Ministerie van Infrastructuur
en Waterstaat

Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail

National Water Programme 2028-2033

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Colophon

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Contact	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management | DG Water and Soil | PO Box 20901 | 2500 EX The Hague

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1 Towards an updated National Water Programme

1.1 A major challenge

Thanks to its location in a delta, with good connections to the hinterland and plenty of fertile land, the Netherlands has been able to develop into a prosperous country. At the same time, this location, in combination with a changing climate, also makes it vulnerable: The Netherlands is increasingly facing extreme weather conditions. Take, for example, the floods in Limburg in the summer of 2021 or the extreme rainfall in the east of the country in the summer of 2024. Prolonged periods of drought are also becoming more common. For instance, the summers of 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2022 were among the five per cent driest summers on record. However, the (economic) damage of drought often is less evident than, say, that of a flood. In the coming decades, the climate will continue to change and extreme weather events are expected to become more frequent.

The use of our land also creates pressure. A comprehensive analysis by the Global Commission on the Economics of Water[1] reveals that increasing water consumption, pollution and changing land use are growing challenges for our water system. Over the years, we have effectively adapted the water system to suit our use, for example by modifying rivers and streams, and damming watercourses. We have designed our water system to meet our economic and social needs, which includes securing our food supplies. This was mostly at the expense of the natural functioning of the water system. It now appears that current use has surpassed the water system's limits.

An effective water policy – that anticipates the water system's limits – is crucial for a future-proof Netherlands, one with a good business climate and an attractive and safe living environment. This will require our water policy to include high-impact choices in the coming decades. These choices must be made in a coordinated way: well-aligned between different parts of our water policy and between the different parts of our water system, and in alignment with the use of space and the layout of the Netherlands. This calls for these choices to be firmly reflected in implementation. The implementation of measures requires structural financing, the availability of raw materials and implementation capacity, as well as broad public support for the necessary choices to be made. In order to make these choices consistently and with significant effect, the central government is updating the National Water Programme (NWP).

[1] watercommission.org

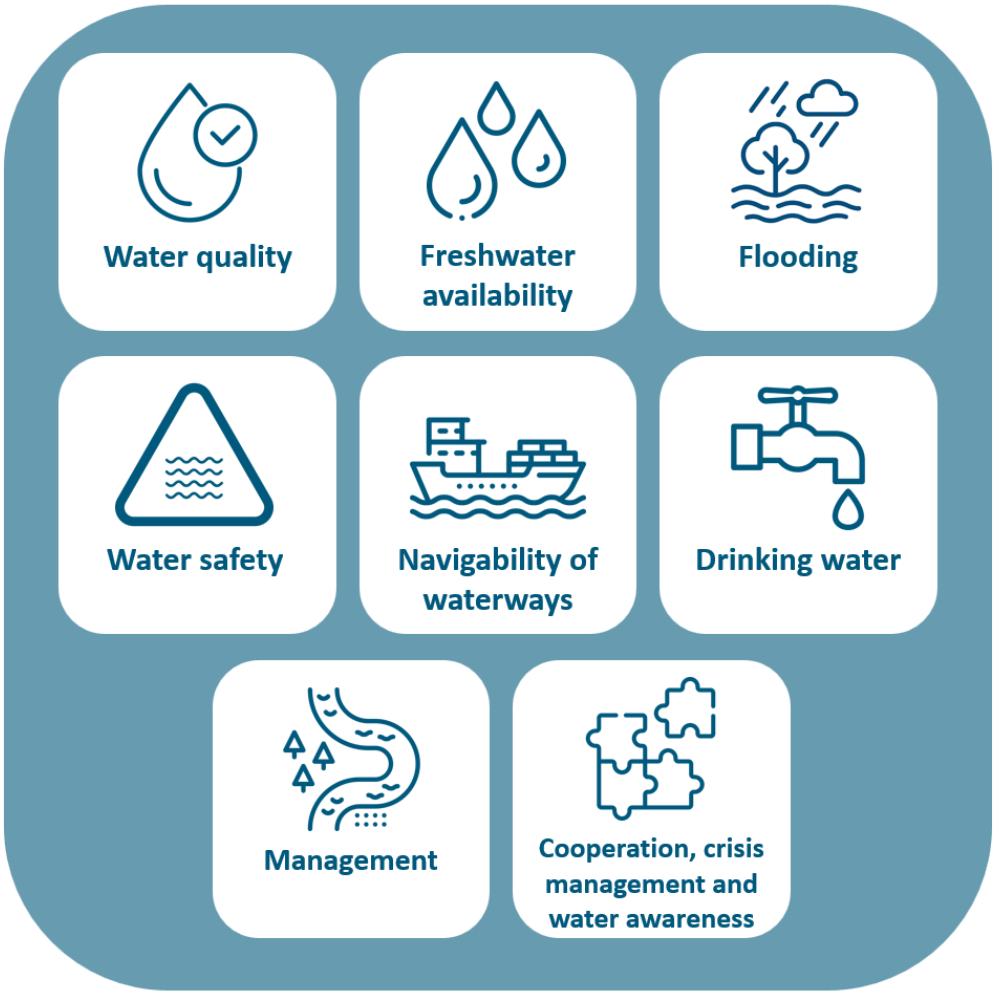


Figure 1-1 The Netherlands' water management challenges converge in the National Water Programme (NWP)

1.2 National Water Programme: directing the future

National Water Programme: outlines of the national water policy
The central government is updating the NWP. The NWP consolidates the Netherlands' water management challenges. The NWP gives direction to water policy for the whole of the Netherlands (including the North Sea). The NWP makes strategic water management choices: choices that the central government will take up over the next six years and that are based on a long-term vision. With this update of the NWP, the central government aims to strengthen its oversight of current and future water management challenges and accelerate the approach to these challenges. It also translates this update into its national water management practices. The NWP thereby ensures alignment between various policies and programmes and forms the basis for a future-proof approach to water management in the Netherlands.

The NWP is updated every six years. The current NWP was adopted in 2022 and applies up to the end of 2027. The NWP affects the activities of central government, provinces, water boards, water companies, municipalities and the wider water community – public, business and civil society. There are many interfaces between

the NWP and sectors such as agriculture, nature, economy, energy and shipping. The water management challenges therefore require a coordinated approach balancing different interests.

Plan area
Figure 1-2 illustrates the NWP planning area. The NWP deals with all water in the European part of the Dutch territory. This includes the territorial sea and the Dutch Exclusive Economic Zone of the North Sea. For Drinking Water, the Caribbean part of the Netherlands also falls within the NWP implementation domain.

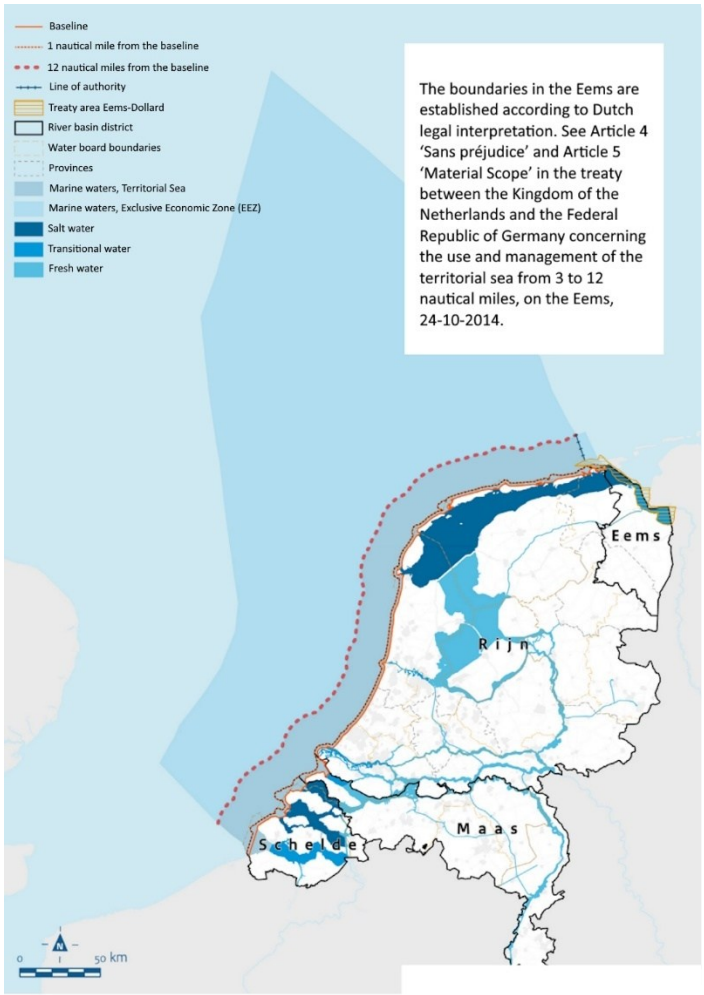


Figure 1-2 NWP planning area (Source: NWP 2022-2027)

1.3 Ambitions: what does the central government aim to achieve with the NWP?

As a result of the NWP update, water management in the Netherlands will remain future-proof. The central government is working towards a Netherlands with clean and healthy water, able to withstand the impacts of climate change and with the facilities needed to deal with water shortages as well as water surpluses. This allows the Netherlands to effectively deal with longer periods of drought and heavy precipitation.

With the NWP, the central government provides national-level guidance on water management and ensures consistency in decision-making. With the NWP, the central government fulfils its overall responsibility for the water system and the public drinking water supply. This way, the central government also gives direction to the regional and local interpretation of water management, land use and spatial planning. The choices in the NWP have a strong link with the choices regarding land

use and spatial planning. Choices made for the water system could influence spatial planning and land use, and conversely, spatial planning and land use could influence the choices made in for the water system. Where these choices have a spatial impact, other spatial challenges are taken into account, agriculture, nature, energy, the economy and housing development. The central government does so with a view to future climatic and socio-economic developments towards 2050 and 2100. The decisions made for the next six years will anticipate this.

The NWP is based on the following principles[2]:

- We prevent shifting burdens: we do not simply pass problems on to other places or to future generations and we strive for a fair distribution of benefits and burdens.
- We take into account a more rapidly changing climate and associated weather extremes, which are likely to increase further.
- We are working to raise awareness among all residents and business owners that not all damage caused by weather extremes can be prevented.
- We are working towards a clean and resilient water system.
- We use an integrated approach to the living environment, actively seeking combinations of functions and efficient use of space while maintaining spatial quality.
- We use a coordinated approach in dealing with flooding, drought and soil. 'The Netherlands must become a sponge: first hold water, then store it and subsequently discharge as little as possible.' In this respect, we are working towards a resilient ecosystem that can cope with climate change.
- We work on the basis of 'the five layers of multi-layered safety'[3]: in addition to the preventive approach that makes use of dykes and flood defences, we use spatial planning and crisis management to mitigate the consequences of water safety and flooding. Here, climate-robust recovery and water awareness are important to prevent damage and social disruption.
- We cover less of our soil and prevent pollution of soil, ground and surface water.
- We work on the basis of the 'comply or explain' principle. We comply with standards, rules and policy principles. Where this is not feasible (and not legally unavoidable and/or enforceable), there is room for customisation: we then explain this.

The central government translates these goals and principles into the various components of the water management policy, elaborated under the following themes: (1) water safety, (2) flooding, (3) freshwater availability, (4) water quality, (5) drinking water, (6) navigability of waterways, and (7) cooperation, crisis management and water awareness. By coherently considering these themes in the NWP , and also seeking connections with other (spatial) challenges, an iterative process emerges between the themes and overarching national choices. Additional topics at the theme level may be added while the NWP is being drafted.

Water safety

Water safety is about managing the risks of catastrophic floods, where there are metres of water in a large area, many casualties and damage in the order of billions of euros. Over the centuries, the Netherlands has invested heavily in water safety,

[2] These principles originate from The Parliamentary Letter on 'water and soil-driven spatial planning and development' of 25 November 2022, and are in line with the basic principles of the Spatial Planning Memorandum.

