SUBMISSION ON

Freshwater national direction – Water Storage

25 July 2025

To: Ministry for the Environment
Name of Submitter: Horticulture New Zealand
Supported by: Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association, Hawke's Bay Vegetable Growers Association, NZ Apples & Pears, NZ Kiwifruit Growers, Potatoes NZ, Summerfruit NZ, Tairawhiti Growers Association, Tomatoes NZ, Pukekohe Vegetable Growers Association, Vegetables NZ

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Horticulture™ New Zealand
Ahumāra Kai Aotearoa

OVERVIEW

Submission structure

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Our submission

Horticulture New Zealand (HortNZ) thanks the Ministry for the Environment for the opportunity to submit on freshwater national direction and welcomes any opportunity to continue to work with the Ministry for the Environment and to discuss our submission.

The details of HortNZ's submission and decisions we are seeking are set out in our submission below.

PART 1

HortNZ's Role

Background to HortNZ

HortNZ represents the interests of approximately 4,500 commercial fruit and vegetable growers in New Zealand who grow around 100 different fruits and vegetables. The horticultural sector provides over 40,000 jobs.

There are approximately 80,000 hectares of land in New Zealand producing fruit and vegetables for domestic consumers and supplying our global trading partners with high quality food.

It is not just the direct economic benefits associated with horticultural production that are important. Horticulture production provides a platform for long term prosperity for communities, supports the growth of knowledge-intensive agri-tech and suppliers along the supply chain, and plays a key role in helping to achieve New Zealand's climate change objectives.

The horticulture sector plays an important role in food security for New Zealanders. Over 80% of vegetables grown are for the domestic market and many varieties of fruits are grown to serve the domestic market.

HortNZ's purpose is to create an enduring environment where growers prosper. This is done through enabling, promoting and advocating for growers in New Zealand.

Industry value $7.48bn

Total exports $4.67bn

Total domestic $2.81bn

Source: Stats NZ and MPI

HortNZ's Resource Management Act 1991 Involvement

On behalf of its grower members HortNZ takes a detailed involvement in resource management planning processes around New Zealand. HortNZ works to raise growers' awareness of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) to ensure effective grower involvement under the Act.

PART 2

Executive Summary

Support for water storage

HortNZ supports the Government's efforts to replace the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM). We particularly support enabling policy for water storage.

Growers require a reliable supply of water to grow fruits and vegetables to feed New Zealanders and the world. Reduced consenting burden for water storage will enable our industry to continue our strong contribution to the Government's goal of doubling export value. Water storage also supports increased climate resilience as growing regions face longer and more frequent drought conditions.

HortNZ proposes the following drafting for the new objective in the NPSFM to encompass the many benefits of water storage:

> **Water storage is enabled to address water security as part of climate change resilience and to support social, environmental and economic outcomes.**

HortNZ seeks the following NPSFM policies to support managed aquifer recharge and the use of natural storage and conveyance:

- **The potential for natural storage and conveyance of water in aquifers is recognised and provided for.**
- **The potential for natural conveyance in surface water bodies is recognised and provided for.**
- **The potential for conveyance in artificial watercourses is recognised and provided for.**

HortNZ seeks the following NPSFM policies to provide for collective approaches to water storage and manage the timeframes for planning and achieving freshwater improvements.

- **Collective approaches are enabled to support the efficient and sustainable use of water at the FMU scale.**
- **Medium-term freshwater visions and actions plans are developed to enable and provide investment certainty for water storage.**

HortNZ supports an NES for Off-line Water Storage as a first step. More policy support is needed though, due to complexity in the regulation related to:

- harvesting water,
- building storage on-line,

- using groundwater storage,
- injecting water into groundwater,
- conveying stored water in streams and other open channel infrastructure,
- abstracting water from storage and using it,
- transferring allocation and consents between users and
- operating globalised consents.

PART 3

Submission

1. Horticulture and freshwater

Horticulture is a high value land use which produces healthy food for New Zealanders and the world. The sector makes $7.48 billion of value between the domestic and export markets,[1] all on less than 0.1% of New Zealand's land area.[2] Growing fruits and vegetables relies on access to water for irrigation, frost protection, and washing produce. Over 90% of horticultural crops are produced under irrigation.[3]

1.1. Importance of water storage for horticulture

Enabling water storage is a strategy to manage the compounding problems of increasing drought frequency and severity, limited water availability and declining freshwater quality and flow regimes for ecosystem health. Storage, whether in-stream, off-line, or in groundwater, will be a critical part of the solution to ensure there is enough water for current users and future horticultural use. The benefits of water storage include:

Climate resilience: Water storage supports the continued success of activities like horticulture during times of drought and low flows.

