



STAFF REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Committee

FROM: Daryl Page, Compliance Officer

REFERENCE: C653

SUBJECT: **2006 / 2007 WATER METERING - MID SEASON SUMMARY (AS AT 30 JANUARY) EP07/02/18** - Report prepared for 28 February Meeting

1. WEATHER PATTERNS

The start of the water meter project (6 November) coincided with some heavy rainfall at the end of October. This was a welcome change from the previous four dry months and meant that any thoughts of an immediate introduction of water rationing were put on hold. Since that time, rainfall at regular intervals has meant river flow and groundwater levels have remained above rationing triggers.

2. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

Staffing

David Shaw has been employed on a temporary contract for the 2006 / 2007 water metering season. While the (traditional) data entry function remains a primary task for David, this work and other project tasks e.g. overtakes, missing readings, and meter audits is shared with myself.

Pre-season Letter

The 2006 / 2007 pre-season letter was progressively released between 13 and 20 October 2006 and followed a process in September 2006 whereby users were asked to nominate their preferred method of supplying their meter readings. The traditional pre printed meter reading return cards (being the default option if the user did not nominate a preference) were sent out to 301 users. The balance of users elected to make returns electronically and were sent their pre-season information letter by email. At that time, 116 users had nominated email returns and 47 users had nominated the newly introduced webpage as their return method (NB the numbers relate to users rather than the number of consents).

While complicated and still time consuming, the pre-season mail process was positive. Benefits this season included less return cards being printed (a generic blank card with sticky labels was used) and an improved level of communication between users and Council staff. The responsiveness of water users has been encouraging with the pre-season communication appearing to create an awareness of the project and the need to make returns or inform Council if they are not using water.

Database

With the introduction of metering in the Upper Motueka (80) and the Wai-iti Dam Service zones (100 in total but a net increase of 56 – 44 consents previously Wai-iti), a total of 696 consents are administered under the WCM database. Of these 696 consents, 612 are 'active' and are subject to day to day monitoring. The remaining 86 consents are those where the consent holder has advised us that they are not irrigating and monitoring is limited to a meter audit only.

A priority in making database administration and monitoring run more smoothly is a procedure manual. Unfortunately this manual remains 'a work in progress'. It is hoped to have the manual completed and a copy put before Council prior to the 2007 / 2008 season.

Meter Returns

Since the pre-season letter, there has been a steady increase in the number of users making their returns on Council's webpage. Despite one or two minor teething issues, use of the webpage has been well received with the number of webpage users now totalling 90 (representing 150 consents).

A total of 104 users (representing 163 consents) continue to use email as their return method. Administration issues with the traditional prepaid return card remain (e.g. time consuming data entry, missing identification, filing and storage) even though there are fewer cards to deal with.

3. COMPLIANCE MONITORING

With database growth continuing both in numbers and information requirements, the staff resource required in maintaining the database and undertake required monitoring remains an issue. Every attempt is made to deal with the issues that arise on a timely basis however priorities in respect to non compliance continue to be established. It has been comforting not having any water rationing administration and monitoring to deal with.

Missing Returns

The return rates to date have been very good. We believe this is a direct reflection of the pre-season communication and the ability to send returns electronically. While the consumption graphs shown below may indicate return rates of less than 90% in some zones, monitoring shows that the absence of a 100% return has not had an adverse impact on reflecting actual water use data in any particular zone. This is because a subsequent return (with or without compliance intervention) has shown there was no or very little water use during the time a return was missing.

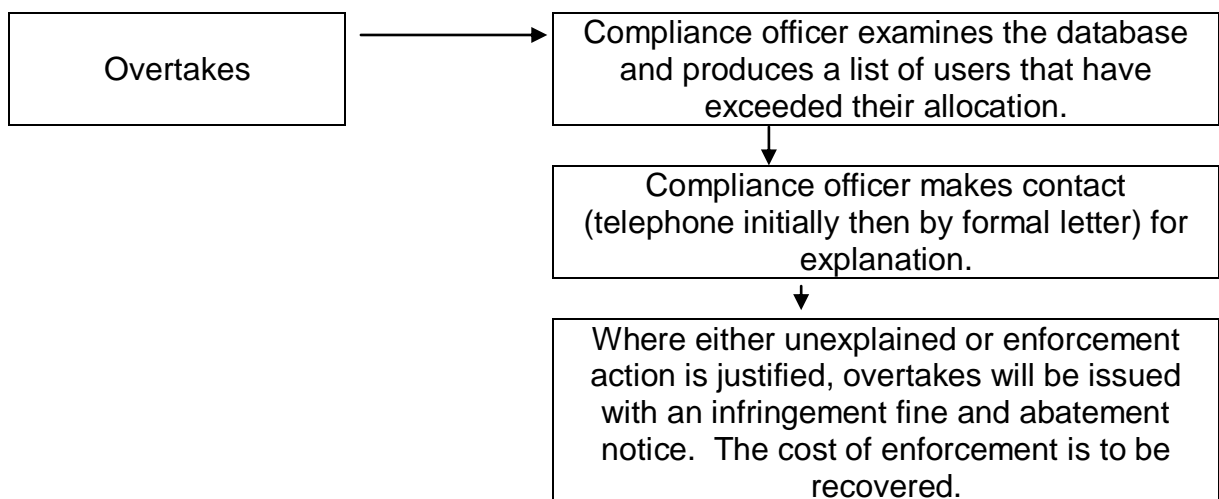
No formal enforcement action on missing returns has been taken at this time. The process to date is in line with the Water Metering Compliance Flowchart (Compliance Flowchart) adopted by Council resolution EP05/08/27. Reinforcing the need to make returns (and on a regular basis) has been by way of a telephone reminder. Unfortunately a small number of users continue to be non-compliant and may require their meter to be read and the costs recovered in the future. It should be noted that the majority of monitoring is focused on the Waimea zones.