[3] The five layers of the multi-layered safety principle are: Water-conscious action, Prevention, Impact mitigation through spatial planning, Crisis management and Water-robust recovery

including through dykes, dunes, storm surge barriers and river systems. Projects such as the Delta Works, Delta Plan for Large Rivers, High Water Protection Programme, Dynamic Coastal Management and Room for the River programme provide a solid foundation for today's water management. We need to take climate change into account in reinforcing primary defences. Sea levels are rising, land is subsiding and maximal river discharges are increasing. This means that our water safety requires continued attention.

Flooding
Flooding occurs when too much water accumulates in a place where it is not wanted, due to downpours or prolonged rain. This is the case, for example, when water from the street penetrates buildings or makes roads temporarily impassable, but also when streams or ditches breach their banks. Flooding can have a major social impact and/or cause damage. Compared to flooding, for example as a result of a dyke breach, the probability of casualties is very low for flooding resulting from excessive rain. But in extreme cases, people's safety may nevertheless be at risk. A resilient water system, where excessive water can be absorbed and leads to as little damage as possible, is therefore our shared goal.

Freshwater availability (including drought and land subsidence)
Availability of sufficient and clean fresh water is of great importance for the supply of drinking water and energy, agriculture, nature, industry, shipping and recreation. Climate change, salinisation, pollution and increasing water use are putting pressure on availability within the current water system. Water shortages – now and in the future – are more common and not all needs will always be met. The challenge lies in finding a balance between the demand for freshwater and its supply – across the year. In doing so, we pay attention to the effects on water users.

Freshwater availability is closely related to drought: a lack of freshwater availability from ground and surface water. Drought greatly affects sectors such as agriculture and shipping and the quality of nature reserves. For agriculture, the availability of water during droughts, proper drainage during periods of excess water, and the quality and salinity of the water are all important. Because a large part of the Netherlands is agricultural land, agriculture is crucial for water retention and the sponge effect. The decline and erosion of river bottoms amplify the negative impacts of drought. Climate change is increasing the frequency and duration of droughts.

Land subsidence is the process by which the land slowly sinks, often due to dewatering, settlement and the oxidation of peat. Mineral extraction (such as gas and salt extraction) can also lead to land subsidence. In parts of the Netherlands, land subsidence due to dewatering, settlement and oxidation has been going on for centuries. Land subsidence makes parts of the Netherlands vulnerable to flooding due to rainfall or other events. It leads to high social costs, including for housing and infrastructure repairs. Climate change, population growth and intensive land use make the need for action increasingly urgent.

Water quality
Clean (ground) water is important for drinking water, nature, biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries, recreation and public health. Water quality affects the potential uses and how well ecosystems function. For instance, highly polluted water has a negative impact on the extraction of drinking water and the plant and animal species that live in and around the water. The goal is to prevent pollution of (ground) water or – where pollution is already present – to deal with it effectively and manage risks.

Drinking water
Drinking water is a basic necessity of life. A sustainable and reliable supply of drinking water is essential for public health, welfare and economic prosperity. To achieve sufficient good-quality drinking water, the NWP focuses on protecting drinking water sources, a sustainable balance between supply and demand of good-quality drinking water and a future-proof drinking water sector.

Navigability of waterways
Shipping has traditionally played and will continue to play an important role in and for the Netherlands. This is partly because the Netherlands has a very well-developed transport network. To maintain this network, it is important to ensure its reliability, accessibility and safety. In particular, climate change and the associated increasing periods of drought, low and high water levels, put this reliability, accessibility and safety under pressure.

Management of the main water system
The Netherlands is working on the biggest preservation task ever. Much infrastructure, including bridges, locks and dams, has reached the end of its technical lifespan. At the same time, pressure on infrastructure is increasing: shipping traffic is intensifying, the climate is changing, and previous maintenance has been delayed. All this calls for a structural, large-scale and programmatic approach.

Rijkswaterstaat (RWS) – as the implementing body of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management – is responsible for managing the national waters. Their management task focuses on ensuring a sustainable living environment, with dry feet, sufficient and clean water, smooth and safe road and water traffic, and reliable and useful information. This management task also focuses on the preservation of infrastructure in national waters. The NWP refines and adjusts this management task. Here, manufacturability, feasibility, national coherence and future-proofing the management task are guiding principles. The policy choices to be investigated that impact management are not elaborated separately in chapter 3 but are included under the various other themes from which they derive.

Cooperation, crisis management and water awareness
Future-proof water management requires strong cooperation among government authorities (central government, water boards, provinces and municipalities) and between government authorities, (drinking water) companies, educational and knowledge institutes, civil society organisations and residents. Every party can and must contribute to this, while also considering water management's longer-term financial viability. In line with this, adequate crisis management is a necessity. Flooding, excessive water, pollution and problems with prolonged drought cannot be ruled out. The Netherlands must be able to deal with these situations. A strong awareness across society about our water-related challenges and risks is needed. Strong cooperation, crisis management and water awareness increase our resilience in dealing with water. The NWP devotes attention to cooperation, crisis management and water awareness.

1.4 A national programme under the Environmental Planning Act

The NWP is a programme under the Environmental Planning Act. The Environmental Planning Act – through interrelated policy instruments – shapes the environmental policy cycle. Nationally, the National Environmental Vision (NOVI) is leading in this, with thematic policies elaborated in national environmental programmes, including

the NWP. The NWP to be updated thus follows from the NOVI, which is also currently being updated under the name Spatial Planning Memorandum[4], see also section 1.5. Through the NWP, the central government is further elaborating our national water policy on the basis of the NOVI.

The NWP is self-binding on the central government and thus provides it with a decision-making framework. In addition, it can provide the substantive basis for impacting provincial and municipal plans through the instruments. With the NWP, central government is asking water boards, municipalities and provinces to reflect the NWP's policy choices in their local and regional environmental policies through means of regional water programmes (provinces) and water management plans (water boards), and provincial and municipal environmental visions and environmental programmes. This way the NWP's policy choices must also be anchored in spatial planning at the regional and local level. With the six-yearly renewal of the NWP, urgent water issues remain and come into focus and there is timely guidance on goals and the pace of implementation.

Drinking Water Policy Memorandum to be integrated in the NWP
The Drinking Water Policy Memorandum will be integrated as a recognisable part of the NWP. The Drinking Water Policy Memorandum is governed by the Drinking Water Act (Section 6(1)) and, like the NWP, is updated every six years. Inclusion of the drinking water theme in the NWP will benefit an approach aligned with other policy areas.

1.5 Alignment with the draft Spatial Planning Memorandum

The National Water Programme is a further elaboration of the NOVI (National Environmental Vision under the Environmental Planning Act) specifically focused on national water policy and the management of national waters. NOVI is currently being updated (under the name Spatial Planning Memorandum), and a draft was published in September 2025. With this Spatial Planning Memorandum, the central government is resuming national control over the spatial planning and organisation of the physical living environment. Making coordinated spatial choices is central to this. In this respect, the Spatial Planning Memorandum gives direction to the spatial development of the Netherlands, with the ultimate goal of achieving an optimal balance between protecting and using our physical living environment. The focus on alignment provides the impetus for developing better links for water policy with other sectors, including through the NWP.

The draft Spatial Planning Memorandum is based on three guiding principles, namely multiple use of space, focusing on area characteristics and preventing the passing on of responsibilities as much as possible. The draft Spatial Planning Memorandum sets a course and makes choices based on four integrated themes:

- Housing, employment and accessibility
- Economy and energy
- Agriculture and nature
- Water and soil

For the NWP, the direction and choices concerning the water and soil component are particularly important. This includes, among other things, the following overarching choices:

- **Future-proof main water system**

[4] The draft Spatial Planning Memorandum was published on 26 September 2025.

Sufficient space around rivers for dyke reinforcement and river widening, sufficient space for (peak) water storage, optimization of freshwater buffers in the IJsselmeer area and Volkerak-Zoommeer, and in principle, no investment in new technical measures to transport water to areas where this is not sustainable in the long term.

- **Balancing regional systems**
  Regional strategies for improving and adapting to changing conditions of the water and soil system, such as focusing on adjusting land use and business operations, better balancing regional freshwater supply and demand, increasing saving, retention, and storage of freshwater, and not locating major new water consumers in areas where long-term freshwater availability cannot be guaranteed.
- **Climate-adaptive design**
  In spatial planning, climate adaptation is systematically and timely incorporated, utilizing the Spatial Assessment Framework for a Climate-Adaptive Built Environment and the National Standard for a Green, Climate-Adaptive Built Environment.

The NWP builds on this by utilizing these overarching building blocks to create spatial coherence between the various water-related themes and among the building blocks themselves, thereby linking them to other spatial challenges, and gives this concrete form by making further choices.

1.6 Alignment with other national water programmes

In addition to the NWP, the National Programme on Soil, Subsoil and Groundwater (BOG) is under development. The aim of this programme is healthy, vital and climate-resilient soil, subsoil and groundwater. The NWP overlaps with the BOG program and the Sustainable Use of the Deep Subsurface (DGDO) program, particularly regarding groundwater. Coordination will take place regarding this.

The central government is updating the 2016 National Climate Adaptation Strategy to create an NAS'26. The NAS'26 is a national programme under the Environmental Planning Act with the aim of creating a climate-proof Netherlands, now and in the future. The NAS’26 has its own Plan-EIA process. The NAS’26 and the NWP are being coordinated to ensure a good fit between the overarching climate adaptation strategy and the NWP.

In the Delta Programme, water boards, provinces, municipalities and the central government work on proposals relating to water safety, freshwater supply and spatial adaptation. The Delta Commissioner will advise the central government in 2026 on choices and measures for the Recalibration of the Delta Programme. Where necessary, this advice will be embedded in the NWP.

The NWP is the umbrella for a number of underlying national water programmes. These include the Room for the River 2.0 Programme, River Basin Management Plans (SGBs) and the Flood Risk Management Plan (ORBP). The NWP also forms the umbrella for the management of national waters. In these national programmes, the central government proposes a number of water management decisions.

The NWP anchors (legal) decisions. The EIA will assess the impacts of these decisions. The EIA thus also supports the decision-making in these programmes.

The NWP and the EIA thus ensure consistency between and connection to pressing societal themes.

The North Sea Programme is an annex to the NWP, but follows its own Plan-EIA path. For this reason, the North Sea Programme is not part of this Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail (NRD).

The NWP is implemented through, for example, the Programmatic Approach to Large Waters (PAGW).

Figure 1-3 Programme coherence

1.7 Water management in an international context

Dutch water management cannot be separated from its international context. Rivers like the Rhine, Meuse, Scheldt and Ems originate in other countries. Policy choices – for example on dyke reinforcements, dams and discharges – in these countries influence our water management practices, and thus the choices in the NWP. The same applies to some parts of our groundwater. This means that the policy choices in the NWP to be updated will also take developments in these countries into account.

1.8 Role and content of this Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail

This document represents the memorandum on scope and level of detail (NRD) for the new National Water Programme 2028-2033. The NRD is the first step in preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the NWP. The NRD is thus the starting point for further development, assessment and refinement of the policy choices to be included in the NWP. The NRD explains why an EIS is mandatory and how the impact of choices on the living environment in the National Water Programme are clarified. It also describes which themes pertaining to the physical living environment are key and which policy choices will be studied. The EIS to be drawn up assesses the impacts of the policy choices in the NWP on the physical living environment. The level of detail of the EIS will therefore match the level of detail of the choices made in the NWP. These will mostly be global, guiding policy choices. Where more detailed choices are made, their impacts are also worked out in more detail.

The NRD provides the first formal moment for public participation. Anyone can provide their opinion on what should be studied for the NWP and should be given a place in the EIS to be drawn up. Relevant administrative bodies, statutory advisers and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Commission will also provide advice on the EIS to be drawn up on the basis of the NRD. In the EIS, the ministry will indicate how it has dealt with the results of participation and the advice provided.

The NRD successively describes:

- How the EIA process works and the formal requirements involved (Chapter 2);
- How the central government arrives at policy choices and which policy choices it aims to explore (Chapter 3);
- How the impacts of these policy choices on the living environment are determined (Chapter 4).