Doubling export value: Water storage can create certainty or provide the resources necessary to expand production of high value crops like kiwifruit and apples.

Addressing over-allocation: Storage can make more water available to land users by harvesting at high flow and reducing pressure at low flow to address over-allocation.

Protecting in-stream values: When water users have access to water storage, they won't need to take at low flows as frequently, protecting in-stream values and ecosystem health. Water storage can also be used to augment flows.

Enabling Māori development: With grandparenting in over-allocated catchments, new users cannot get access to water to develop their land. Water storage can provide those new users the water and security of supply, creating an opportunity for development of Māori land.

Transition to a low emissions economy: Water storage can support diversification to and expansion of low emissions activities like horticulture.

[1] HortNZ. Annual Report to March 2024. Accessed online 14/07/25.
[2] StatsNZ. Agricultural and horticultural land use. 15 April 2021. Accessed online 14/07/25.
[3] MPI. Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries. June 2025. (p. 50)

1.2. Water storage enables export growth

Horticulture is New Zealand's third largest primary sector export.[4] With 19% annual growth in 2025, horticulture is the fastest growing primary industry sector. Kiwifruit and pipfruit (apples and pears) are the key drivers of this growth, bringing in $3.9 billion and $1.1 billion respectively in the year ending June 2025. Organic horticulture is also growing rapidly, increasing 71% from 2020-2024.[5] The horticulture sector's continued growth will be a strong contributor to the Government's goal to double export value.

Access to water is often the main hurdle before a business diversifies or establishes itself in horticulture. Young trees and vines need more reliable access to water to reach maturity. Kiwifruit growing requires investing in a license as well, which costs hundreds of thousands of dollars per hectare.[6] Water storage can give businesses the confidence to invest in a new horticultural development or expansion because with water storage, they know they'll have the water needed to grow.

For some crops, water is used for frost fighting as well as irrigation. Access to water for frost fighting enables horticulture in regions where frosts pose a persistent risk to plant health.

1.2.1. THE MULTI-YEAR EFFECTS WHEN LACK OF WATER CAUSES PLANT STRESS

Access to water is especially important in times of drought or low flows. Establishing an orchard, in particular, requires significant capital investment and several years before trees or vines produce a commercially viable crop. There is a threshold at which trees and vines reach enough water stress that their productivity cannot bounce back in following years due to root die-back and reduced branching.[7] The financial returns growers get for their fruit are strongly influenced by fruit size. If water stress results in smaller fruit or a decline in plant health, continued production is less viable. If trees or vines reach that point and are no longer productive, it can take growers several years and more capital again to establish new plants.

When land transitions to horticulture, new growers may not need a greater water allocation than previous land uses. Unlike other land uses, horticulture does require more reliable access to water to prevent plant stress and ensure crops reach maturity. Water storage can provide that reliability.

2. The industry is committed to environmental improvements

The horticulture industry is committed to the efficient and sustainable use of water to produce healthy food for New Zealanders and the world. Using the right amount of fresh water and the right nutrient inputs at the right times ensures fruit will grow to match consumer demand and sustain plant health year on year. This is what drives good practice.

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[4] MPI. June 2025. *Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries*.
[5] OANZ. *2025 Organic Sector Market Report*. Accessed 19/06/25.
[6] Zespri. *Kiwiflier*. December 2024.
[7] Khaembah EN, Gee M, Moore T, Brown H. October 2023. *Rootstock survival for New Zealand orchards*. A Plant & Food Research report prepared for HortNZ.

Industry assurance programmes require comprehensive data and record-keeping to ensure growers meet market and regulatory standards. Before buying their product, domestic and export markets require growers to demonstrate Global G.A.P. or NZGAP certification. Global G.A.P. includes water management, and the NZGAP Environmental Management System (EMS) add-on requires irrigation planning and an assessment of the environmental risk of water use with appropriate mitigations planned or in place. HortNZ is encouraging all growers to sign up for the EMS in preparation for freshwater farm plans.

On average, orchards use a third of the water used by irrigated pasture. Orchards have lower leaching rates than most pastoral uses, and in most studies, nutrient leaching rates are similar to or less than unirrigated sheep and beef farming. Irrigation of fruit growing does not increase the water quality risk from this activity.

