



# BIODIVERSITY

## 1 ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

- 1.1.1 Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council (Horizons) has statutory obligations to maintain and sustainably manage the region's biodiversity under the Resource Management Act (1991). Horizons' strategy is set out in the One Plan and includes both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches. This item reports on the non-regulatory biodiversity programme.
- 1.1.2 Horizons' Biodiversity team works closely with other council teams and external organisations to enhance biodiversity and engage the community in biodiversity enhancement. This work is supported by research, additional labour and monitoring undertaken by the Horizons' Science & Innovation and Biosecurity teams, along with other agencies, to prioritise and focus implementation efforts. This item reports on the collective biodiversity activity of the implementation and science programmes. Other non-regulatory programmes, particularly the freshwater programme, also contribute to biodiversity outcomes.
- 1.1.3 A key challenge in biodiversity management is allocating resources in a way that provides the greatest ecological benefit. This has been a significant area of focus within the biodiversity programme review. The review aims to improve processes and subsequent biodiversity outcomes across the region, while working to bring Horizons closer to meeting requirements under the proposed **National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity** (NPSIB). The proposed NPSIB requires councils to identify areas where there is significant vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna, and to manage their protection through plans and consent processes under the **Resource Management Act** (RMA).
- 1.1.4 National policy direction is changing with Central Government releasing the National Biodiversity Strategy, Te Mana o te Taiao, on 10 August 2020. The regional sector and Horizons staff were involved in the development of the strategy. The NPSIB has been delayed due to

Central Government's Covid-19 response and is now signaled for release in April 2021. These documents will influence the way that Horizons manages biodiversity within the region.

- 1.1.5 Work across the non-regulatory biodiversity programme supports the goal for the priority sites to *"maintain or restore the full range of the region's indigenous ecosystems to a healthy and functioning level"*.
- 1.1.6 Biodiversity Activity is presented regionally (where appropriate) and/or for each of the programmes that make up the Non-regulatory Biodiversity Programme, integrating the implementation work of the Biodiversity team and the activities of the Science & Innovation and Biosecurity teams. This includes:
- The regional activity update and progress against Annual Plan targets;
  - The priority biodiversity sites programme, a site-led programme working with landowners to maintain and enhance priority sites on private land;
  - The biodiversity partnerships programme, where projects extend beyond the boundary of a single landowner and/or involve community groups or external agencies; and
  - Management of Tōtara Reserve, our Regional Park.

## 2 ANNUAL PLAN TARGETS

2.1.1 Progress against the Annual Plan targets for the 2020-21 year are shown in Table 1 below.

2.1.2 The project listed as completed in the community-based biodiversity projects supported row was the July planting day at Bettie Tripe Reserve in the Rangitikei.

Table 1 Progress reporting for the Biodiversity Activity Annual Plan targets for 2020-21.

Long-term Plan Target	Target	Allocated	Completed or supported	% of target completed
<b>Protect/enhance priority habitat remnants</b>				
Additional top 100 wetlands actively managed	4	1	0	0%
Additional top 200 bush remnants actively managed	7	5	0	0%
<b>Support community involvement in biodiversity protection</b>				
Support existing community-based biodiversity improvement projects	12	18	1	8%
<b>Tōtara Reserve Regional Park</b>				
Annual report on the management of Tōtara Reserve Regional Park for biodiversity and recreational values, including managing the camping facility.	1	-	0	To be presented at the end of the financial year
<b>Science &amp; Innovation - Biodiversity Long-term Plan targets for 2019-20.</b>				
<b>Performance Measures for Levels of Service</b>	Target 2020-21	Target achieved	Progress update	
Annual report on biodiversity monitoring and research activity.	1	0	To be presented at the end of the financial year	

## 3 PRIORITY SITES PROGRAMME

### 3.1 Programme overview

3.1.1 The Priority Biodiversity Sites Programme is a habitat-focused programme aiming to maintain or restore the full range of the region's indigenous ecosystems to a healthy and functioning level. Staff identify and assess priority sites for their eligibility for management. Once sites are found to be eligible, staff work alongside the landowner and sometimes the QEII National Trust to manage them by interventions such as animal exclusion and pest plant control.

3.1.2 The Biodiversity Activity has been through a review involving developing a prioritisation process to identify and select sites for further management. Once sites are selected from site summary information, site management prescriptions are written and costed, and will be added to the

prioritisation list for work that is required at management sites. The budget available for this work will then be allocated according to the assessed priorities. A paper will be presented to Council in November on the new goal to maintain or restore the full range of the region's indigenous ecosystems to a healthy and functioning level and the approach to working toward this goal via this year's work programme.