2 Environmental impact assessment process and procedure

2.1 Obligation to complete an EIA procedure

The Environmental Planning Act requires an environmental impact assessment (EIA[5]) to be conducted for plans and projects that are likely to have significant environmental impacts. This applies to projects that may have a direct impact on the environment and to plans that provide a framework for such projects. The National Water Programme will soon form the framework for future decisions on plans and activities that may affect the physical living environment, and is therefore subject to a (Plan-)EIA procedure. This means that an EIS must be prepared as a justification for the draft National Water Programme to be submitted for public inspection. In this procedure, the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management – in agreement with the ministers concerned – is both the initiator and the competent authority.

Parallel to the Plan-EIA procedure, a so-called 'appropriate assessment' under the Environmental Planning Act must also be carried out for the National Water Programme. This assessment determines whether any significant negative impacts are expected in relation to the preservation targets for the Natura 2000 areas as a result of the (new) policy choices in the NWP. The appropriate assessment is a legal test that must be carried out before the NWP is adopted. The appropriate assessment has no set format and can be included as a chapter in the EIS or as a stand-alone report. This NRD does not address the content and form of the Appropriate Assessment.

2.2 The purpose of the environmental impact assessment

Reference, policy choices and alternative policy options
The EIA procedure and the EIS to be drawn up serve to support decision-making on the integrated water policy in the National Water Programme, and the national policy choices to be made therein. As a result, the importance of the physical living environment is taken into account as early as possible in the choices to be made within the programme. Two elements are key to this. First **insight into the impacts** of the programme on the physical living environment. For this, it is necessary to know what the current condition of the physical living environment is (a so-called 'living environment snapshot') and which trends, (autonomous) developments and current policy affect it, and what the physical living environment would look like if policy were continued unchanged (this is the **reference situation**). Second, this concerns **insight into the impacts of policy choices** to achieve (new) policy objectives. These policy choices, and possible alternative **policy options**, are the focus of the EIS to be drawn up for the National Water Programme. The EIS compares the impacts of the policy choices and possible alternative policy options with each other and with the reference situation.

[5] The term environmental impact assessment is usually abbreviated as EIA (the formal procedure) and environmental impact statement (the report) as EIS.

What does the physical living environment entail, and how are the impacts determined?

The Environmental Planning Act introduced the 'physical living environment' concept. There is no definition of this term in the Environmental Planning Act. The law defines what the term covers in any event; namely buildings, infrastructure, water systems, water, soil, air, landscapes, nature, cultural heritage and world heritage. The 2020 National Environmental Vision introduced the 'Wheel of the Living Environment' as an instrument for determining impacts on the living environment, see

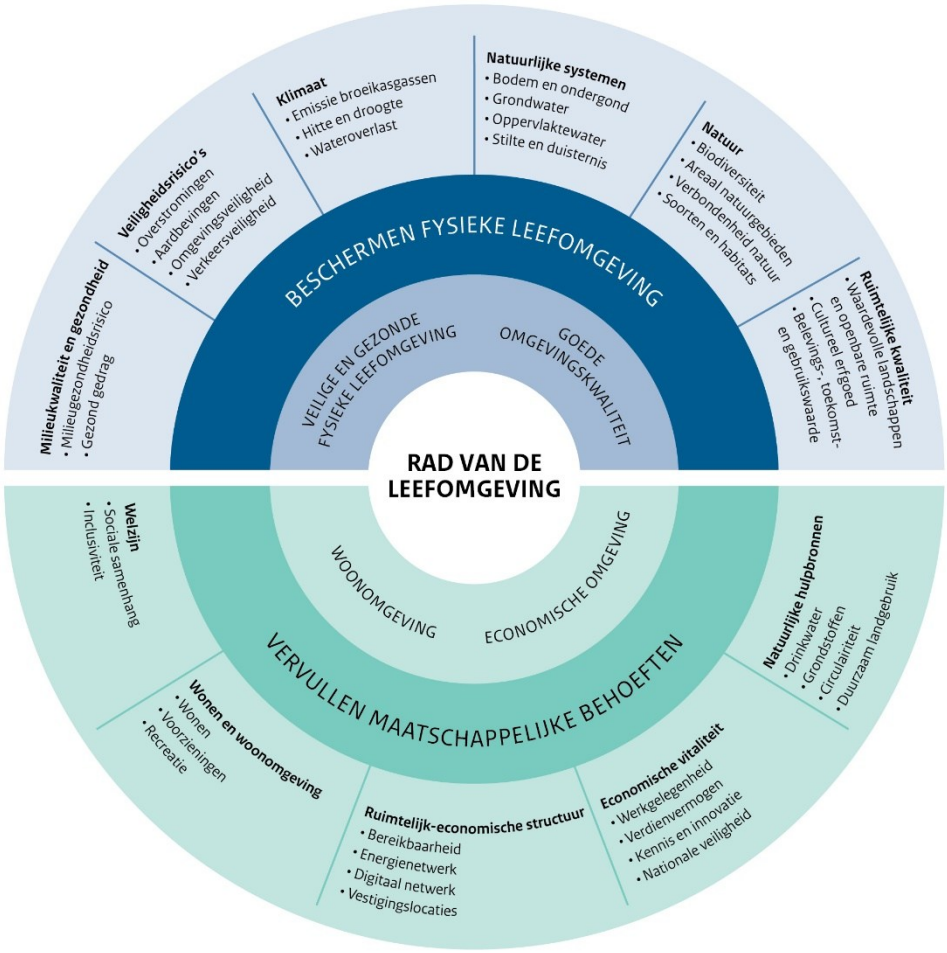


Figure 2-1. This Wheel also forms the basis for describing and assessing impacts for the EIS of the
National Water Programme. Chapter 4 discusses this in more detail.

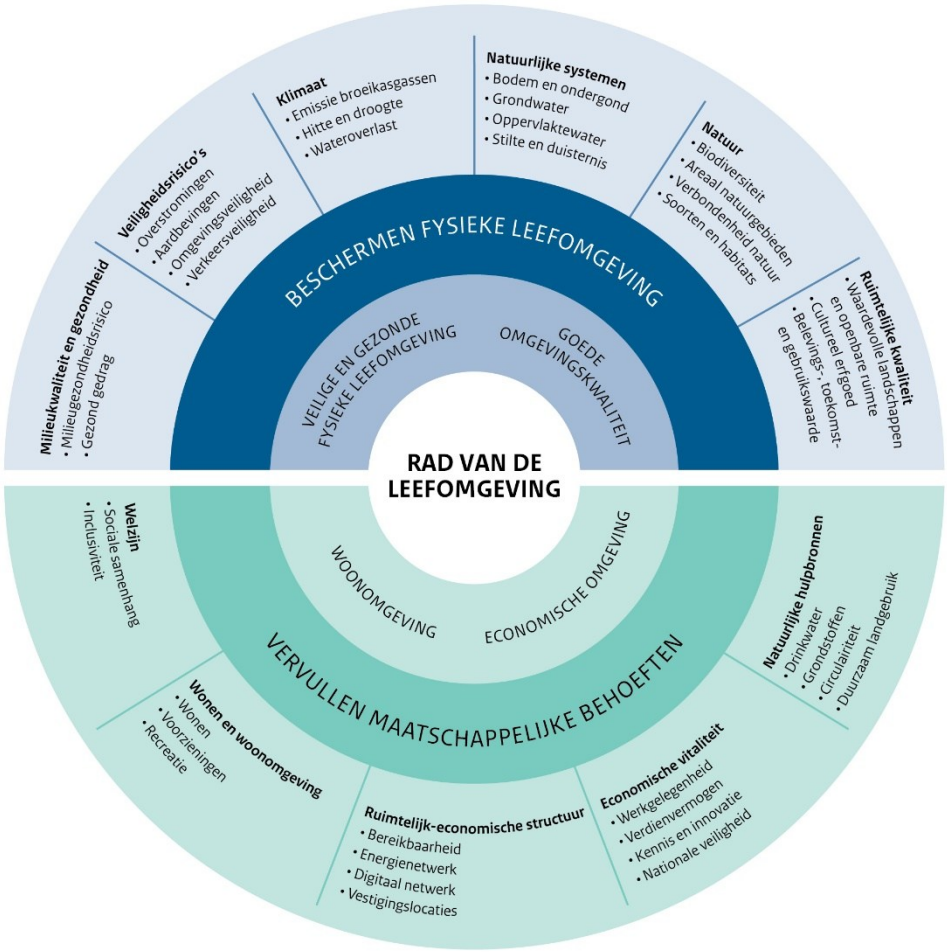


Figure 2-1 Wheel of the living Environment as an assessment framework for the physical living environment. Framework in Dutch, all theme's and indicators are explained in English in paragraph 4.1.

2.3 The EIA procedure to be completed

The EIA procedure has a number of steps. These steps as much as possible will run in parallel with the procedural steps of the National Water Programme. Figure 2-2 illustrates these steps, which are subsequently explained in more detail.

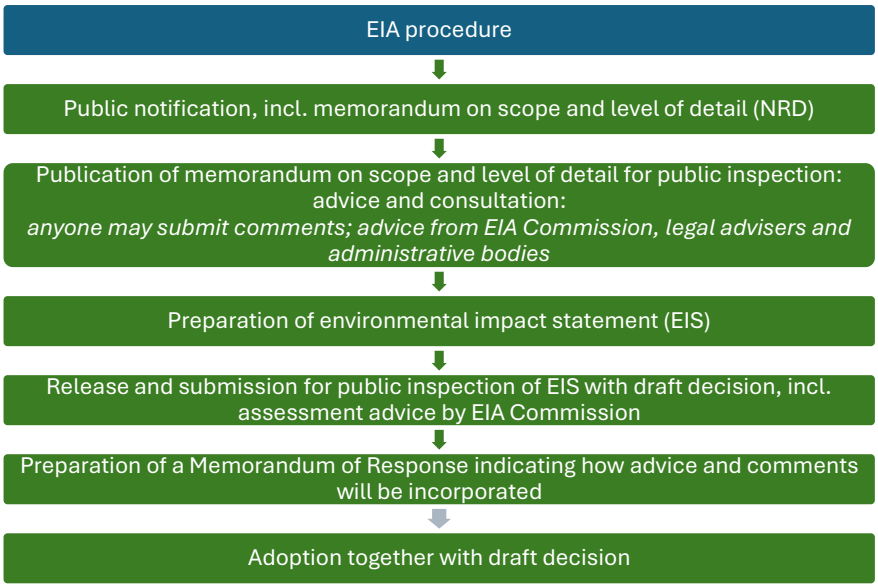


Figure 2-2 the EIA procedure for producing the National Water Programme's EIS

Public notification, including memorandum of scope and level of detail (NRD) (January 2026)
The first step is public notification. Through this notification in the Government Gazette and daily newspapers, everyone is informed of the intention of the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management – in agreement with the ministers concerned – to prepare and adopt the National Water Programme. To give more substance and context to this intention, a memorandum of scope and level of detail (NRD) is prepared. At the same time as the NRD, the participation plan is also submitted for consultation.

Publication of memorandum on scope and level of detail for public inspection: advice and consultation (January 2026)
After publication of the public notification, including the memorandum on scope and level of detail, legal advisers, concerned administrative bodies and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Commission can provide advice on what should be addressed by the EIS.

Since decentralised authorities play an important role in implementing water policy, they are specifically consulted. As the plans could potentially have environmental impacts on neighbouring countries, relevant administrative bodies across the border, namely Germany and Belgium, are also consulted. Furthermore, the central government's legal advisers are also consulted on scope and level of detail of the impact study. These are the Minister for Housing and Spatial Planning, the Minister for Climate and Green Growth and the Minister for Agriculture, Food Safety, Fisheries and Nature. The EIA Commission will also be asked to provide advice on how to deal with the scope and level of detail in the EIS to be drawn up. This advice will be made public on the Commission's website.

The advice obtained during the consultation on scope and level of detail will, after assessment by the competent authority – on behalf of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management – be included or not in the implementation of the environmental impact assessment. By means of a memorandum of response and in the EIS, it is indicated how the advice and comments submitted are dealt with during the implementation of the (Plan-)EIA.

