

Introduction

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (as amended in August 2017) directs all regional councils (including unitary authorities) to set regional targets to improve the quality of fresh water so they are suitable for primary contact more often. “Primary contact” includes swimming, and means people’s contact with fresh water that involves immersion in the water. Being suitable for primary contact more often includes improvements in water quality from one state to another (for example, you could use a colour code where moving from poorest to best quality is represented by orange to yellow, yellow to green, or green to blue).

All regional councils have worked together to use the best information available to identify:

- The improvements that will be made to water quality in rivers and lakes in the Southland region under programmes that are planned or underway
- When the anticipated water quality improvements will be achieved
- The likely costs of all interventions, and where these costs will fall

A report on these theoretical improvements and costs, presented region by region, is available [here](#). The assumptions and limitations of the modelling approaches taken are described in the report.

Regional context and focus

The overall state of the Southland region’s rivers and lakes is **62%** and **98%** swimmable (respectively). The regional priorities for Southland are to improve land and water management through the Southland Water and Land Plan and then to work closely with our communities to integrate action on the ground with development of limits through the Council’s People, Water and Land Programme.

Regional targets

The minimum primary contact targets for Southland, based on the modelling of programmes underway, are:

- **65.7%** of rivers and **98%** of lakes by 2030; and
- **80%** of rivers and **98%** of lakes by 2040.

Beyond 2040, Council intends to continue improving the percentage of rivers and lakes suitable for primary contact.

Regional process from here

The first step for Southland will be to resolve the appeals on and implement the Southland Water and Land Plan. This will improve land and water management in the region and contribute to ‘holding the line’ on water quality. The next steps will come through Council’s People, Water and Land programme. This programme will take a people-focused approach to integrating action on the ground with regulation (including limit-setting). Council intends to work in partnership to support an implementation first approach to support a thriving Southland.