



## Managing our estuaries

### Media release

### Waste traps or taonga?

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment Simon Upton is calling for an approach to managing estuaries that treats estuaries and the waterways that feed into them as a single entity from the mountains to the sea.

“If the vision of *ki uta ki tai* for managing water is to mean anything, estuaries have to be an integral part of the plan.

“What comes off the land ends up in the estuary so unless we manage this in a genuinely integrated way our estuaries will always risk being sacrificed.

“Yesterday’s and today’s pollution – be it sediment from a subdivision or contaminants from road run-off – will be stored up for tomorrow,” the Commissioner warns in a report released today.

The report, *Managing our estuaries*, describes a wide range of problems – overlapping jurisdictions, overlapping responsibilities, ever-changing policies, and inadequate enforcement and compliance.

“The health and wellbeing of an estuary is rarely the sole and undivided responsibility of any one entity.

“This report tries to take the estuary’s point of view in asking whether we are doing as good a job as possible at managing their health,” the Commissioner says.

Estuary management is not about managing the body of water itself but rather about managing the activities that affect it.

“That means considering *all* the activities that cumulatively impact on estuaries – regardless of where they are located – and with climate change in mind.”

To ensure the entire catchment is managed as one, the Commissioner recommends that every estuary be included in one or more freshwater management units within the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020.

This is not a radical addition, because a river without an estuary is already managed all the way to the sea.

“To do this for all river systems, we need to add estuary management as the last piece, joining waterway management from the mountains all the way the sea,” the Commissioner explains.

The Commissioner also recommends instituting robust, standardised and consistent monitoring of the state of estuaries, including taking a Māori perspective.

“Mātauranga Māori is a powerful tool for management because it synthesises observations about people, the environment and their interactions, without compartmentalisation.

“I believe that really good information about what’s going on and an insistence that we manage estuaries as part of catchments *would* make a difference,” the Commissioner concludes.

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