Drafting the EIS
Based on the memorandum of scope and level of detail, the first drafts of the National Water Programme and the comments and advice obtained, the EIS will be drawn up.

Release of and public consultation on EIS together with draft National Water Programme
The EIS will be submitted for consultation at the same time as the draft National Water Programme. Anyone may submit comments in accordance with the public consultation procedure. Neighbouring countries (Belgium, Germany, UK, Denmark and Norway) will be consulted on the EIS and the draft National Water Programme. The EIS will also be reviewed by the EIA Commission. In parallel with the previous steps, the EIS and the draft NWP are presented to the House of Representatives.

Adoption of National Water Programme
With the National Water Programme, the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management – in agreement with the other ministers concerned – sets the national water policy for the Netherlands. This includes a statement on how the environmental impact assessment and the comments and advice have been taken into account. The NWP also indicates how monitoring will be structured.

3 The policy choices to be examined by the central government

3.1 National level water system choices by theme

In the NWP, the central government intends to make a number of important water management policy choices. It will make these choices at three levels, see also Figure 3-1:

- **National guiding principles:** These principles form the core of the NWP and provide the basis for water management and the choices in the NWP. They give direction to water management and must have impact at the regional and local level, as well as within the different themes.
- With the help of **strategic guidance**, the national guiding principles are developed. This is accomplished through means of **integrated national system choices**. These choices concern structural measures in the main water system (such as, for example, discharge distribution), but also national choices on the possible deployment of guidelines, instruments and/or standards.
- **Thematic choices:** Choices within one or more themes that give concrete expression to the national guiding principles. Choices within one theme may affect other themes.

The EIS aims to provide the information needed to make these choices with due care. This requires sufficient depth – specific information about the potential consequences of the choices made. To this end, alternative options must be identified ('what can we choose from?', hereinafter referred to as **policy options**). This also requires an understanding of the **coherence between choices** and how this is **managed**. This coherence is about consistency between choices for different themes, for example the impact of choices relating to the 'availability of fresh water for shipping'. But consistency is also needed between choices at different levels. For example: the choices within a theme such as shipping must be in line with the guiding principles.

The coherence of these choices and how this is managed is shown in Figure 3-1.

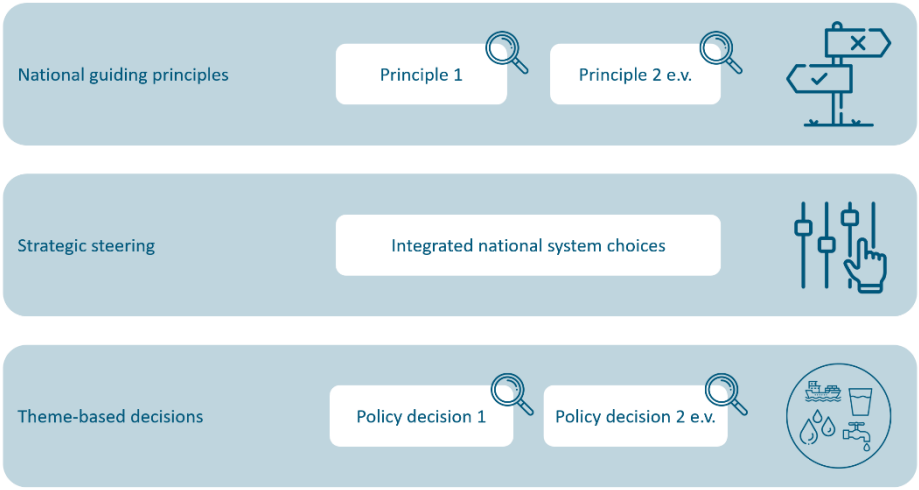


Figure 3-1 The three levels within the NWP

3.2 How does this approach work?

The NWP will set national guiding principles, make thematic policy choices, and shape the strategic guidance needed for this through integrated national system choices.

- **National guiding principles** and **integrated national system choices:** This NRD outlines some guiding principles and integrated national system choices that the central government is considering. These serve as the **starting point** for the elaboration of the NWP. The EIS actualises and tests these principles and choices. New principles or choices may also emerge in the elaboration of the NWP, which will then also be actualised and tested.
- **Thematic choices:** This NRD outlines the central government's goals for the various themes. A range is provided for each theme that the central government intends to explore in the EIS for the NWP, with the aid of policy options. These also serve as **starting point** for further elaboration and are developed in greater depth and actualised in the NWP and EIS. They are also assessed against the national guiding principles. Subsequently, adjustments and new policy options for each theme could emerge.

This creates a coherent approach for the EIS that works in an overarching manner. For the policy choices to be explored, a range is defined that the central government aims to explore. This range captures the connection with other national and/or thematic choices. Based on this coherence and the impacts, real policy options for the policy choice to be made are derived. For these policy options, the impact on specific areas, dilemmas and (environmental) impacts are determined. On this basis, the policy choice can be adopted or adjusted. This creates an iterative process by which choices are tested and refined. This process, depending on the impact and importance of the choice at hand, can be global or more in-depth. This process is shown in Figure 3-2
Figure 3-2.

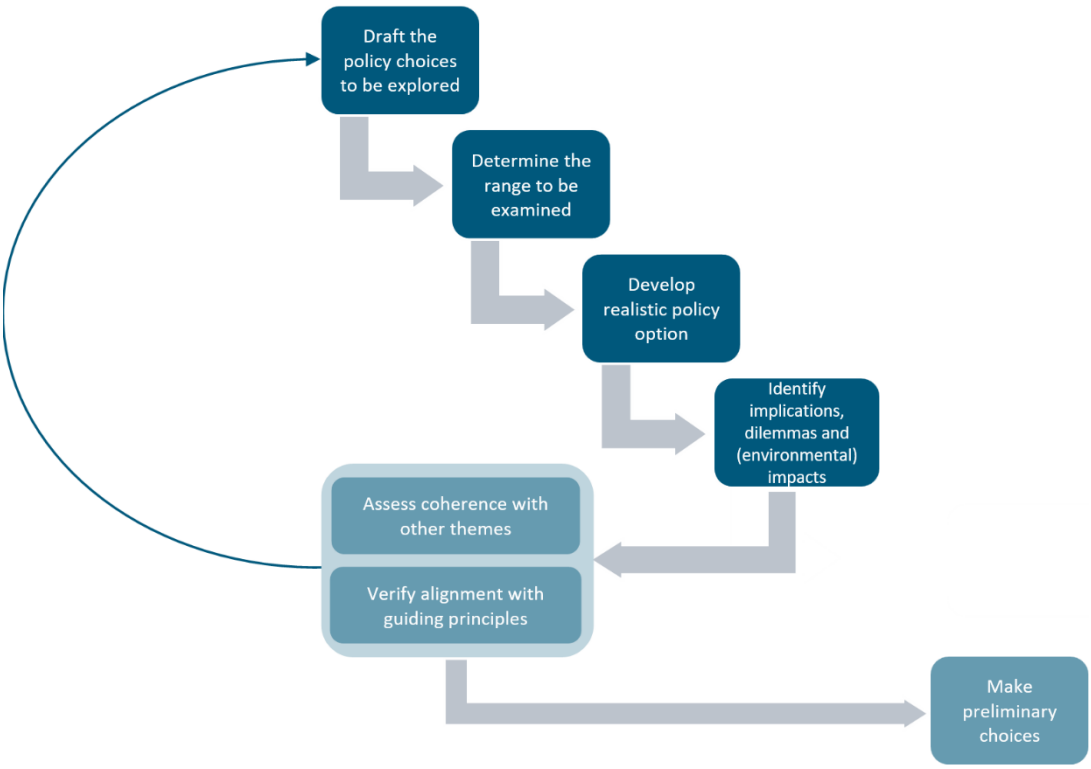


Figure 3-2 Approach to elaborating policy choices

3.3 National guiding principles to be explored

In the EIS, the central government aims to explore a number of national guiding principles. The central government wants these principles to guide water management in the period 2028-2033. With the aid of the EIS, it intends to refine and adapt these principles. It is also possible that new national guiding principles will emerge during this process. The central government is starting this process on the basis of the following national guiding principles to be explored:

Taking water and soil into account
To be able to face the major challenges within the water and soil system in the future, it is important to properly account for this system in the spatial planning of our country. The way we plan our land use will have to be adapted to changing circumstances. This requires future-proofing for new developments and, at times, also adjusting existing methods of land use or business operations. This principle – as an elaboration of the Spatial Planning Memorandum – guides policy considerations in the NWP. This shifts the approach from 'adapting water and soil to human activities', to 'taking water and soil into account when making spatial decisions'. As such, this principle is in line with the guiding principles for the NWP as already identified in section 1.3 and this structuring principle impacts all parts of the water policy and land use: from water safety and freshwater to water quality, nature, agriculture, mobility and energy.

One system, consistent choices
The Netherlands' water challenges are inextricably linked. We are simultaneously dealing with too much water – high water, flood risks and extreme showers – as well as too little water, in the form of prolonged droughts and structural shortages.

These extremes interlock directly: measures that drain water quickly to reduce inconvenience can actually reduce availability in dry times. In this respect, the amount of water is also closely related to water quality. Furthermore, the various water-related challenges are also strongly interconnected with land use and other spatial planning issues: agriculture, industry, shipping, cities and energy supply depend on sufficient and clean water, but at the same time contribute to pollution, paving and water and land use. Furthermore, other spatial functions can contribute to solving water-related challenges, for instance, through the multifunctional use of space. This requires anticipating other policy domains. This also involves European obligations, such as the Water Framework Directive, the TEN-T regulation (Trans-European Transport Network), the Drinking Water Directive, the Urban Wastewater Directive, the Nitrates Directive and the nitrogen policy. Only by taking an integrated approach to water safety, flooding, drought, water quality, public drinking water supply, nature, navigability and other societal functions – and their connection to other policy areas – will a water system emerge that can withstand extremes and form a solid basis for a safe, liveable and economically strong Netherlands.

National choices and regional impacts
Major water challenges call for system choices at national and even international levels, such as in the Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt river basins. To this end, national direction is necessary. The system of coasts, rivers and the IJsselmeer never functions separately from the regional polders, storage basins, streams, canals and urban water systems. Measures in one system directly affect the other.

With the NWP, the central government aims to strengthen the connection between the main and regional water systems and spatial planning. In this respect, all government authorities work together on the basis of their own responsibility to better integrate water and spatial planning. To this end, the central government takes a directing and connecting role: it ensures alignment between administrative layers, stimulates knowledge sharing and supports coherent implementation. It monitors the national interest and – where necessary – sets frameworks. This ensures that measures at all scale levels contribute to a robust, resilient and future-proof water system.

From ambition to specific high-impact frameworks
Ambitions only become meaningful when they are translated into specific goals and specific frameworks. This creates a foothold for administrators, implementers and civil stakeholders. Water safety is already firmly anchored in law and implementation is invested in the High Water Protection Programme. This NWP takes for flooding, water shortage, water quality and the public drinking water supply to do what is necessary to keep to keep the Netherlands safe and livable for people, the economy, and nature. And in doing so, to also provide clarity for decentralised authorities and predictability for citizens and businesses.

This does not mean that the central government sets everything in stone. The central government must provide a balance between clarity and frameworks, and room for elaboration by regional governments (water boards, municipalities and provinces) and water companies. There must also be a balance between central government and society: the central government sets frameworks, but citizens, businesses and civil organisations also bear responsibility for preparedness and resilience. This creates a clear and coherent system of goals and frameworks that guides policy and implementation – and makes the Netherlands resilient to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Adaptivity and long-term choices
The Netherlands' water management requires decisions that will have an impact beyond 2100. Uncertainties about climate change, socio-economic developments and technological opportunities make it necessary to make choices that are adaptive. That means: acting where it must now, but at the same time keeping room for adjustments when changing circumstances and insights warrant it. It also means that we design measures in such a way that we can adjust and build upon them later as much as possible.