A positive note has been that as a result of last seasons missing reading enforcement action some of the 'familiar' names have been good at making prompt returns this season.

Overtakes

No formal enforcement action (apart from some verbal warnings) has been necessary this season. Other overtake situations have been resolved because the meter had been misread or an incorrect reading had been made. The question of how to deal with any future non compliance however is raised here for clarification from Council.

The relevant part of the Compliance Flowchart is reproduced below.



In implementing the flowchart last year, and in respect to the third action, it evolved through discussion at management level that a warning letter would be issued for the first overtake. As we progress into a second season and at a time when water use is expected to increase, one area not initially considered was whether water users with a history of overtakes would start each new season with a "clean slate".

Council direction is sought in this respect. The staff view is that a warning letter continues to be the first action each year for an overtake situation unless the overtake is deemed excessive (we suggest greater than 30%) and there is a history of overtakes in any previous season.

Water Meter Audit

The water meter audit replaced the traditional pre season reading by Council staff. The intention was to spread the workload over the season by making a visit to all water meters during October and May each year. It was expected that database improvements would allow the time to complete this work. Unfortunately that has not been the case with only 88 (of 696) meter audits having been completed at this stage.

The administration component of the audit takes around 20 minutes per meter. It continues to include a (digital) photographic update of the meter and electronic location maps produced for future use in the field. The intention is to phase out the use of the old record card as these are no longer maintained. Future use of the hand held ipaq's will allow users to have the 'office' information with them in the field and is expected to speed up future meter audits.

With the assistance of Neil Tyson and Joseph Thomas it is hoped to complete audits in the Upper Motueka zones during February/March. These together with the new Wai-iti Dam Service zone consents are seen as a priority this year as we do not have any details on file. In some cases, the audit may also serve as a reminder of the need to install a meter.

Water Consumption Data

Graphical representation for each water management zone in the Waimea Plains, Motueka and Moutere area follows. Observations are:

- A general trend of increased use in the two weeks before Christmas,
- Six zones exceeded 40% (but did not go beyond 60%) of allocation during this increased use period. The six zones were:

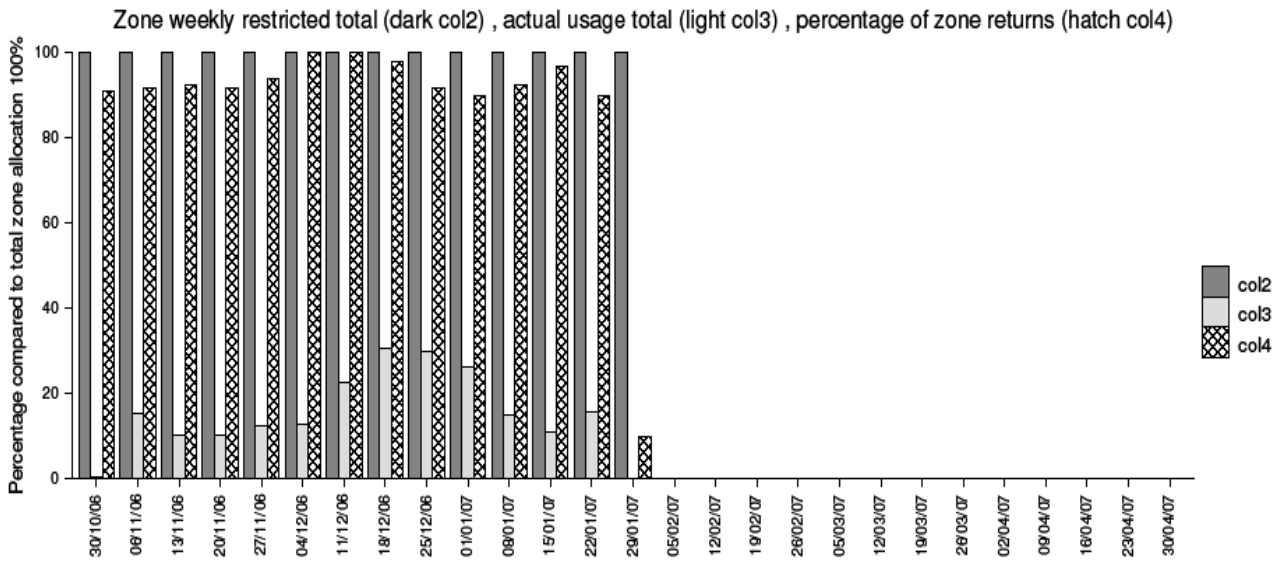
Waimea Lower Confined,
Waimea Upper Confined,
Waimea Hope Minor,
Motueka Hau,
Motueka King Edward and
Motueka Transition.