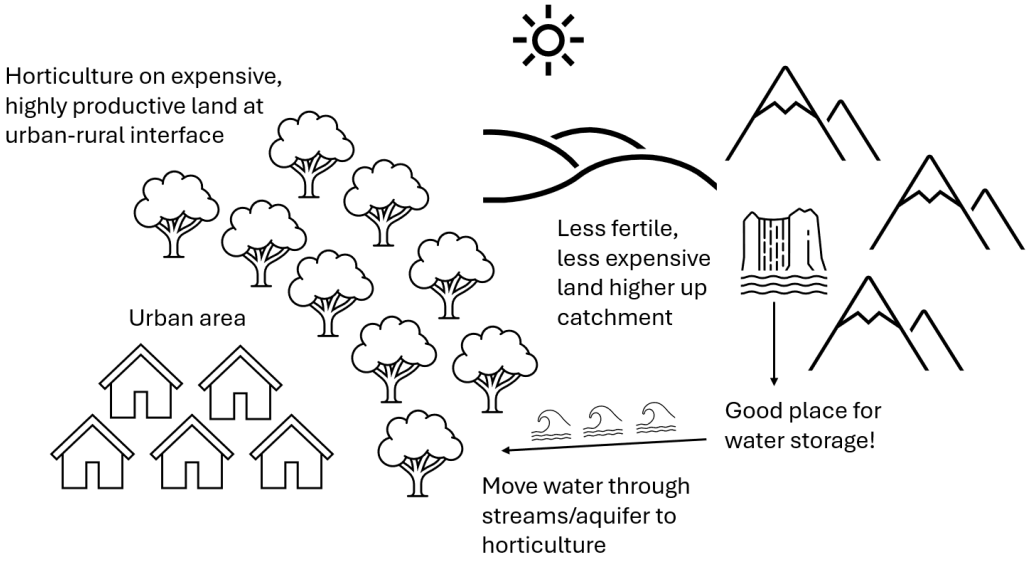
3. Why collective water storage and security needs to be enabled as a national priority

3.1. Locating storage up the catchment

Community water storage is often the most efficient solution in horticultural areas where groundwater is not sufficient. Orchards and market gardens tend to be small and located on the flat, highly productive land at the urban-rural fringe at the bottom of the catchment. They are not often adjacent to a river, which means that they cannot harvest surface water. Also, their land value tends to be high, and they do not have extra space for water storage. Most growers plant the full extent of their land (aside from setbacks required in plans), which contributes to the lack of space.

It may be a better use of land to locate water storage further up the catchment instead of on the lowlands. Covering the fertile soils used for horticulture with storage tanks or dams is a poor use of that resource. Community schemes can be based on lower value land, and then the water can be distributed to users via natural conveyance (using natural waterways and aquifers), water races or pipes.

Figure 1: The location of water storage can enable productive use of highly productive land



On-line storage can result in negative localised changes in hydrology, so a rigid interpretation of the "maintain" concept in the NPSFM encourages off-line single-farm-scale water storage instead. While that option is valid, the land most likely to be suitable for off-line single-farm storage would be pastoral rolling land intersected by streams with harvestable quick-flows. This land has much lower versatility than highly productive land in the lowlands.

Therefore, while off-line on-farm storage is an option for some growers, most horticultural land will need to be served by strategically located storage, either off-line, on-line or in groundwater. Stored water will need to be shared via transfers and globalised consents. This requires an ability in plans to account for the benefits of argumentation and assess them alongside localised effects associated with abstractions or storage. Otherwise, limits will be designed at a constrained scale.

The NPSFM policy to "avoid over-allocation" of limits makes it difficult to design consenting pathways for any activity other than through a grand-parented approach where existing resource use is slowly reduced, and limited flexibility is provided for resource users to respond by using resources in a more efficient and collective manner. More flexibility in water use can enable people to make choices about diversification and land use change. Some crops and farming systems need more water at different times of year, so a collective approach can manage these ebbs and flows across land uses.

HortNZ seeks the following policy to enable collective approaches to water storage:

> **Collective approaches are enabled to support the efficient and sustainable use of water at the FMU scale.**

3.2. The power of collective effort

The horticulture sector is organised around collectives – whether they're district associations (local grower groups), industry assurance group schemes, packhouse networks or even Zespri, which can be thought of as a mega-collective for export, research and development and extension. Our industry's penchant for organisation means that we are well-prepared to manage water collectively through irrigation schemes or water user groups in partnership with other land users. Collective water management can bring land users together to discuss broader questions of catchment management and how to make environmental improvements.

4. Vision under the future Planning and Natural Environment Acts

The Government has stated that the RMA will be replaced with two new acts: one to manage environmental effects and the other to enable urban development and infrastructure.[8] HortNZ's vision is that water storage will be proactively planned for under the Planning Act with linkages to water allocation decisions under the Natural Environment Act. This submission talks about the benefits of collective approaches to water storage. Community-

[8] Report from the Expert Advisory Group on Resource Management Reform. *Blueprint for resource management reform: A better planning and resource management system*. 2025. Accessed 21/07/25. (para 23)

scale schemes require millions of dollars of investment, which may require central or local government co-investment as well as planning support.