The NWP therefore applies the principle of adaptivity: coordinated planning together with other challenges, working with adaptive strategies and incorporating decision points so there is enough space to weigh the latest insights. Major investments – for example in dykes, barriers or pumps – and spatial choices are designed to be adaptable to new insights, such as accelerated sea level rise or changes in river discharges. This sometimes requires reserving physical space to prevent locking ourselves into irreversible decisions. It also involves weighing, depending on the specific situation, how the space can be (temporarily) used appropriately so that no disproportionately large restrictions arise for other spatial developments. This can be achieved, for example, through multiple space use, which can serve several (spatial) objectives.

3.4 Integrated national system choices to be investigated

In order to give strategic direction to the national ambitions, the central government makes a number of integrated national system choices: choices with an impact on the entire water system that form the basis for water policy in the coming planning period. In the EIS, the central government will explore at least the following integrated national system choices:

1. **Coherence in the main water system** – the distribution of river discharges, and the IJsselmeer, Markermeer and Volkerak-Zoommeer as a national buffer for water safety and freshwater.
2. **A safe water system** – strong dykes, dunes and delta works.
3. **Healthy water** – a source-based approach and healthy ecosystems for a future-proof water system.
4. **Space for water –** structural reservation of space for rivers, dykes, stream valleys, buffer zones and deep polders in spatial planning.

These integrated national system choices give substance to the central government's strategic direction for Dutch water management and its coherence. They intervene in important links in the Dutch water system, namely the primary flood defences, the discharge distribution to the Rhine tributaries, the IJsselmeer/Markermeer, and the space along dykes, rivers and in regional water systems. They also intervene in pollution sources. These choices each impact the different water management themes.

3.4.1 Coherence in the main water system

The way the Netherlands distributes river discharges is a defining choice for the future of water management in much of the Netherlands. Whereas in the past the main focus was on the safe discharge of high water, today the distribution of available water at low tide is also crucial. Due to climate change, prolonged periods of low Rhine discharges are increasing, while demand for freshwater for agriculture, shipping, drinking water and nature is growing. At the same time, erosion of river bottoms has disrupted the natural distribution between the Rhine tributaries. The

distribution to the Rhine tributaries largely determines the amount of freshwater in the IJsselmeer, the opportunities for countering salinisation in the western Netherlands and the navigability of much of our waterways. The NWP addresses:

- **River discharge and the river bottom –** measures for stable river bottoms, sustainable sediment management and balanced discharge distribution across the Rhine tributaries at high and low water.
- **IJsselmeer, Afsluitdijk and IJmuiden** – water level management for the IJsselmeer and Markermeer and sufficient discharge capacity to sea.
- **Rhine-Meuse estuary and Southwest delta –** strategy and measures to counter salinisation.
- **Coherence of main and regional water systems** – alignment and cooperation to retain water during drought and safely drain it during precipitation.

Specifically, the central government will investigate:

- Opportunities for stabilising and, where necessary and possible, raising river bottoms in the Rhine tributaries, including setting policy targets for bottom elevation. This enhances the navigability of the Rhine tributaries, reduces desiccation in the river basin and improves the discharge distribution across the Rhine tributaries at low water.
- Discharge distribution at **low water** on the Rhine tributaries and increasing the flexibility of the Driel weir programme, including measures to limit salinisation in the Rhine-Meuse estuary and protect existing open sea connections and inlets.
- Optimal use of the IJsselmeer and Markermeer as freshwater reserves, including adjusting the level of the IJsselmeer and Markermeer in summer, in conjunction with water quality and ecology, water safety and impacts on water use, such as the public drinking water supply and navigability.
- The possibilities and need for increasing the discharge and storage capacity of the rivers and the discharge distribution across the Rhine tributaries at **high water** (very high discharges to the Rhine, greater than 16,000 m^3/s).
- The possibilities of allowing the winter level in the IJsselmeer and Markermeer to rise along with the sea level rise, so as to be able to continue discharging for a longer period of time at the Afsluitdijk. This is linked to the required increase in discharge capacity at the Afsluitdijk.
- Optimisation opportunities between regional water systems and the main water system in times of both extreme precipitation and drought. This is aimed at improving the interplay between water retention, storage and discharge and the division of responsibilities between the different parties involved.

Here, it is important to realise that freshwater shortages cannot be solved within the main water system, and that regions and sectors must prepare to adapt to increased salinisation and greater shortages. The National Water Programme provides more insight into the challenges for the various regions.The choices to be made about the river's bottom elevation and, in connection with this, the possibility of improving the discharge distribution across the Rhine tributaries are part of the Room for the River 2.0 programme, see also Figure 3-3.

3.4.2 A safe water system

Due to climate change, the water safety challenge is becoming more extensive and complex. Sea level rise, land subsidence and more extreme river discharges increase pressure on the water system, while the interconnection between coast, rivers and polders increases. With the course that has been set, the Netherlands has

a solid basis to tackle this challenge, provided the policy is implemented adaptively, funding is maintained and sufficient sand, raw materials and personnel are available to ensure implementation.

In the planning period, the National Water Programme (NWP) focuses on the continuation of the current water safety policy, as established in the Environmental Planning Act and the Decree on the Quality of the Living Environment (Bkl). In this regard, the High Water Protection Programme (HWBP) is the implementation instrument for bringing and keeping the primary flood defences in order. The HWBP is being implemented adaptively, allowing for a timely response to new insights, climate developments and future safety challenges. In addition, to make future dyke reinforcements permanently possible, it is important to reserve sufficient space around the flood defences. In terms of the coast, the central government remains committed to dynamic coastal management.

As for the Delta Works, the current facilities, if properly maintained and reinforced where necessary, will be adequate for decades to come. The Maeslant barrier is not expected to need replacement until around 2070. The current policy of leaving the Rhine-Meuse estuary open will therefore be continued for the time being. This is why no new policy choices will be prepared within the NWP for the upcoming planning period. The NWP does raise a number of strategic issues for the period after 2033, including the future of the Delta Works in the Rhine-Meuse estuary and the South-West Delta (see section 3.8).

Choices about the availability and extraction of sand for coastal safety are being explored through the North Sea Programme in the associated Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), so that dynamic coastal management can be continued in the future.

3.4.3 Healthy and clean water

To prevent pollution of surface water and groundwater, the central government will investigate:

- Source-based approaches and a chain approach: The potential for adopting a source-based approach to control pollution in rural and urban areas so that pollution is prevented as much as possible rather than dealt with afterwards. In addition to a source-based approach, the central government will also investigate the entire chain.
- Policy instruments to introduce target setting and result commitments: Whether and under what conditions goal-driven and result commitments are instruments to replace the current best-effort obligations.
- Zoning and spatial planning: Protection of groundwater and drinking water sources and ecologically valuable areas – by spatially securing sensitive areas in policy and protecting them from pollution.

Section 3.5.4 Water quality provides further details on this.

3.4.4 Space for water

Healthy and clean water, dealing with drought as well as heavy precipitation requires sufficient space for water. For example, for water storage, increasing the 'sponge effect' of the landscape, stream valleys and buffer zones.
To retain space for future dyke reinforcements and dynamic coastal management, the central government is pushing ahead with existing policies. With spatial reservations in the river region and the Policy Guideline for Major Rivers, the central government is preserving the space in the floodplains. Restraint with land reclamation and construction outside the dykes in the IJsselmeer region is also

called for and the rules in the Decree on the Quality of the Living Environment form the framework for this.

In addition, the central government will explore options for:

- Room for the Rivers, see also the Room for the River 2.0 programme, Figure 3-3. The central government hereby will also review the possibility of updating the existing inner dyke spatial reservations for river widening through the Decree on the Quality of the Living Environment (Bkl), so that future river widening remains possible, high discharges can be handled safely and river-based functions can be accommodated as much as possible.
- Supporting decentralised authorities in relation to:
    - reserving space for water storage and combining it with other functions, such as nature, agriculture and recreation;
    - opportunities to increase the sponginess of the landscape – through measures in agricultural, natural and urban areas that allow the soil to absorb and retain more water;
    - the possibilities for responsibly raising the water level in the peat meadow areas, with groundwater levels of 20 - 40 cm below ground level to inhibit land subsidence and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in low moorland areas, whereby it is necessary to limit the demand for additional freshwater in support of the land subsidence approach to avoid displacement of other water consumers at times of water scarcity as much as possible;
    - the incorporation of green and blue structures in spatial development – such as buffer zones, aquatic nature and green permeability that enhance the purifying impact of the landscape and reduce the inflow of pollutants;
    - adaptive management of green and blue structures and dykes to contribute to improved water quality but also to a better living environment.

Room for the River 2.0 programme

The central government's goals

Sufficient space for all river functions in the river basin/River basin ready for the future
The river functions in the river basin are safe water discharge, navigability, freshwater availability, ecological water quality and nature, and spatial-economic development, including agriculture. To ensure future flood safety in the river basin, even at higher discharges, choices are needed to increase discharge capacity. This can be done through dyke reinforcement, while additional space for the river may be needed in some places to safely discharge higher discharges in combination with other tasks such as creating robust natural areas or other developments.

Stabilising and raising the river bottom
In various places, the river bottom is increasingly subsiding. The bottom of the Waal River, for instance, has dropped 1.5 to 2 metres in some places over the past decades. Along with falling water levels and groundwater levels, damage to agriculture and nature occurs, and the risk of damage to foundations also increases. This also causes problems for navigation at various locations, because

the river bottom does not descend at the same rate everywhere, and also because engineering structures and inlets of inland ports do not descend with it, and thus remain higher. Finally, the uneven descent of the river bottom causes a deterioration in the distribution of the Rhine discharge, with more and more water flowing to the Waal River and less and less to the IJssel River and the IJsselmeer region. In the future, the central government aims to achieve stable river bottoms at both higher and lower river discharges.

Range of options to be explored in the EIS for this purpose by the central government

- The central government will explore several options to counter river subsidence. A distinction is made between the options for the Rhine tributaries and for the Meuse. For the Rhine tributaries, shipping is an important factor; for river subsidence in the (Common) Meuse, nature is an important factor. Within the investigation, a range between 'no river bottom measures – sediment replenishment only – structural bottom measures' will be considered. In this respect, structural river bottom measures look at the combination of additional sediment replenishment and additional measures for distributing the Rhine discharge across the Waal River and Pannerdensch Canal at low water.

No soil measures ⟷ Structural soil measures

- From the perspective of the five river functions, central government will investigate the long-term necessary and/or desired discharge and storage capacity of the rivers, what space (both outside and inside the dykes) is needed for this and with what combination of interventions (raising dykes, river widening inside and outside the dykes) this can be accomplished. This involves exploring different scenarios. Low/moderate, as well as high climate scenarios are assumed for the 2100 target year. In addition, the discharge distribution across the Rhine tributaries during extremely high discharges (higher than 16,000 m^3/s) will also be investigated. For this purpose, a range of dividing the surplus above 16,000 m^3/s 80/20 across the Waal and IJssel rivers or 50/50 Waal/IJssel will be examined.

Low / moderate climate scenario ⟷ High climate scenario

Figure 3-3 Framework detailing policy choices to be investigated on the basis of the Room for the River 2.0 programme. These policy choices explicitly shape part of the strategic direction.

3.5 Thematic choices to be explored

The national guiding principles permeate the various water management themes. This section details the choices and range of policy options to be explored for each theme.

3.5.1 Water safety

The central government's goals

The central government is focused on continuing the current national water safety policy. The aim is for the Netherlands to meet water safety standards by 2050 and to remain safe from flooding from the sea, rivers and lakes into the future.

The standards and instruments for this water safety policy have already been established and recently updated. In this regard, the High Water Protection Programme (HWBP) is the implementation instrument for bringing and keeping the primary flood defences in order. The HWBP is being implemented adaptively. In addition, to make future dyke reinforcements permanently possible, it is important to reserve sufficient space around the flood defences. No new policy choices are included in this NWP with regard to the national water safety policy that give rise to a mandatory Plan-EIS-based decision.

For the long term, the central government is putting a number of strategic issues on the agenda, including the future of the Delta works in the Rhine-Meuse estuary and the South-West Delta. These will end up in a Delta Works Decision Agenda, so that timely direction can be given to strategic choices on the future operation, replacement and adaptation of the major Delta Works as sea levels continue to rise.