4. RECOMMENDATION

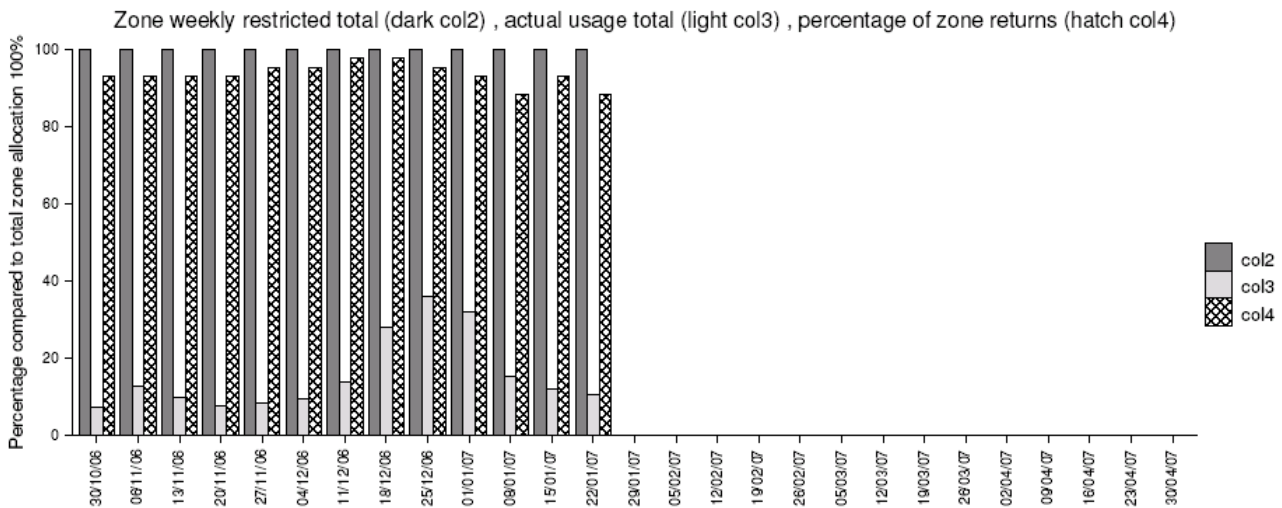
- That Council accepts this report.
- That Council confirms the policy of a warning letter for the first overtake each year unless the overtake is deemed excessive (we suggest greater than 30%) and there is a history of overtakes in any previous season.