HortNZ imagines that a combination of spatial planning and the framework of the 30-Year Infrastructure Plan could be used to prioritise community-scale water storage and the activities it could support to grow export value. At the same time, the Natural Environment Act should have direction to feed into those infrastructure planning conversations recognising how water storage can support ecosystem health by reducing the effects of activities that use water on flow regimes. Planning for water storage under the Planning Act would fit under the Expert Advisory Group's proposed goal to "Plan and provide for infrastructure ahead of expected demand."[9]

The NES Off-Stream Water Storage will not speak to this strategic planning as it does not apply to collective approaches to water storage.

5. HortNZ's policy proposals

5.1. Managed aquifer recharge

The Government has committed to "cutting red tape and regulatory blocks" for managed aquifer recharge (MAR).[10] MAR is a type of water storage, in which surface water is stored underground in an aquifer, with the added benefit of preventing salinization of groundwater. This is how the Waimea Dam works: water from the dam is released to recharge the aquifer, before farmers and growers take up the water through their bores. Given that this discussion document does not contain any policies or standards to enable MAR, HortNZ will take this opportunity to outline what policy support we think is needed.

Most plans allow for harvesting water at high flow and then storing that harvested water in an on- or off-line dam. Some plans also allow for the water to be stored underground in an aquifer. Some plans allow for the stored water to be conveyed down a river or open channel irrigation race and taken out by land users downstream, but that is not commonly planned for. If it is more efficient to use natural systems than water races or pipes, water users should have a consenting pathway to do so. There are different ways of building storage systems, so flexibility should be provided.

HortNZ seeks policies that recognise the natural storage and conveyance of aquifers and natural conveyance of rivers and the use of those natural systems to balance the natural peaks and troughs of seasonal water supply with seasonal demand.

HortNZ seeks a policy in the NPSFM to support natural storage and conveyance with managed aquifer recharge as follows:

> **The potential for natural storage and conveyance of water in aquifers is recognised and provided for.**

[9] Report from the Expert Advisory Group on Resource Management Reform. *Blueprint for resource management reform: A better planning and resource management system*. 2025. Accessed 21/07/25. (Table 4)
[10] National, NZ First. 24 November 2023. "National-NZ First Coalition Agreement"; MfE. May 2025. *Discussion document: Freshwater*. (p. 24)

HortNZ seeks the following policies to support the use of surface waterbodies for the conveyance of stored water:

> **The potential for natural conveyance in surface water bodies is recognised and provided for.**
>
> **The potential for conveyance in artificial watercourses is recognised and provided for.**

Case Study: Gisborne Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR)

The Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan identifies the Waipaoa deep groundwater as over-allocated and proposes reductions in abstractions over time. The plan includes provisions to support water harvesting and policies supporting managed aquifer recharge. While it is possible under the plan to harvest water and recharge the groundwater with harvested water, it is a discretionary activity to abstract that harvested and stored water. This is because the harvested and stored water is stored in the groundwater, and any new abstractions from the groundwater are not provided for in the plan.

This case study highlights the need for national policy direction that supports the use of natural features, particularly aquifers, for water storage.

5.2. Support for an NPSFM objective

As part of this consultation, the Government has proposed a new objective or policy in the NPSFM to address water security as part of climate change resilience.

HortNZ supports the introduction of an objective in the NPSFM to address water storage as a national priority. There is a risk with the proposed drafting presented by MfE that councils will only be directed to enable water storage specifically for climate change resilience and not for other reasons.

There are many social, economic and environmental reasons why water storage is beneficial, in addition to climate adaptation. Water storage can provide security of water supply for businesses working toward doubling export growth. It can provide for a secure drinking water supply or augmentation to support recreation. It can support ecosystem health because it is less environmentally impactful to take harvested water than to take it directly from the waterway. In that sense, storage may support maintaining minimum flows in waterbodies during dry times of year, supporting aquatic life. These benefits are not contained within "climate change resilience".