In terms of the coast, the central government will continue the policy of dynamic coastal management in the coming planning period. Choices about the availability and extraction of sand for coastal safety are being explored through the North Sea Programme in the associated Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), so that dynamic coastal management can be continued in the future.

Range of options to be explored in the EIS for this purpose by the central government

- Choices about the availability and extraction of sand for coastal safety are being considered through the North Sea Programme in the associated EIS.

3.5.2 Flooding

The central government's goals

A climate-proof water and soil system
A water system, in which the main regional and urban water systems are coordinated in such a way that flooding due to extreme precipitation is prevented as much as possible.

Resilient urban and rural design

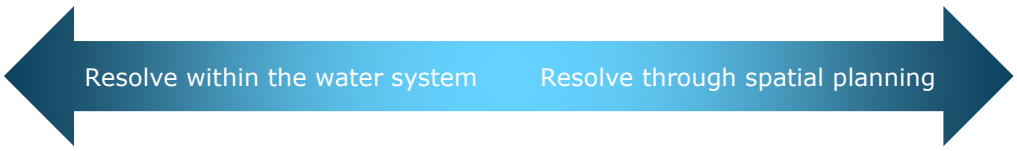
In the planning and development of the physical environment, systematic consideration is given to the current and future effects of climate change in order to minimise damage and social disruption caused by heavy rainfall.

Effective crisis organisation during extreme precipitation
Crisis management and communications that have been prepared for extreme rainfall, with clear protocols and timely notification to citizens and stakeholders, see also section 3.5.7.

Water-robust restoration after damage
After an extreme rainstorm, damage that is repaired in a way that can better accommodate and prevent future flooding.

Flooding and water awareness
Water awareness targets are included in section 3.5.7.

Range of options to be explored in the EIS for this purpose by the central government



Together with the decentralised authorities, the central government will take a risk-oriented look at the connection between flood prevention from the perspective of the water system, spatial planning, crisis management, water awareness and post-flood recovery. This examines policy options within the water system and policy options in spatial planning.

- The central government, together with decentralised authorities, will be reviewing the responsibilities of relevant government authorities. The impacts of providing active direction by the central government and/or decentralised authorities on mitigating and managing risks will be identified in this respect. This will include exploring opportunities within current policy instruments and the application of new, framework-setting instruments.
- Together with the decentralised authorities, the central government will investigate when maximum efforts can be made to retain and delay precipitation water and when, in extreme rainfall situations, water should instead be discharged as quickly as possible to places where this leads to the least possible damage. This will include consideration of the acceptable societal risks and the vital infrastructure to be protected. The infrastructure needed to provide sufficient drainage capacity and search areas for water storage are an important part of the study.

3.5.3 *Freshwater availability*

The central government's goals

Improved freshwater distribution
The central government aims to improve freshwater distribution across the Netherlands through the main water system. This will not be enough: every region and water user will be faced with less available water. Regions must also take measures themselves, such as improving freshwater retention and managing the distribution of freshwater more intelligently, strengthening their resilience to drought. In spatial planning, the water demand must be better aligned with the (declining) availability from the system. Major new water consumers are not planned in locations where freshwater availability cannot be guaranteed in the long term.

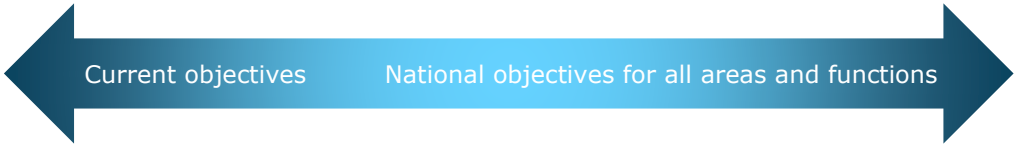
A climate-resilient water and soil system in 2050 and 2100
The central government will focus on:

- A ground and surface water system resilient to the impacts of drought and water shortages. Government authorities providing transparency on expected water shortages and users that are aware of the challenges in specific areas.
- Land and water use resilient to the impacts of drought and water shortages, in conjunction with flooding and water quality.

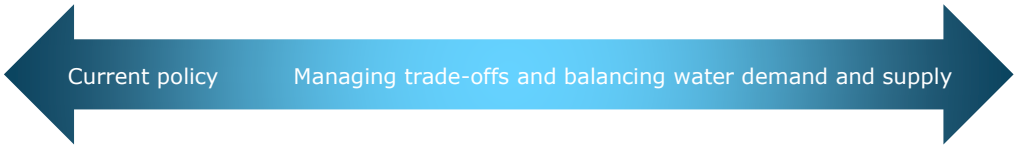
In this respect the central government aims to achieve the best possible balance between water supply and demand. Measures within the (main) water system alone can no longer prevent shortages in this regard. To effectively combat water shortages, spatial planning and business operations must be better aligned with the (declining) availability from the system. Retaining the winter precipitation surplus in the soil ('sponge effect') and maintaining higher groundwater levels are crucial in this regard. These higher groundwater levels may require spatial adjustments to economic functions and habitation.

Transparency
The central government is committed to maximum transparency on drought, land subsidence and salinisation.

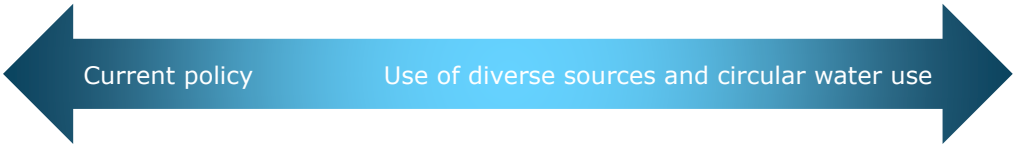
Range of options to be explored in the EIS for this purpose by the central government



- The central government will explore the possibility of setting specific water availability targets differentiated by area and function. This involves setting national targets for crucial functions, targets appropriate to a specific area and arriving at a desired groundwater regime and groundwater extraction ceiling.



- The central government will explore options to actively manage a sustainable land and surface water balance. The starting point here is to retain (ground) water longer and better. The objective is to eventually better align spatial planning and water demand with the (declining) availability from the system and to enable decisions to be made between water users, partly based on the availability of groundwater and surface water. In this respect, the central government will also be exploring opportunities to increase the focus on site selection and management of (new) large-scale water demands that put pressure on the balance.



- The central government will explore options to broaden the supply of freshwater sources, especially in areas where freshwater availability is already under pressure. In this respect, the central government will at a minimum explore opportunities to desalinate brackish and saline water and reuse effluent, including practical uses where this might offer an alternative source.

3.5.4 *Water quality of surface and groundwater*

The central government's goals

Prevention rather than treatment

The central government aims to ensure that in the long run water pollution no longer occurs: prevention before treatment, legal limitation before non-commitment and equitable distribution of environmental use space. Preventing groundwater pollution requires extra attention, because once polluted, it stays polluted. Burden of proof and costs shifted to dischargers. Where we cannot (yet) prevent, we are committed to reducing pollutants, with target setting and clear result obligations through the following pathways:

- Chain approach
- A broad substance-based approach and monitoring
- Zoning
- Single European framework: and level playing field for producers through European directives such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD)

In this case, it's not just about various substances; temperature also plays a role.

Range of options to be explored in the EIS for this purpose by the central government

- Based on its system responsibility, the central government aims to investigate where the water chain from urban wastewater can be improved ranging from a source approach, such as the decentralised treatment by organisations and companies that (partly) discharge wastewater into the sewer, to far-reaching centralised treatment by WWTPs. The objective is to reduce the water's effluent load.
- The central government aims to investigate how to reduce mixture toxicity (the combined impact of a 'cocktail' of different substances) and will explore additional emission routes, such as deposition through means of air or sea spray. The central government will also be investigating the detection and control of unknown pollutants through monitoring, among other things.
- The central government will explore options to tighten the admission criteria for new substances, for example through efforts at the European level to bring the admission standard for each admitted substance in line with the WFD standard. This includes efforts to establish equal starting points for example, for standards and measurement methods within a river basin.
- The central government will investigate whether zoning – in addition to the existing (partly voluntary) approach – with associated measures could be a policy option to minimise contamination in sensitive areas, such as groundwater protection areas, additional strategic reserves and national groundwater reserves.
- The central government is placing the target temperature for water bodies at the centre of the assessment of current and future cooling water discharges. Following the approach for seawater and tidal waters, the government is investigating a reduction of the maximum temperature used in permits from 28 to 25°C for rivers and other freshwaters.

3.5.5 Drinking water

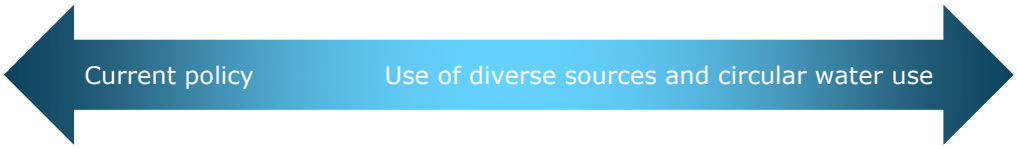
The central government's goals

Sustainable balance between supply and demand
The central government is aiming for a sustainable balance between the supply and demand of good quality drinking water, with sufficient drinking water (sources). In this respect, it is committed to a future-proof drinking water sector.

To achieve this, the central government is committed to five policy tracks:

- Sufficient drinking water (sources)
- Good quality drinking water (sources)
- Conscious and economical use of drinking water
- Future-proof drinking water sector
- General (inter)national frameworks for drinking water (including Caribbean Netherlands)

Range of options to be explored in the EIS for this purpose by the central government



- To achieve a long-term robust drinking water supply, the central government will explore opportunities for designating new drinking water extraction sites within the main water system. One policy option here is to assign a drinking water function to the entire main water system.
- The central government will explore the possibility of adjusting specific environmental quality standards set by the Decree on the Quality of the Living Environment (Bkl) to allow more (brackish or saline) surface waters to be used for drinking water production.
- In this respect, the central government is considering three types of sites within the main water system. Different conditions will apply to each site:
    - A sites: can be kept fresh and the water quantity and environmental quality standards set by the Bkl are under little or no pressure.
    - B sites: these sites are prone to salinisation and/or water shortages. The challenge to continue to extract drinking water here will increase in the future. Because water managers cannot give the same guarantees as A sites, the central government will investigate which environmental quality standards can be permanently safeguarded at these sites, and which cannot be safeguarded temporarily. And where safeguarding drinking water supplies requires adaptive measures to bridge periods of drought or salinisation.
    - C sites: are sites that are already saline or highly susceptible to salinisation and/or water shortages. The water authority cannot give any guarantees about freshwater availability; however, sufficient water is often available. The central government will investigate what amendments to the Decree on the Quality of the Living Environment (Bkl) are needed to enable drinking water extraction from these waters.
    - This concerns the environmental quality standards for surface water from which drinking water is produced; no concessions are made to the quality requirements of the drinking water itself.

3.5.6 Navigability of waterways

The central government's goals

Ensure navigability during heat, drought and water shortage
Sufficient water depth and flow in rivers to keep navigation safe and reliable even during periods of heat and drought. By preventing soil erosion and riverbed barrier formation.

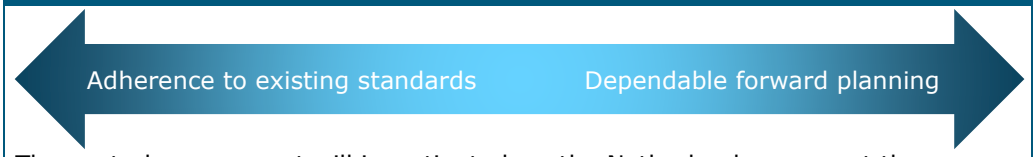
Maintain navigability during high water and extreme precipitation
Ensure that navigability is maintained as much as possible even during peak discharges and heavy rainfall, where destinations are still accessible.

Ensure nautical safety in the face of increasing crowds and changing conditions
Take measures to ensure safety on water, despite increasing traffic and reduced manoeuvring space at low water levels.

Infrastructure maintenance and replacement
Maintaining and replacing infrastructure and ensuring nautical safety is part of this.