Daryl Page
Compliance Officer

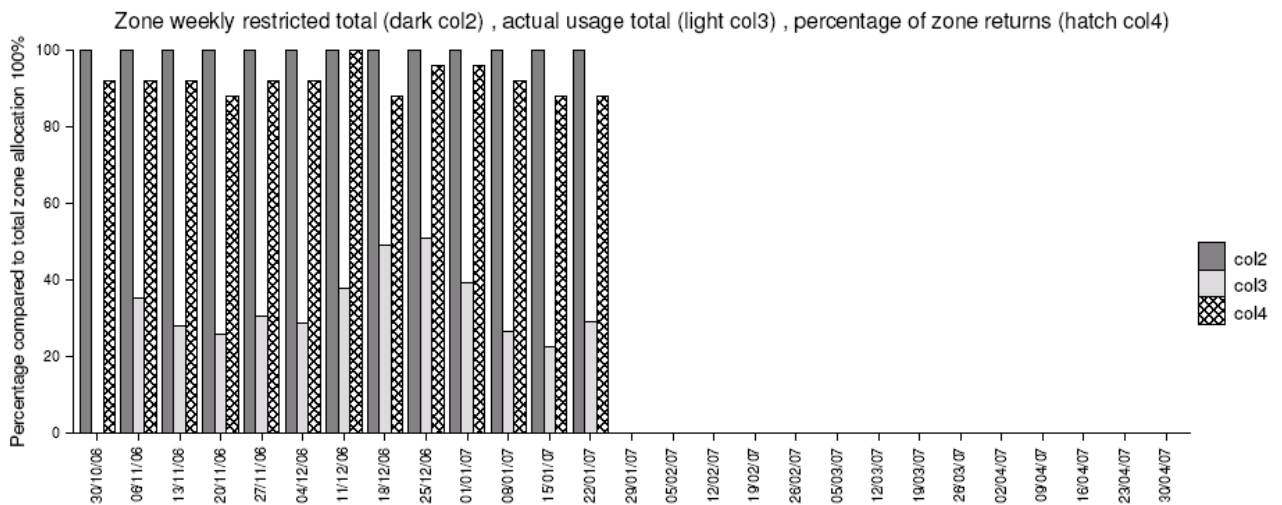
Waimea Delta Zone



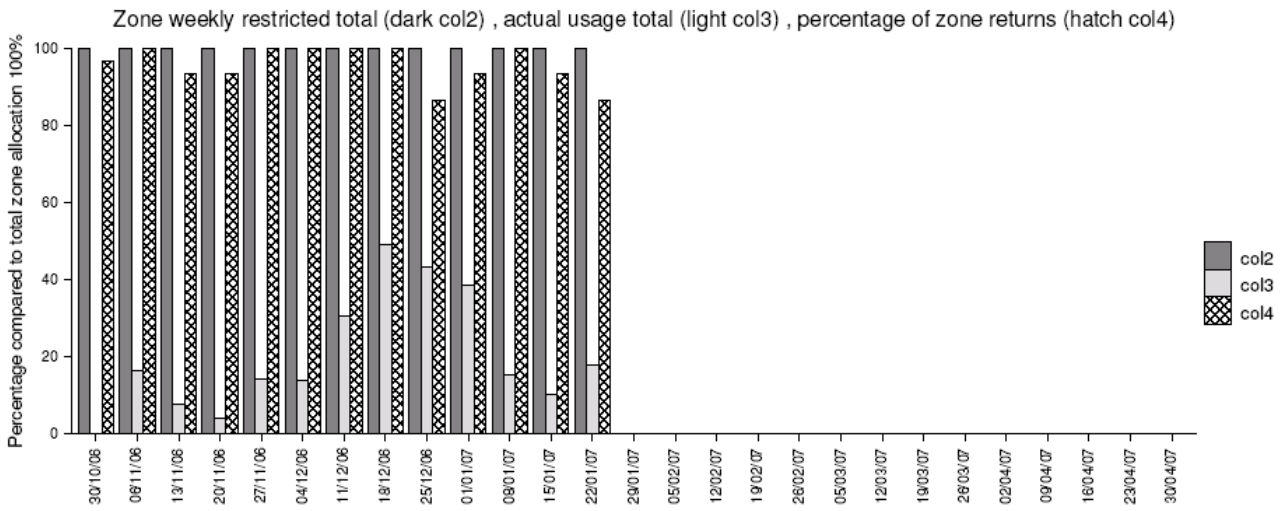
Waimea Reservoir Zone



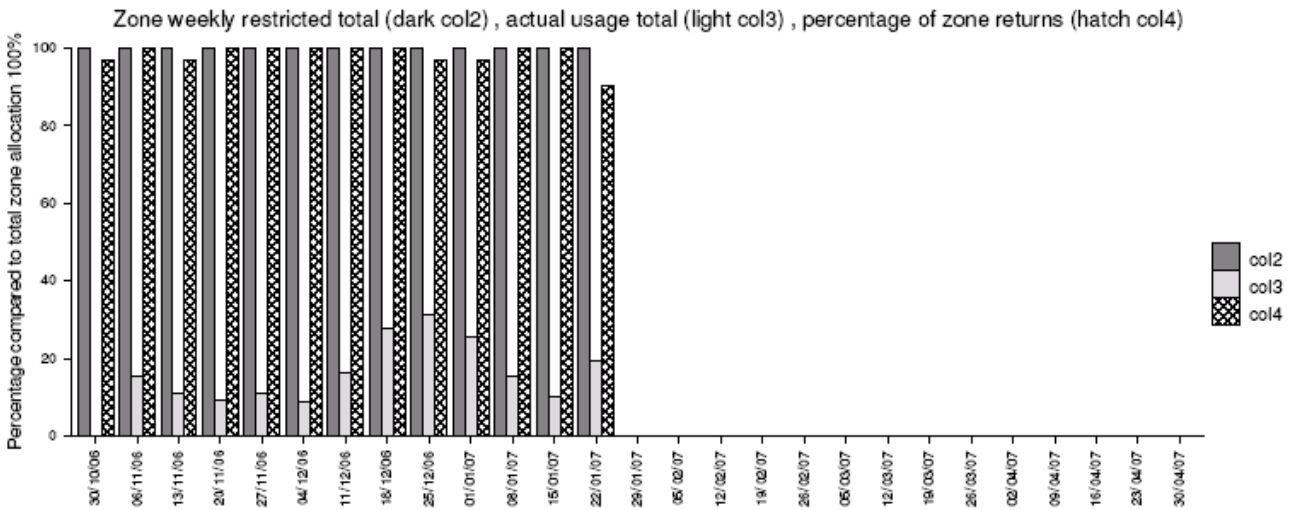
