



FRESHWATER HEALTH

Properly assessing the health of freshwater requires a holistic view. Ki uta ki tai (from the mountains to the sea) is an approach to freshwater management based on Māori knowledge and practice. This approach recognises that the health and mauri of a river cannot be determined by looking just at the water. The whole catchment that is drained by a river must be examined, as an intact mauri depends on the status of all the interrelated components in the catchment. In this approach, the mauri of the water diminishes as it comes into contact with detrimental aspects of human activities (Tipa, 2009).

Ki uta ki tai methodologies to assess the overall health of a catchment are increasingly being used in freshwater management (Rainforth & Harmsworth, 2019). The mauri of the waterways is connected to the mauri of the people who live there, and the conditions of the water impact cultural wellbeing (Anderson et al, 2019). This means that ki uta ki tai approaches are intrinsically connected to particular places and the values of the people who live there. These values are not transferable so it is not possible to understand the state of freshwater without also understanding the core values of the people in that place (Crow et al, 2018). The cultural health index is a national tool used to assess the health and mauri of a waterway and to monitor changes to it over time. It assesses a site's accessibility, its ability to undertake mahinga kai activities, and cultural stream health. Cultural health index scores for waterways were very good or good at 11 sites, moderate at 21 sites, and poor or very poor at 9 sites, of 41 sites tested between 2005 and 2016. (See indicator: [Cultural health index for freshwater bodies.](#))