Vital processes
The NWP also looks at the impact of spatial planning and freshwater distribution on vital processes for shipping, such as shipping operations and the accessibility of seaports. The NWP also looks at the (large) industrial water consumers that potentially are important for the sustainability of shipping.

Range of options to be explored in the EIS for this purpose by the central government



The central government will investigate how the Netherlands can meet the mandatory shipping standards for navigability of the main water system (including the European TEN-T standards).

- The central government will study the practical implementation of these standards (including under extreme weather conditions) and the opportunities to adaptively anticipate changing discharges and water levels. In this respect, the central government will review the conditions for ensuring navigability, keeping seaports and inland ports accessible and what the desired baseline is in this respect.
- The central government will investigate how discharge distribution choices (national system choice, see section 3.4) affect this positively or negatively.
- The central government will examine the possibilities of prioritising shipping during low discharge and water levels based on the economic importance of the various shipping routes.

3.5.7 Cooperation, crisis management and water awareness

The central government's goals

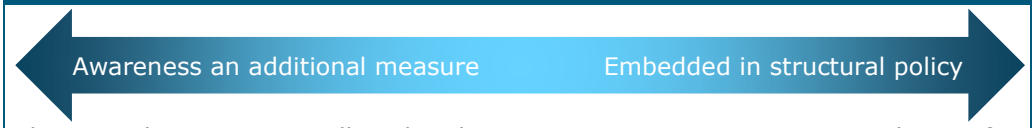
Water-conscious society
Residents and business owners who are aware of the risks of extreme precipitation and know what measures they can take to prevent or mitigate damage.

Encouraging joint responsibility and cooperation
Government authorities, social parties and citizens must shape the transition together to respond to increasing water shortages, increased flooding, salinisation in some areas and ongoing land subsidence, to avoid social disruption. The central government is committed to collaboration with other government authorities, as well as within the safety domain.

Clear division of responsibilities for vital functions and emergencies
The central government will work to provide clarity: it explicitly will lay down who is responsible for preventing consequential damage to vital functions and networks due to climate change (extreme drought or flooding). It will clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of parties involved in water-related disasters, so that cooperation and decision-making during crisis situations are effective and unambiguous.

Commit to strong crisis management and water awareness to support multi-layered safety
The central government is focusing on multi-layered safety. To this end, it is focusing on strong water awareness. Residents, businesses and administrators must be aware of the risks in their living environment and be able to contribute at an individual and collective level to preventing and reducing flood damage. In line with this, the central government remains committed to strong crisis management.

Range of options to be explored in the EIS for this purpose by the central government



The central government will explore how water awareness as a structural part of water policy can contribute to a future-proof Netherlands, including specific targets. The use of, for example, a 'water calendar', through which the central government clearly communicates policies and risks that residents and parties can anticipate, is part of this. In this respect, the central government will explore how collective and individual resilience can take shape and reinforce each other.

- The central government will explore ways to strengthen crisis management (including extreme weather messaging) for water policy.
- In this respect, the central government will investigate which instruments are effective to achieve these goals, from soft instruments (such as knowledge sharing and communication) to hard instruments (standardisation, funding).
- The central government will explore ways to strengthen cooperation with other government authorities, as well as within the safety domain.

3.6 Continuation of current policy

Many policies that respond to urgent water challenges within the NWP themes have already been deployed, and will be upheld in the updated NWP. The EIS will specify whether this is appropriate. Key areas where current policies are expected to be continued are:

- The realisation of the High Water Protection Programme (HWBP) to bring the dykes up to standard by 2050 at the latest, with measures from the HWBP reassessment that strengthen the feasibility of these goals.

- Realisation of the Water Framework Directive package of measures from the 2022-2027 river basin management plans.
- So-called 'no regret' optimisations in the main water system, reduced flushing against salinisation and adapting to shortages and higher salt concentrations.
- Continued dynamic coastal management to maintain a safe and natural coastal foundation: This means that natural processes such as wind, water and sand are actively given room to help shape coasts and dunes, within predefined limits. This nature-based approach allows the dune system to develop in a robust manner while preserving the coastline. The current agreements on dynamic dune management zoning from the so-called 'Coastal Pact'[6] are the starting point in this respect.

Explanatory note – Flood Risk Directive: policy to continue unchanged

This NWP establishes that the Netherlands will continue to implement the European Flood Risk Directive (EFRD) unabated in the coming planning period. The six-year cycle of risk assessments, maps and management plans continues. The Flood Risk Management Plan (ORBP) 2028-2033, to be adopted by the end of 2026, is an annex to the updated NWP. In this respect, the Netherlands complies with the European requirement for public participation and adoption.

The ORBP does not contain new policies, but describes existing policies that have been created through other processes and, where necessary, have already been substantiated by an EIA procedure. The central government is responsible for national coordination and reporting to the European Commission. The provinces provide regional input and liaise with municipalities, water boards and safety regions. Implementation of the European Flood Risk Directive thus remains embedded in the national water safety policy and is closely linked to the Delta Programme and the High Water Protection Programme. The coherence and consistency of the approach is thus ensured in the upcoming planning period as well.

3.7 River basin management plans

The NWP has a strong interrelationship with a number of programmes, each of which influences and makes choices that affect multiple themes. (See also section 6). This is explained in further detail below for the Standard Groundwater Protection Plans (SGBPs).

Explanatory note - River basin management plans

The river basin management plans report broadly on the Netherlands' commitment to the WFD. The scope of the Plan-EIA emphasises the new policy choices and measures from the central government for the planning period 2028-2033, since these are the choices that will be specifically decided in the context of the river basin management plans and the NWP.

Explanation of WFD and river basin management plans
The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) aims to achieve and maintain chemically clean and ecologically healthy surface water, and clean and sufficient groundwater. The Netherlands is obliged to review and update its river basin management plans every six years. This way it reports progress to the European Commission.

[6] pdf

The 2028-2033 river basin management plans will account for the targets attained in 2027 and describe policies and measures for the new planning period. Draft plans will be adopted by the end of 2026 and submitted for consultation along with the draft NWP.

Delineation of Plan-EIA scope for river basin management plans 2028-2033
The Plan-EIA assesses relevant policy choices and measures for their environmental impacts (in part this concerns the continuation of existing policies and measures). Part of this includes the WFD measures taken by Rijkswaterstaat for the national waters. This will be done in close connection with the Programmatic Approach to Large Waters.

Policy choices and measures by other government authorities (provinces, water boards and municipalities) are primarily included in their regional water (management) programmes. These are summarised in the river basin management plans, as this is part of the Netherlands' overall commitment to the WFD. However, these are not choices decided by the central government and are therefore not part of the scope of the Plan-EIA.

The WFD target attainment depends to a large extent on choices and developments in other adjacent policy areas besides the water domain. This applies, for example, to the manure policy for which the 8th Nitrates Directive Action Programme is being drafted (led by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (LVVN), with its own Plan-EIA). These measures are also listed in the river basin management plans, but because they are not decided on here, they are not part of the Plan-EIA review.

3.8 Agenda setting for strategic choices beyond the 2028-2033 planning period

The updated NWP focuses on the period 2028-2033, anticipating long-term developments such as climate change, developments in the condition of dykes, dunes, weirs and flood defences, and societal developments. To ensure a robust water system in the long term as well, several large-scale choices and interventions in the water system are envisaged for the period after 2033. Thus, the NWP is already expected to announce certain choices for the subsequent NWP, including:

- Explorations in the Southwest Delta and the Rhine-Meuse estuary, in conjunction with the adaptive pathways from the Sea Level Rise Knowledge Programme (KP-ZSS), will culminate in the Delta Works Decision Agenda. This decision agenda maps out whether, when and how adaptation or replacement of the Delta Works is needed, including strategic choices on the future functioning of the Rhine-Meuse estuary and the replacement of the Maeslant barrier, among others.
- Studies along rivers to determine whether river widening is needed in the long term (2100 with a look ahead to 2200) to properly handle future discharges in combination with other aspects of the river basin such as nature.
- Evaluation of the entire groundwater protection regime, including the Supplementary Strategic Reserves and National Groundwater Reserves, in conjunction with the National Soil, Subsoil and Groundwater and Sustainable Use of the Deep Subsurface programmes.

The NWP will identify large-scale choices foreseen beyond the planning period and agenda the necessary studies to be carried out for this purpose in the 2028-2033 planning period.

4 How impacts are determined

4.1 Which impacts are identified: Wheel of the Living Environment

The Wheel of the Living Environment was introduced in 2020 in support of the National Environmental Vision: an integral instrument to visualise the impacts on all relevant themes pertaining to the physical living environment. In the EIS for the NWP, the central government builds on this. It uses this 'Wheel' to visualise impacts.

Themes within the Wheel of the Living Environment
The Wheel of the Living Environment aligns with the Environmental Planning Act. The objective of the Environmental Planning Act consists of (1) protecting the physical living environment and (2) fulfilling societal needs. The Wheel elaborates on this in four main themes:

1. Safe and healthy physical living environment
2. Good environmental quality
3. Residential environment
4. Economic environment

The EIS for the NWP uses this classification as its main structure. In its elaboration, much emphasis will be placed on themes directly related to the water system (such as 'nature', for example) and themes on which the National Water Programme is expected to have a direct impact (such as 'shipping', 'residential environment' and 'agriculture', for example). In the further elaboration of the impact assessment, the elaboration has been refined where necessary so that it aligns well with the NWP, see Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Wheel of the Living Environment – main themes, sub-themes and indicators

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator	Further elaboration in support of impact assessment
Safe and healthy living environment	Environmental quality & Health	Environmental health risk	Change in magnitude of environmental health risk (including due to air quality, environmental safety risks and noise pollution).
		Healthy behaviour	Change in behaviour in relation to a healthy lifestyle. This indicator is expected to be covered summarily due to the limited impact of the NWP on changes in healthy behaviour.
		Drinking water	Change in quantity and quality of sources of public drinking water supply.
	Safety risks	Floods	Change in the probability and consequence of floods from rivers and the sea (and hence flood risk).
		Earthquakes	Change in the probability and consequence of earthquakes in the Netherlands. This indicator is expected to be covered summarily due to the limited influence of the NWP on changes regarding earthquakes.
		Environmental disasters	Change in the probability and consequence of environmental disasters due to risks from economic activities, especially from shipping.
		Traffic safety	Change in the number of shipping accidents, and (shipping) traffic disruption due to moveable waterworks and change in navigation conditions.
	Climate	Emission and sequestration of greenhouse gases	Change in greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration.
		Heat and drought	Change in intensity and periods of heat and drought.
		Flooding	Change in probability of occurrence and consequences of flooding.

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator	Further elaboration in support of impact assessment
Good environmental quality	Natural systems	Soil & subsoil	Change in the quality and natural system of soil and subsoil.
		Groundwater	Change in groundwater quality and quantity and natural groundwater system. Including specific attention to the variations between phreatic groundwater (e.g. around subsidence), shallow groundwater (e.g. around ageing) and deep groundwater (e.g. around drinking water extraction).
		Surface water	Change in quality, quantity and natural system of surface water.
	Nature	Silence & darkness	Change in the total surface area of quiet, peaceful and dark areas. This indicator is expected to be covered summarily due to the limited impact of the NWP on silence and darkness.
		Biodiversity	Change in biodiversity
		Total surface area of nature reserves	Change in total surface area of nature reserves.
		Connected natural areas	Spatial cohesion of natural areas.
		Species & habitats	Proper environmental conditions for the sustainable conservation of species and habitats.
	Landscape & public space	Valuable landscapes	Change in total surface area and quality of valuable landscapes.
		Public space	Change in the quality of public space.
		Heritage & archaeology	Change in conservation and development of archaeology, built heritage (monuments/town and village sites), cultural landscape and world heritage sites.