Waimea Lower Confined Aquifer



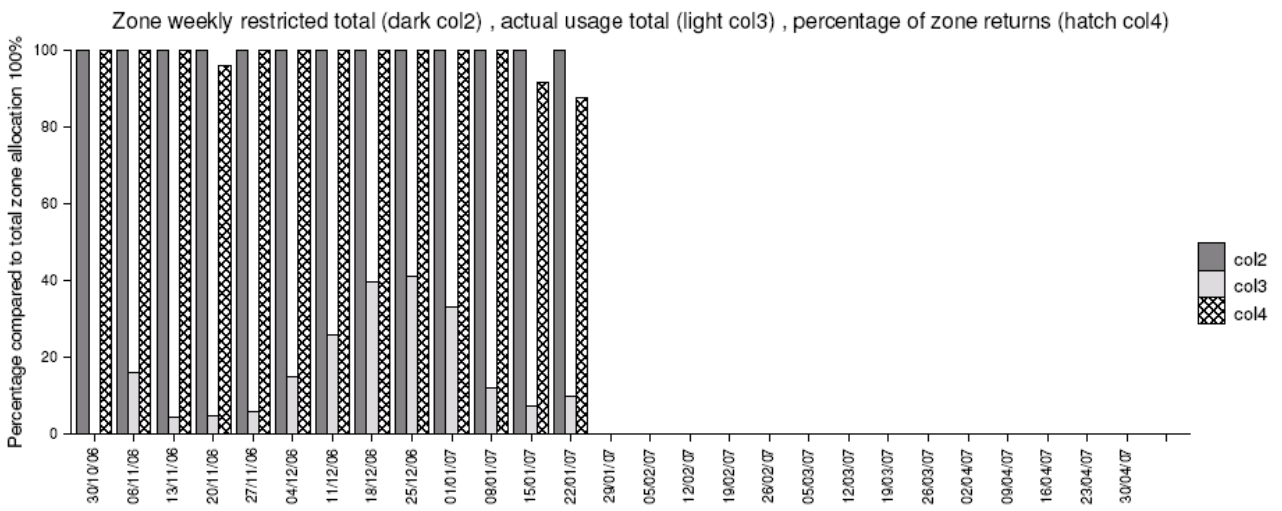
Waimea Upper Confined Aquifer



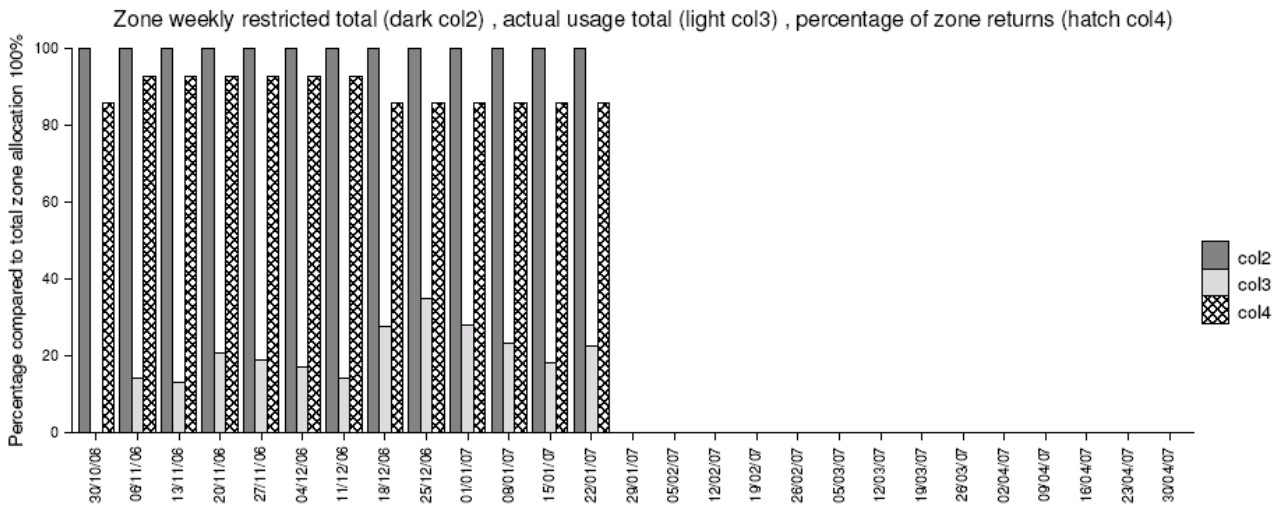
Waimea Golden Hills Zone