HortNZ proposes the following objective drafting to encompass the many benefits of water storage:

> **Water storage is enabled to address water security as part of climate change resilience and to support social, environmental and economic outcomes.**

5.3. NPSFM policy to enable water security and storage

We recommend policies to support the design of water take limits and action plans, that are focused on enabling harvesting, storing (offline, in-line in aquifers), sharing and using water. The wording could be as follows:

> **Harvesting, storing and using stored water is enabled to improve water security over time, as part of climate change resilience.**
>
> **Collective approaches are enabled to support the efficient and sustainable use of water at the FMU scale.**

We support the "maintain and improve" objectives, policies and the NOF, including the retention of water quality bottom lines so decision makers can have confidence that increased water storage and irrigation will be managed to ensure that freshwater quality is maintained or improved. For horticulture, irrigation does not increase the risk of increased contaminant discharge loads.

5.4. Long-term limit for water abstraction

This section responds to the following consultation question.

Q. 18	Are there any other options we should consider? What are they, and why should we consider them?

Many waterbodies are overallocated today, and councils are progressing plans under the NPSFM to ensure that paper allocations match the true availability of water that can be abstracted while safeguarding ecosystem health. Water storage can be a solution to make sure people still have enough water with great enough reliability to carry on with their activities. However, water storage takes time and significant investment to build.

HortNZ sees a policy solution wherein land users are given a firm deadline for when clawbacks from non-harvested water allocation will take place. The period before that deadline must be sufficiently long to given land users time to put together a plan for storage, achieve resource consent (if not permitted under the proposed NES), and construct the storage. The period must be sufficiently short to incentivise land users to invest in the storage, rather than seeing it as a problem for the next generation. The long-term limit at the deadline needs to be ambitious but achievable and credible to truly push people to build storage.

To achieve this, the NPSFM should direct councils to adopt a long-term limit and an interim limit for water abstraction. At the same time, policymakers need to work out what is needed to make water storage socially and economically possible to achieve those limits and then make action plans to deliver on those needs. For example, water storage needs long-term consents to provide certainty for investment.

In the RMA replacement system, we see a greater role for supporting water storage in spatial planning and recognising that water storage is infrastructure and should be managed in a strategic manner.

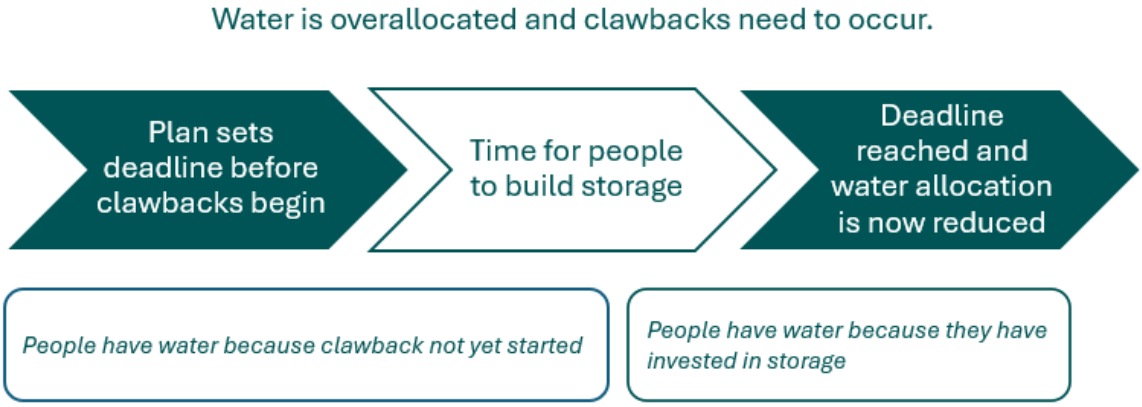
Councils should implement policies that enable water harvesting, storage and conveyance, making it possible to achieve volumes necessary under climate change scenarios and to

support irrigation. These enabling policies should be paired with council support for community storage where it has a wider community benefit.

HortNZ seeks the following policy in the NPSFM to provide for a staged approach to incentivise water storage:

> **Medium-term freshwater visions and actions plans are developed to enable and provide investment certainty for water storage.**

Figure 2: A firm deadline for clawbacks can incentivise water storage construction.



Case Study: Hawke's Bay TANK and Tukituki Water Storage

The Tukituki water storage scheme can supply water via abstraction from the lower Tukituki and reticulation to the Whakatu area. In the Whakatu area, there are a number of horticulture and primary industry commercial water users who draw water from the confined Heretaunga aquifer. The confined Heretaunga aquifer is fully over-allocated, and the regional council's TANK Plan seeks to reduce allocation for primary industry and irrigators while allowing the municipal use to increase, such that the overall abstraction is reduced over time. The reduction in the allocation for irrigators will have serious economic consequences if the reductions occur before storage is created to harvest water and replace some of the groundwater abstractions with stored water. Providing additional stored water is required to enable primary production and export growth.

