

Using Overseer in Water Management – An Overview Guideline

Who wrote the report?

Gerard Willis of Enfocus Limited has 30 years' experience in planning, natural resource management and related public policy. Now based in Auckland, Gerard has previously worked for local and central government and has operated his own consultancy since 2002 offering services to a range of public and private sector interests – particularly around land and water management.

Gerard was awarded the NZPI award for District and Regional Plan Best Practice 2017 and the Commonwealth Association of Planners award for Outstanding Achievement in the Commonwealth in 2018. He holds a Bachelor of Regional Planning (Hons), is a member of the New Zealand Planning Institute and is a qualified hearing commissioner under the Making Good Decisions Programme.

Who is the intended audience?

Policy-makers and regulators who are operating in accordance with their Resource Management Act (RMA) responsibilities.

Why was this report commissioned?

In early 2018, Overseer Limited commissioned Gerard Willis of Enfocus, to prepare a report on “Using Overseer in water management planning - an overview guideline”.

The purpose of this report is to provide high level guidance on the actual and potential use of Overseer in water quality management, as well as the issues and limitations of its use in that context.

The Enfocus report builds on two earlier comprehensive reports¹. This new guidance is written in a clear and more easily digestible manner to better support policy-makers and planners.

What are the key messages?

- Overseer models. It does not measure.
- Overseer models' long term annual average losses, not annual actual losses.
- There are risks in using Overseer in a pass/fail regulatory context.
- Due to the nature of the uncertainties inherent in the model, in a regulatory context Overseer should:
 - not be used in isolation but as one tool in a more comprehensive water management tool box
 - be used as a safe harbour option or to model compliance with limits based on relative change from a modelled baseline.
- Overseer is a decision-support rather than decision making tool.

¹ “Using OVERSEER in Regulation”, Freeman Environmental, 2016
“Technical Description of OVERSEER for Regional Councils”, AgResearch, 2015

What is Overseer's vision?

Farms are enabled to be environmentally and economically sustainable.

What is Overseer's mission?

Our mission is to make analysis and interpretation of farm nutrient performance accessible to achieve our vision.

To be able to achieve this, as a company we will:

- generate enough revenue to become sustainable and continue investment in farm nutrient modelling and analysis
- create an innovative, open and collaborative environment where staff are proud to work
- collaborate with industry and the Government to achieve outcomes for New Zealand.

What are the next steps?

Overseer Limited hope that this independent report will further inform decision making on the best ways to achieve the National Policy Statement – Freshwater management using outputs from Overseer.

The report is not designed to be definitive, but rather to propose directions and inform the conversation about how Overseer can be used by policy makers and planners to support managing freshwater.

We believe that now is a good time to explore these opportunities as the new OverseerFM software has been released recently. New features and functionalities have expanded options that were not available under the legacy OVERSEER product. For instance, its usability has been significantly improved and a centralised database has the ability to demonstrate N loss trends over time at a farm operation level.

More detailed guides may be prepared for specific policy and regulatory applications.

Where can I find additional information about Overseer?

[Overseer's website FAQs](#)