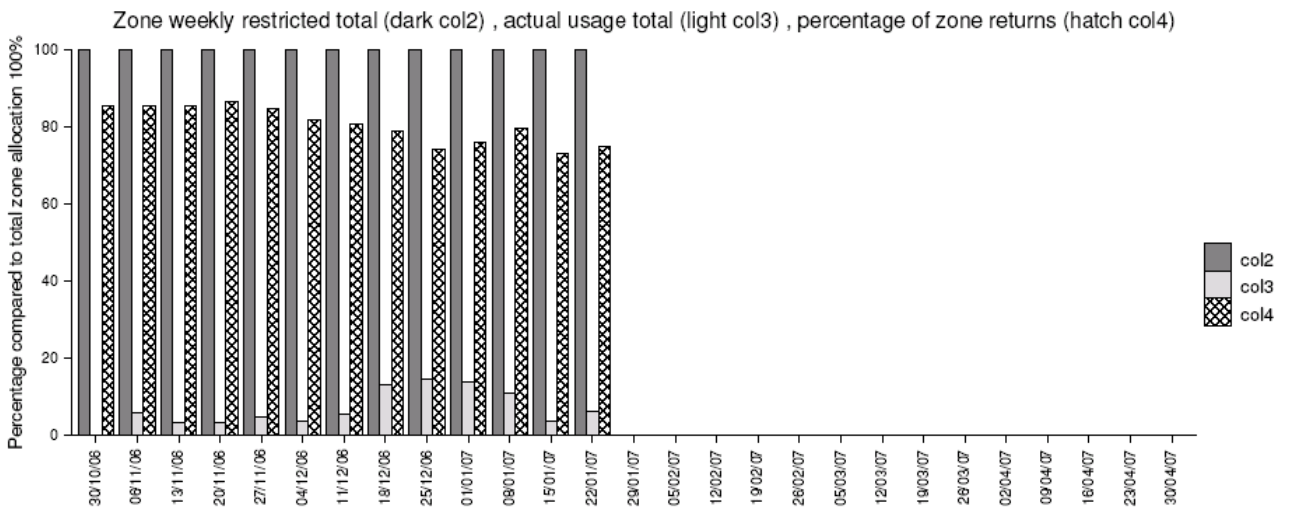
Waimea West Aquifer



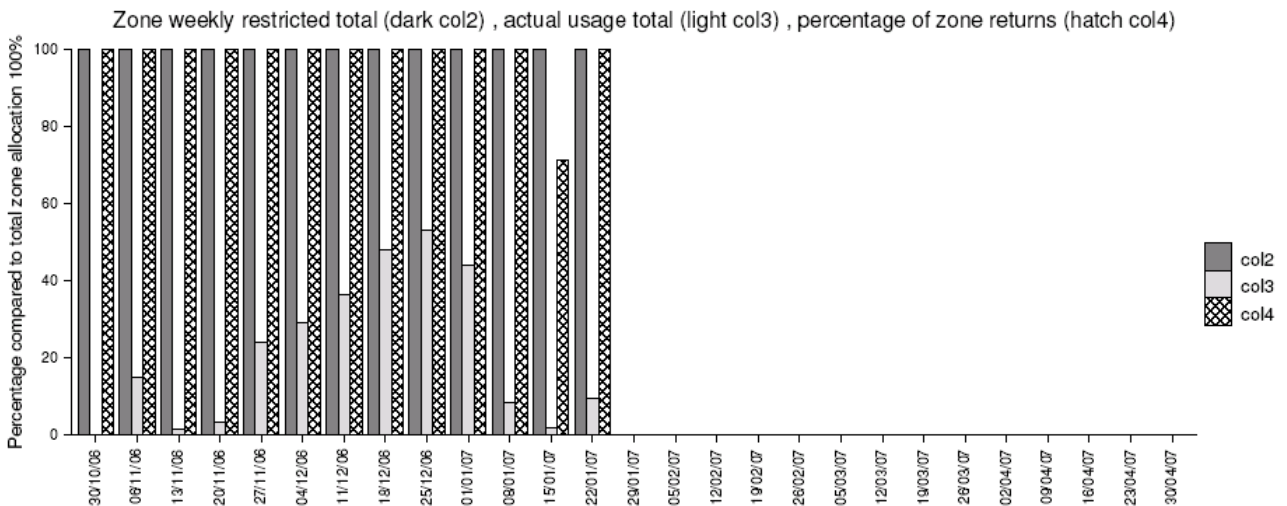
Wai-iti Zone



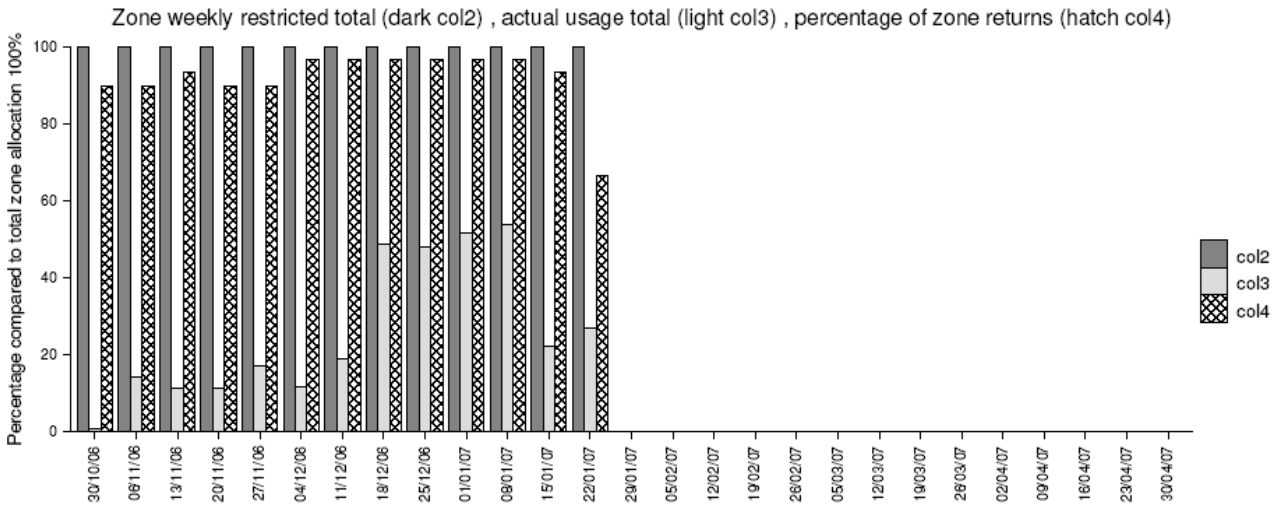
Wai-iti Dam Service Zone - Waimea