The Tukituki stored water may be the first available stored water, now that the project is listed as part of the Fast-Track Approval process. In order for that water to be useful for the Heretaunga Plains, the ability to transfer water amongst users within the groundwater zones and to manage the groundwater abstractions as global consents is needed. The TANK Plan does provide provisions for transfer and global consents, but the spatial scale at which these transfers and global consents can occur is unclear. In HortNZ's opinion, the groundwater zone is a single hydrological unit, and the plan should provide the flexibility to transfer and globalise consents at any scale within that unit.

Establishing efficient globalised consents is precursor to making most storage options work on the Heretaunga Plains. Most irrigators do not have streams with harvestable

flows running though their orchards, so most will not be able to access water for on-farm storage. They will rely on storage being located elsewhere in the catchment and using transfers to switch and optimise water use.

The water users in the Heretaunga Palins have established a group 'Heretaunga Sustainable Water". They have developed a long-term vision and are working together to explore water storage and collective options to serve the Heretaunga plains, which include the Tukituki and other storage options within the Ngaruroro catchment.

This case study identifies how the design of freshwater resource take limits and water storage are interlinked. They need to be developed carefully to enable efficient water use within cumulative water body limits.

5.5. Globalised consents, transfer and storage

Establishing globalised consents and enabling the transfer of water between users is a precursor to enabling harvested and stored water to be used efficiently beyond the farm-scale. A rigid interpretation of the "maintain" concept under the NPSFM constrains options to allocate water differently to enable greater improvements in freshwater health at the river scale over time.

This rigid interpretation of the "maintain" concept would make building storage within any waterbody challenging. It may be challenging to harvest high flows if harvest results in any localised adverse effects on a tributary, no matter how minor impact on freshwater values. It may even be challenging when harvesting and augmentation provides an improvement in freshwater values downstream on the same waterbody.

While transfer of water needs to occur within a meaningful hydrological unit, even within a groundwater zone or sub-catchment, transferring water between users may have slightly different hydrological impacts in terms local draw-down. If a rigid interpretation of "maintain" is applied, it may prevent transfers that result in any adverse change, regardless of whether that change was minor or there were also benefits occurring because of the transfer on the same waterbody. Growers can only harvest water for on-farm water storage if their property is next to a surface water body. Provision is needed to enable the transfer of groundwater to other land users who cannot take surface water.

5.6. Who pays for storage?

Water storage infrastructure can support climate change adaptation by maintaining irrigation supply and maintaining stream flows as climate conditions shift. Where the purpose of storage is to offset reduced natural flows due to climate change, the benefit is collective and should not be paid for solely by irrigators. These environmental and public benefits justify shared investment.

Who pays for storage is closely linked to how water is allocated. The current first-in, first-served framework, developed through case law, prioritises historical use over efficient and sustainable use. This approach needs reform. Māori agribusinesses or land users transitioning to horticulture are often new users. These uses typically require more reliable water rather than more volume. To support Māori economic development, the cost of storage must be shared fairly among all users.

Current frameworks for water allocation prioritise domestic water supply, consistent with Te Mana o te Wai. We agree that access to safe drinking water is essential. That said, municipal users should be held to the same efficiency standards as rural users. Municipal supply should not be subsidised at the expense of those who don't use it. Given their scale and governance structures, municipal water suppliers are well-placed to contribute to or develop storage infrastructure.

Currently, new users, particularly irrigators, are often expected to bear the full cost of storage. This is not equitable. **The cost of water storage must be shared across all water users, including municipal suppliers,** especially as demand for water grows with the population. Reliable water supply for households is important, but municipal use can be held to efficiency standards without compromising its own availability or the availability of water for other essential productive uses.

5.7. Enabling policy needs to be strategic at the interface with water quality policy

While enabling water storage will bring great benefits to the industry, there are some potential concerns for ecosystem health and greenhouse gas emissions that need to be balanced with strategic policy direction.

The main benefit of water storage – accelerating land use change – is also a potential risk. Water storage lifts a constraint to intensified land use, which can lead to worsening water quality. Setting clear water quality limits ensures that unintended environmental consequences are addressed. In-stream storage can also disrupt downstream fish passage and modify habitats, so the design and location of storage needs consideration.

Water storage schemes should be paired with **robust water quality limits** to avoid increasing catchment loads and decreasing water quality from intensification.

6. National standards for off-line water storage

The Government has proposed new national standards to permit the construction of off-stream water storage. We support an NES for off-line water storage. The effects of developing off-line storage can be managed and should be enabled with a permitted activity standard.

We note, however, that off-line storage small enough to be a permitted activity is unlikely to be of sufficient scale to support the horticulture industry. On-line storage is also an important part of providing greater water resilience, though it is out of scope for this NES.

