

The carrots and sticks of freshwater policy are probed

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Issues around the health of our rivers and lakes are front of mind for many New Zealanders at this time. As pressures on water resources increase in New Zealand, so does the need for alternative policy approaches that can adequately address the demands of competing interests.

A new research paper by Motu Economic and Public Policy Research presents the array of different [policy](#) instruments available for managing freshwater quality and quantity and provides insights into how the various instruments can be used to incentivise behavior change.

"We already have many policy instruments in New Zealand, but they're currently underutilized," said Dr. Julia Talbot-Jones, one of the authors of the paper. "The policies differ in the extent to which they incentivise innovation and behavior change. In this research we have outlined the barriers and opportunities affecting their wider implementation at various scales across New Zealand."

Recognizing current barriers and reframing them as opportunities has the potential to place New Zealand decision-makers in a stronger position to address issues that are at the core of the country's water governance challenges and open up new pathways for more efficient and effective policy outcomes.

"There is potential for a series of innovative policy instruments to complement or replace stand-alone regulatory approaches and help

achieve more resilient outcomes for freshwater," said Julia.

The paper ultimately aims to provide [decision-makers](#) with insights into how an economic way of thinking can help guide the selection and design of policy instruments and improve freshwater outcomes for all.

More information: Review of policy instruments for freshwater management: [motu-www.motu.org.nz/wpapers/20_10.pdf](https://www.motu.org.nz/wpapers/20_10.pdf)

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