Protection Zones) to the PNRRP Chapter 4: Water Quality.