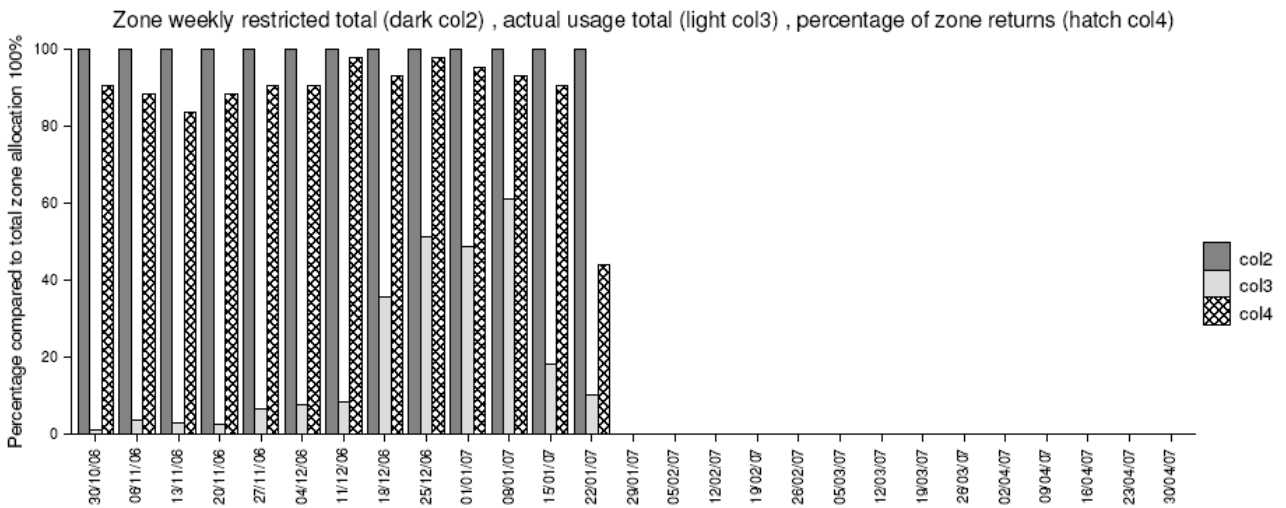
Waimea Hope Minor Aquifers



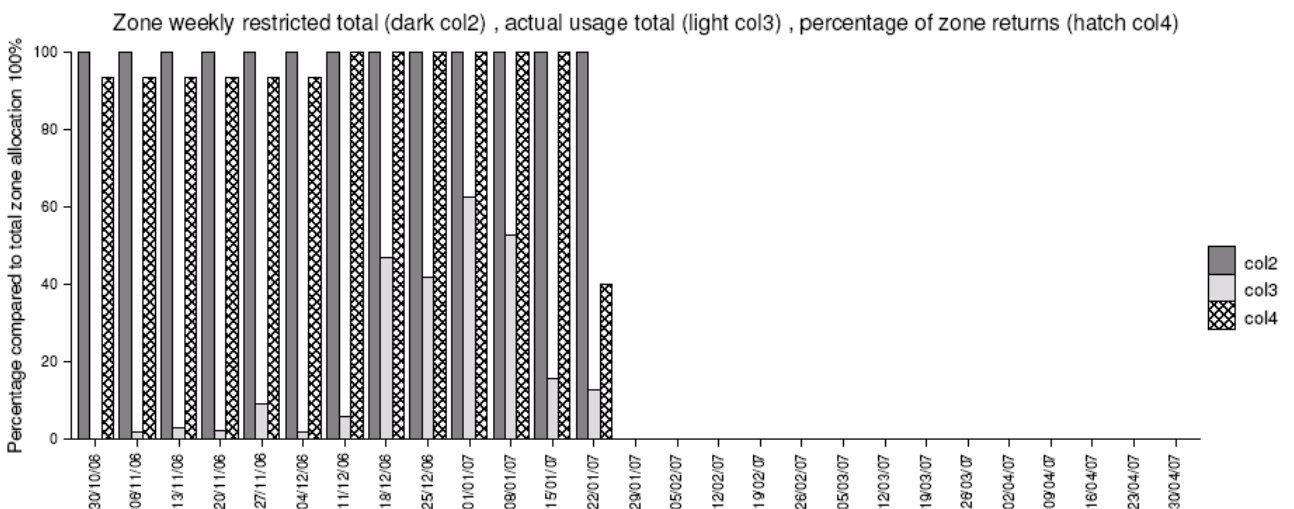
Motueka Hau Zone



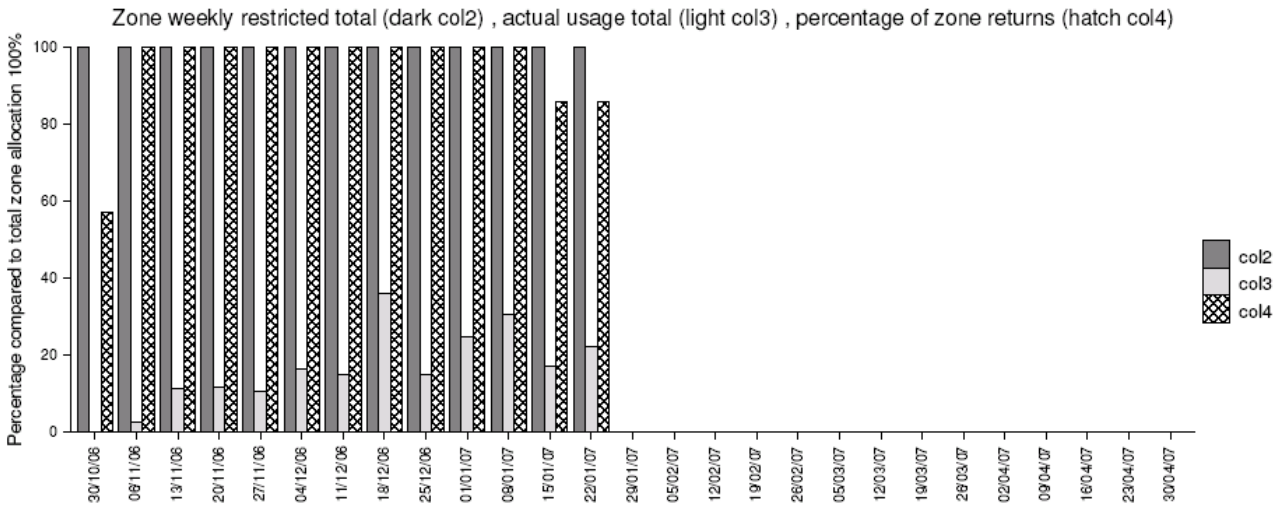