The following sections respond directly to sections of the discussion document that discuss water storage.

6.1. Comment on draft standards

Q. 19	What are your views on the draft standards for off-stream water storage set out in Appendix 2: Draft standards for off-stream water storage? Should other standards be included? Should some standards be excluded?

Councils are making changes to water allocation, including clawbacks in over-allocated catchments. Water storage can allow activities to continue while reducing effects on flow regimes, but users need time to transition and for barriers to building storage to be removed. **National direction to manage the transition** is needed, to ensure a workable rate of change.

An NES could assist with supporting water storage through a consenting pathway for off-line storage, although this is not the most complex type of storage to design. It could also assist by providing for policy support to enable transfers and global consents, as those are the precursors to storage operating efficiently.

The NES Freshwater did not include an intensification rule associated with increased irrigation area. HortNZ supported this because land use change from unirrigated pastoral farming to irrigated fruit production is likely to result in water quality benefits. Some councils, however, have introduced intensification rules to constrain new irrigated area.[11] The NES for Off-line Water Storage should not include intensification rules that are related to new irrigated area, for this same reason.

Line by line comments on the draft standards are included in Part 4 of this submission.

7. Other water storage topics of interest

Q. 17	Should rules for water security and water storage be set nationally or regionally?

There will need to be national and regional rules to adequately balance the national benefits of water storage with the considerations particular to local environments.

Q. 20	Should both small-scale and large-scale water storage be enabled through new standards?

HortNZ seeks that both small and large-scale water storage be enabled through new standards, although we consider that large-scale water storage is likely to require consent.

8. Alignment with Government commitments

Enabling horticulture through enabling water storage aligns with the Government's target to double export value in the next ten years[12] and the coalition agreements' commitment to

[11] Hawke's Bay Regional Council. TANK.
[12] National Party. National sets bold target for export growth. 10 October 2023. Accessed via Internet Archive 13/01/25.

lift New Zealand's productivity and economic growth to increase opportunities and prosperity for all New Zealanders and "grow the economy to ease the cost of living".[13]

Promoting water storage aligns with the Government's stated priorities to "make it easier to consent new infrastructure",[14] cut red tape and regulatory blocks on irrigation, water storage, managed aquifer recharge and flood protection schemes" [15] and progress climate adaptation.[16]

Ensuring water resilience (availability and storage) is also Key Priority 1.2 of the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan (AHAP), a sector strategy which aims to double the sector's value by 2035.[17] AHAP is jointly owned by Government, industry, the science sector and Māori.

National-NZ First Coalition agreement: "Cut red tape and regulatory blocks on irrigation, water storage, managed aquifer recharge and flood protection schemes."[18]

[13] National Party, NZ First, ACT. National, ACT and New Zealand First Coalition Government: Consultation and Operating Arrangements. DPMC. Accessed 17/06/25.
[14] National Party, NZ First, ACT. National, ACT and New Zealand First Coalition Government: Consultation and Operating Arrangements. DPMC. Accessed 17/06/25.
[15] National Party, NZ First, ACT. National, ACT and New Zealand First Coalition Government: Consultation and Operating Arrangements. DPMC. Accessed 17/06/25.
[16] Hon Simon Watts. Budget supports practical climate action. 30 May 2024. Accessed 17/06/25
[17] HortNZ. Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan. Accessed 10/07/25.
[18] National Party, NZ First. Coalition Agreement. 24 November 2023. Accessed 18/06/25.

PART 4

Submission on Draft Standards for Off-Stream Water Storage

Without limiting the generality of the above, HortNZ seeks the following decisions on the proposals for water storage, as set out below, or alternative amendments to address the substance of the concerns raised in this submission and any consequential amendments required to address the concerns raised in this submission.

Additions are indicated by bolded underline, and deletions by strikethrough text.

Provision	Support/ oppose	Reason	Decision sought
Scope of NES Off-Stream Water Storage	Support	We support limiting the scope of the NES to off-stream storage and consider that the name of the NES should reflect this limited scope. HortNZ supports that natural storage solutions and managed aquifer recharge are out of scope for this NES as they are more appropriately managed through other instruments.	Rename NES: National Environmental Standards for **Off-Stream** Water Storage
Standard 1: The water storage structure is not located in a critical source area, swale or wetland.	Support	We support this while noting that CSA's may be appropriate places for water storage with a consent because they are places where water naturally concentrates. CSA's are defined for the purpose of water quality management under the NES-F, but these landforms are places where the topography lends itself to the construction of water storage with fewer earthworks.	n/a