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator	Further elaboration in support of impact assessment
Economic environment	Natural resources	Mineral & fossil resources	Change in volume and quality of stock of mineral and fossil resources.
		Circularity	Changing perspective on closing resource cycles.
		Sustainable land use	Change in the degree of sustainable management of total surface area of rural land (incl. soil fertility conservation).
	Economic capital	Employment	Change in the number of jobs in (especially) water-dependent sectors, such as agriculture, ports, recreation and maritime industry.
		Earning power	Change in the earning power of (especially) highly water-dependent sectors, such as agriculture, recreation and maritime industry[7].
		Knowledge & innovation	Change in the level of knowledge development and innovation.
		National safety	Change in the degree to which national safety is assured.
	Spatial economic structure	Accessibility	Change in accessibility, especially on inland waterways and port areas.
		Energy network	Change in the extent to which supply and demand for energy are linked by the presence of energy infrastructure.
		Digital network	Change in digital connectedness through the presence of digital infrastructure.
		Business locations	Change in the total surface area and quality of business locations, with a specific focus on water-related sectors.

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator	Further elaboration in support of impact assessment
	Housing & living environment	Housing development sites	Change in total surface area and quality of housing development sites.
		Facilities	Change in presence, quality and proximity of facilities. This indicator is expected to be covered summarily due to the limited impact of the NWP on the provision of facilities.

[7] Needless to say, this assessment is qualitative and is not a Social Cost-Benefit Analysis (SCBA).

Residential environment		Recreation	Change in presence, quality and proximity of recreational facilities.
	Welfare	Social cohesion	Change in the degree of (spatial) social cohesion.
		Inclusiveness	Change in the extent to which everyone has equal opportunities to participate in society. This indicator is expected to be covered summarily due to the NWP's limited expected impact in this regard.

National scale, impacts on main water system and impacts on specific areas
In the EIS, impacts are considered at the level of the four main themes, for which all indicators are considered. This zooms in on impacts, opportunities and risks. Themes and indicators for which impacts, opportunities or risks are not significant are not explicitly highlighted. The method of impact assessment is at a national level with an assessment for each indicator at this same level.

Because some of the impacts will occur specifically – and will be characteristic – for parts of the main water system and/or specific areas, – they are described separately and included in the assessment wherever such specific impacts occur. This is at a minimum expected to apply to the impacts of choices for:

- Lake IJssel water level management;
- Discharge distribution at high, as well as low tides and subsequent impacts on related areas;
- The river basin's bottom elevation;
- The designation of new drinking water extraction sites within the main water system.

4.2 Understanding the quality of the living environment in the current and reference situations

The EIS will use the current situation and the reference situation to determine the impacts. The reference situation is the situation for each indicator in the envisaged time horizons of impacts (2050 and 2100) *under unchanged policies.* A five-point scale is used to rate the current condition of the environment and the reference situation, see Table 4-2.

Table 4-2 Scale for rating the condition of the physical living environment (by Wheel of the Living Environment theme) in the current situation and reference situation

Rating	Explanation
5	The condition is good everywhere, there are no bottlenecks (target values/goals are met everywhere).
4	The condition is mostly good, locally there are some bottlenecks (target values/goals are largely met).
3	The condition is reasonable, there are scattered bottlenecks (targets/goals are often met, sometimes not).
2	The condition is moderate, there are a fair number of bottlenecks (target values/goals are sometimes met).
1	The condition is poor everywhere, there are bottlenecks everywhere (target values/goals are not met anywhere).

4.3 Integrated assessment of the new policy choices and a 'preferred alternative'

The NWP will contain a coherent package of national policy choices. In the EIS the impacts of this coherent package ('the preferred alternative' or 'the policy choices') are determined, including a description of how they are assessed. Where possible, this is made clear for each policy choice. The same approach is used for the current situation and reference situation.

For the purpose of impact assessment, the EIS categorises the method of impact assessment. A distinction is made between choices involving a continuation of existing policies, specific decisions leading to implementation, strategic policy

decisions giving direction to policy implementation and process-based decisions, see Table 4-3.

Table 4-3 Categorisation of policy choices for the purpose of assessing the preferred alternative

Category	Explanation	Method
1. Continuation of existing policies	Policy choice that upholds and continues an existing policy.	No impact assessment; the change compared to the reference situation equals '0' by definition (after all, the reference situation is based on the continuation of existing policy).
2. Specific decision	Policy choice that is new and so specific that there is insight into how it will be implemented.	Impact assessment; based on the extent to which choices already now can lead to a change in the degree to which the targets for the Wheel of the Living Environment's indicators are attained (apply 5-point scale).
3. Decision in principle	Policy choice that is new and global to such an extent that further consideration of choices in follow-up decisions is needed to gain insight into its implementation. The framework for follow-up decisions to be taken is in sight.	Impact assessment; based on a consideration of opportunities and risks relevant to follow-up decisions, given the impact that future choices may have on achieving the targets for the Wheel of the Living Environment's indicators.
4. Process decision	Policy choice that is new and involves the intention to take a step in a process that may lead to new policy. The framework for any follow-up decisions is not yet in sight.	No impact assessment; impacts cannot be estimated because the nature of any follow-up decisions is still unclear (e.g. 'smart localisation').

4.4 Determining the impacts of policy options

To arrive at these policy choices, the NWP considers alternative policy options for the various choices. In the EIS the impacts of these policy options are determined for this purpose. The impact assessment of these policy options (as well as the final policy choices) is carried out on the basis of expert judgement using existing analyses (such as the KNMI's climate scenarios and the biennial monitoring of the quality of the living environment (MONOVI) by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency). The impact assessment uses the most up-to-date version of the Delta scenarios. The analysis and consideration of impacts deals pragmatically with overlap and consistency between indicators. Some indicators are strongly linked and can be considered under multiple indicators and themes. For example, the impacts of the 'heat and drought' indicator also affect the 'surface water' indicator. The starting point is that impacts are only considered in one place and that any correlation with other indicators is also considered in the same place. The impact assessment is validated in three ways:

- Initial assessment by experts of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and their advisers;
- Validation and refinement by experts from other ministries;
- Validation and refinement by a guidance team from planning agencies, IPO, VNG, UVW and possibly other knowledge institutions.

4.5 Method of assessment: what do we think of these impacts?

The impacts of policy options and final policy choices are assessed: what do we think of these impacts. This assessment uses 'pluses' and 'minuses' to evaluate the impact. The following framework is used for this purpose.

++	Probability of **high positive** impact in comparison to the reference situation
+	Probability of **positive** impact in comparison to the reference situation
0/+	Probability of **low positive** impact in comparison to reference situation
0	**Neutral** impact in comparison to the reference situation
0/-	Risk of **low negative** impact in comparison to the reference situation
-	Risk of **negative** impact in comparison to the reference situation
- -	Risk of **high negative** impact in comparison to the reference situation

4.6 Overarching assessment

People, planet and prosperity

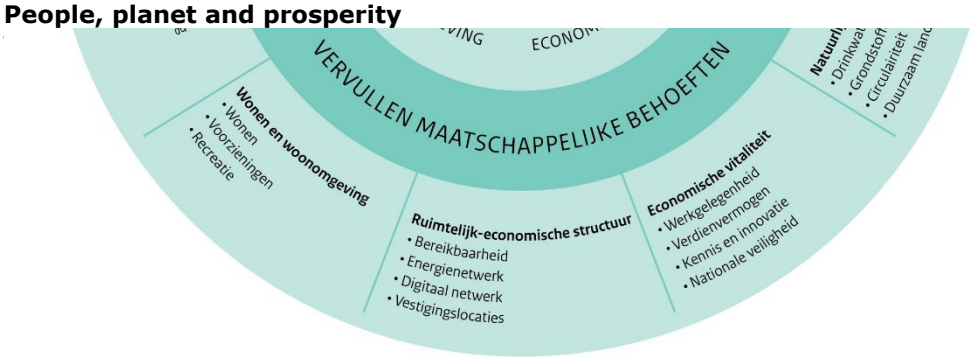


Figure 2-1.

Robustness
Given the need for consistent choices at the national level, the central government will also assess policy choices and alternative policy options from the perspective of 'robustness'. In this perspective, the central government looks at coherent policy choices from the perspective of time, future and water system coherence. When do the policy choices bring about potentially irreversible change in the system, or do the policy choices increase its robustness? To what extent are the targets up to 2100 achievable within the water system? This perspective also considers when so-called 'lock-ins' may arise: policy choices that preclude other choices in the future.

Preventing the shifting of burdens
A key principle for the NWP – following the draft Spatial Planning Memorandum and the parliamentary letters of 25 November 2022 and 22 October – is to prevent the shifting of burdens as much as possible: onto future generations, onto other areas or functions, and from private use to the public domain. In the EIS the coherent policy choices are tested on this basis. Together with the 'people', 'planet', 'prosperity' and 'robustness' perspectives, this provides a strategic overarching picture of the future value of the updated NWP.

4.7 Appropriate Assessment approach

The National Water Programme may contain policy choices, for which it cannot be ruled out in advance that they, individually or in conjunction, could lead to significant negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, under the Nature Conservation Act, a so-called 'Appropriate Assessment' must be drawn up. The purpose of this appropriate assessment is:

- To identify the risks of significant adverse impacts on the natural features of Natura 2000 sites due to new policies.
- To gain insight into possible mitigation measures and/or policy adjustments needed to avoid these significant adverse impacts.

- To identify opportunities for positive impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

The Appropriate Assessment focuses specifically on the final policy choices in the NWP. Whereas the EIS estimates the relative impacts on nature (*will it get better or worse?)*, the Appropriate Assessment is absolute (*will significant negative impacts potentially occur?)*. The insights from the Appropriate Assessment are included in the EIS at a high level in a separate section. In the EIS the impacts for each policy option are assessed within the range established for that purpose. This includes impacts on Natura 2000 sites. These impact assessments provide input for determining the final policy choices. When these final policy choices take into account the recommendations and risks for Natura 2000, it is expected that the appropriate assessment will not identify significant negative impacts. In that case, the National Water Programme (NWP) can be adopted. However, if the appropriate assessment shows that significant negative impacts cannot be ruled out – even if proposed mitigation measures are included in the elaboration of the programme – then the NWP cannot be adopted. In that case, adjustments to the programme are necessary to still meet requirements.

The level of detail of the appropriate assessment matches the level of detail of the EIS. Given the level of abstraction of the policy statements, the assessment is broad-based. This is because the focus primarily is on risk assessment.

4.8 Dealing with impacts from and on foreign countries

The Netherlands and our water system are not isolated in terms of its challenges and the impact of global trends. Impacts from and on neighbouring countries in particular (Belgium and Germany) are therefore likely. In the EIS, relevant developments in these countries will be succinctly considered and the policy options that entail risks and provide opportunities abroad will be identified.

4.9 The importance of monitoring

The impact assessment of policy options and policy choices will use existing monitoring data as much as possible. Because the policy choices also focus on the long term and the NWP is updated every six years, structural monitoring for evaluating goal attainment and the impacts of the final policy choices is crucial. The EIS will therefore also address the importance and means of monitoring these impacts for the future.

Annex 1 – Glossary

Concept	Meaning
Autonomous developments	Developments that occur if the proposed activity is not carried out.
EIA Commission	The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Commission is an independent organisation that advises government authorities on the content and quality of environmental impact statements (EIS).
Specific decision	Policy choice that is new and so specific that there is insight into how it will be implemented.
WFD	Water Framework Directive
HWBP	High Water Protection Programme
EIA	Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is a process by which the environmental impacts of a plan or project are examined and described in an environmental impact statement (EIS).
EIS	Environmental impact statement (EIS) is the document that records the results of the environmental impact assessment (EIA).
Natura 2000	European network of protected natural areas.
NRD	Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail.
NWP	National Water Programme
Appropriate assessment	The nature study that is conducted if significant negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites cannot be ruled out.
Decision in principle	Policy choice that is new and global to such an extent that further consideration of choices in follow-up decisions is needed to gain insight into its implementation. The framework for follow-up decisions to be taken is in sight.
Process decision	Policy choice that is new and involves the intention to take a step in a process that may lead to new policy. The framework for any follow-up decisions is not yet in sight.
Wheel of the Living Environment	The Wheel of the Living Environment was introduced in 2019 in support of the National Environmental Vision: an integral instrument to visualise the impacts on all relevant themes pertaining to the physical living environment.
RWS	Rijkswaterstaat