Motueka King Edward Zone



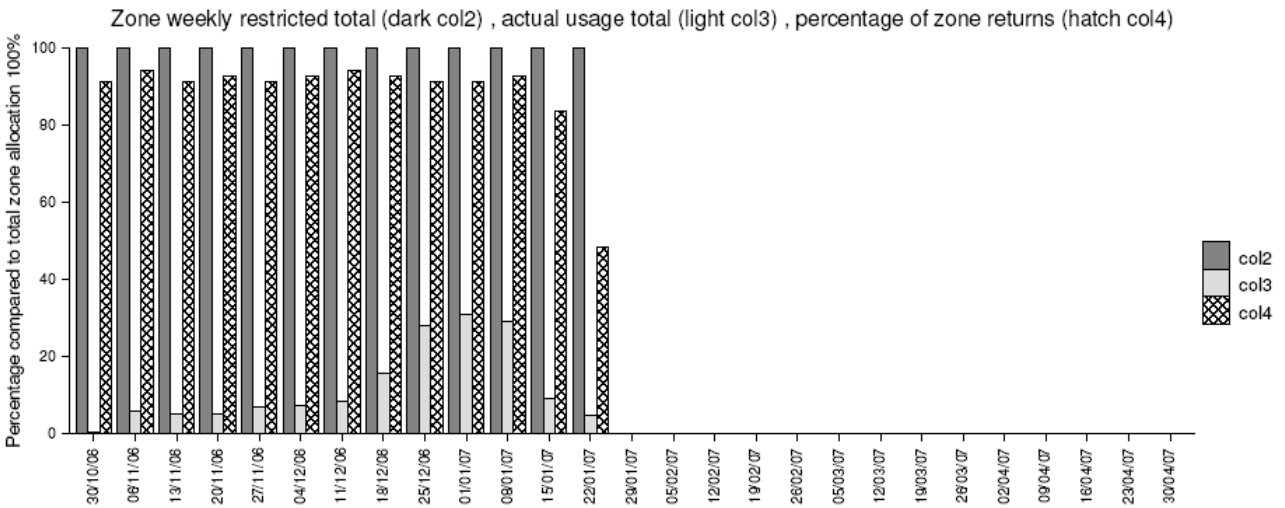
Motueka Transition Zone



Motueka Central Plains Zone



Moutere Eastern Groundwater Zone



Moutere Western Groundwater Zone

