**PRESS RELEASE**

**FORUM AND MINISTER ENGAGE ON FRESHWATER PACKAGE**

The Land and Water Forum met earlier this week with Minister for the Environment Hon Dr Nick Smith to discuss the Government’s Clean Water reform proposals.

 “The proposals represent another important step forward in improving New Zealand’s approach to freshwater management, building on the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014 and the National Objectives Framework, and contain approaches recommended by the Forum” said Forum Chair, Dr Hugh Logan. “The meeting this week was a useful discussion that clarified some issues.

“In particular, the Minister confirmed that the the way that the Government intends to implement its commitment to swimmability of waterways includes consideration of the range of values included in Table 1 on the Ministry for the Environment’s website. Table 1 includes median values and they lead to more stringent conditions for human health outcomes than reliance just on the 540 upper limit.

“The Minister also committed to getting further guidance on the trigger point for taking action on declining ecological health in waterways as indicated by monitoring of macroinvertebrates (MCI).

“The Forum contends that getting a clear trigger point if MCI monitoring shows a human-induced decline in ecological health, and then mandating remedial actions, is an important component in a reform package.

“Further consideration on managing algal growth in rivers was also agreed. The proposals make it much more explicit than before that managing nitrogen for ecological health must be undertaken by councils. The Forum will be submitting on ways this could be undertaken consistently round the country.

“The Forum noted with approval the reaffirmation of the commitment to stock exclusion from waterways.

“All of these issues and more are now properly in the public domain for wider input. People should engage in the consultative process and give feedback on whether further adjustments are required to align the package with public expectations.

“Importantly, the Minister undertook to discuss the details of the final package and National Policy Statement with the Forum after public submissions have been received and considered and before decisions are made.

“We are making progress in reforming freshwater management and the Forum looks forward to active engagement over the next few months. We are very committed to getting this right and we think the Minister is too,” Dr Logan concluded.

The Forum will be making a submission on the Government’s package which will be available for viewing on its website.

**RELATED INFORMATION**

Hyperlink to Ministry for the Environment detailed table on statistical tests for National Policy Statement swimming attribute: <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/fresh-water/freshwater-management-reforms/water-quality-swimming-categories-attribute-states-detail>

Letter from Minister Smith to the Chair of the Forum: <http://landandwater.org.nz/includes/download.ashx?ID=147179>

**NOTES TO EDITOR**

The Land and Water Forum brings together over 50 stakeholders consisting of industry groups, electricity generators, environmental and recreational NGOs, iwi, scientists, and other organisations with a stake in freshwater and land management. They are joined by central and local government participants in developing a common direction through collaboration for freshwater management in New Zealand and provide advice to the Government.  The Forum operates under a mandate from the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Primary Industries.

The Land and Water Forum is the trading name for the Land and Water Trust.

A Small Group, with around 30 participants, meets on a monthly basis and reports to the Plenary, which has a membership of nearly 70 organisations. More information can be found at: [www.landandwater.org.nz](http://www.landandwater.org.nz/).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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