Provision	Support/ oppose	Reason	Decision sought
Standard 2: The water storage structure (and associated activities) is not located on land that is contaminated or potentially contaminated.	Support with amendments	All horticultural land is considered potentially contaminated under the HAIL registry.[19] To allow for storage on fruit and vegetable growing properties, this standard needs to be carefully drafted.	Standard 2: The water storage structure (and associated activities) is not located on land that is contaminated ~~or potentially contaminated~~.
Standard 3: The water storage structure (and associated activities) must not destroy, damage, modify or be located within [X m] of an archaeological site that is protected (including through a statutory acknowledgement) because of the site's historic heritage (including, to avoid doubt, because of its significance to Māori).	Support	We would support a 5m buffer to leave sufficient room to access the archaeological site. We are open to evidence that this buffer may need to be larger.	The water storage structure (and associated activities) must not destroy, damage, modify or be located within **5 m** of an archaeological site that is protected (including through a statutory acknowledgement) because of the site's historic heritage (including, to avoid doubt, because of its significance to Māori).
Standard 4: The base of the water storage structure and maximum depth of excavation has a vertical separation distance at least [X m] above the highest expected water table.	No comment		n/a
Standard 5: The water storage structure has an impermeable layer that prevents transfer of water.	Support	This won't work for natural storage solutions such as managed aquifer recharge, but that might not fall	n/a

[19] Ministry for the Environment. Hazardous Activities and Industries List (HAIL). October 2011. Accessed online 14/07/25.

Provision	Support/ oppose	Reason	Decision sought
		under the definition of water storage for this NES.	
Standard 6: The water storage structure is located at least [X m] from property boundaries and any structure or dwelling that is owned by someone other than the off-stream water storage owner, and that exists at the time the off-stream water storage was commissioned.	No comment	n/a	n/a
Standard 7: The water to be taken and used from the water storage structure is authorised by: • a permitted activity rule in a relevant regional plan, or • a resource consent. Where the water user is not the owner of the water storage, the water user has written permission from the owner to take the water.	Support with amendment	To use the water from storage, provision is needed to: 1. Take the water from the waterway or aquifer to put in storage 2. Take the water from the water storage 3. Use the water Some plans have a gap in their rules where taking water for storage is provided for, but taking it from storage is captured by rules designed to limit abstraction of non-stored water, for example, the TANK Plan and Gisborne Resource	Standard 7: The water to be taken **and stored in the**~~and used from the~~ water storage structure is authorised by: • a permitted activity rule in a relevant regional plan, or • a resource consent. **Taking and using the water in the water storage structure is a permitted activity.** Where the water user is not the owner of the water storage, the water user has written permission from the **consent-holder**~~owner~~ to **use** ~~take~~ the water.

Provision	Support/ oppose	Reason	Decision sought
		Management Plan. This NES should remedy that situation.	
Standard 8: Earthworks for the establishment of off-stream water storage structures must not be undertaken within [X m] of a natural water body (including coastal water and the coastal marine area), and control measures must be in place to prevent sediment entering waterways.	Support	n/a	n/a
Standard 9: Clearance of vegetation that was established for flood and erosion control measures or that is ecologically significant vegetation (as specified in a relevant plan) is not permitted.	Support with amendment	While biosecurity incursions of unwanted organisms are managed by MPI, there are actions that may need to be taken which should be provided for in the NES. Such actions include the burial of infected material or removal and destruction of vegetation, including indigenous vegetation if it is infected. Therefore, HortNZ seeks provisions in the NES that provide for such activities to be undertaken as permitted given the necessity to act rapidly in a response. The Biosecurity Act 1993 does not give MPI the ability to override the RMA, except when the Minister declares an emergency – and that has never occurred in NZ.	Clearance of vegetation that was established for flood and erosion control measures or that is ecologically significant vegetation (as specified in a relevant plan) is not permitted **except where it is for the disposal of infected material for biosecurity purposes and treatment of areas to manage incursions of unwanted organisms.**

Provision	Support/ oppose	Reason	Decision sought
Standard 10: Vegetation clearance must not be undertaken within [X m] of any natural water body (including coastal water and the coastal marine area).	Support with amendment	Same as for Standard 9	Vegetation clearance must not be undertaken within [X m] of any natural water body (including coastal water and the coastal marine area) **except where it is for the disposal of infected material for biosecurity purposes and treatment of areas to manage incursions of unwanted organisms.**
Standard 11: No less than two weeks prior to the construction of the water storage structure, the owner of the storage structure must notify the regional council with: • their contact details • the location of the water storage structure • confirmation that they have checked and meet the permitted activity conditions in this standard.	Support	n/a	n/a