## 3.2 Activity Update

### IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING SITES

- 3.2.1 **Rapid Ecological Assessments** (REAs) involve visiting a site to collect inventory data on the ecosystem types present and the threats that would need to be managed if the site was included in the Priority Sites Programme. As well as increasing our knowledge of remaining biodiversity in the region, REAs identify sites that are eligible for management in the following year.
- 3.2.2 To create the list of sites outlined for REAs in the coming year, a subset of regionally critically endangered ecosystems has been shortlisted based on four factors: predicted remaining habitat, extent of habitat decline, area of remaining habitat in the conservation estate, and proportion of remaining habitat outside the conservation estate. Sites identified by prioritisation modelling from these shortlisted ecosystems will be targeted for REAs in the coming year. By being selective about the location of next year's REAs, we are targeting the most threatened sites for management in the 2021-22 financial year.
- 3.2.3 For the 2020-21 financial year the Biodiversity Team has set an internal target of undertaking 80 REAs. The list of 150-200 potential sites is considerably greater than the number of REAs expected to be completed, allowing for redundancy due to factors such as lack of access.
- 3.2.4 Table 2 below provides a summary of the management level index status for all sites on the managed list to the end of September 2020. The current assessment identifies that 10 sites are at management level 4, i.e. have been assessed and priority works are being carried out as required.

Table 2 Priority Sites Management Level Index (0.5: site may have received management from Horizons but has not been assessed, 1: REA completed within the last 10 years, 2: site has received Horizons contribution to management, 3: site receives ongoing management input from Horizons, 4: site receives a higher level of management inputs, 5: receives significant inputs from stakeholders, 6: receives management inputs for all animal pests.

Management level	Bush sites	Wetland sites	All sites
6	1	0	1
5	1	2	3
4	7	3	10
3	40	14	54
2	100	51	151
<b>Sub-total for Level 2+</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>219</b>
1	350	69	419
0.5	4	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>648</b>

#### SITE MANAGEMENT IN 2020-21

- 3.2.5 Management actions in the 2020-21 year are being prioritised to fit the available budget through a process that is focusing firstly on the 68 sites currently at Management Level 3 and above. The process includes all of these sites having full site summaries and management prescriptions prepared. These: a) identify ecological integrity targets, b) identify pressures required to be managed to meet targets and c) develop prescriptions and indicative cost information to reduce pressures to required levels over a five-year period. Costings are based on prescriptions designed to restore ecosystem function and viability, not to maximise populations of charismatic species or ensure the persistence of threatened species. Where charismatic or threatened species are present it may be appropriate to provide additional management in collaboration with the Department of Conservation.
- 3.2.6 Of the 68 sites currently at Management Level 3 and above, 50 have had site summaries prepared this financial year and 48 of those have had management prescriptions approved.
- 3.2.7 In addition, 23 sites currently lower than Management Level 3 have had site summaries prepared and 14 of those have had management prescriptions approved. These are sites that will be considered for funding assistance to bring them up to Management Level 3 in this financial year or the next.

## 4 BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

### 4.1 Programme Overview

4.1.1 The Biodiversity Partnerships Programme funds biodiversity-related projects that extend beyond the property boundary of a single landowner and/or involve community groups or external agencies. The current suite of projects includes target sites or areas with environmental, social and cultural values.

4.1.2 The 18 projects approved in 2020-21 are made up of six Biodiversity Collaborations (four "icon" and two targeted rate projects), nine Contestable Biodiversity Fund projects, Weedbusters and, so far, two Community Engagement projects.

### 4.2 Programme Activity

#### SEEKING GOVERNMENT FUNDING

4.2.1 During the 2020 year Horizons has made a range of applications to Central Government for funding from the Jobs for Nature fund. These applications aimed to provide employment opportunities with biodiversity enhancement outcomes, and included Iwi Environmental Management Plans, Regional Biodiversity enhancement, Kia Whārite expansion, and supported two projects proposed by the Unenuku Charitable Trust for the Pōkākā Eco-sanctuary Trust in Ruapehu District. None of these biodiversity or biosecurity based applications have been successful.

4.2.2 During the reporting period, staff have engaged with the Department of Conservation and some iwi regarding the DOC "Kaimahi for Nature" funding which has an allocation of approximately \$11 million for work in the region. Staff have sought clarity about the regional council role and process around funding distribution from DOC, and are working to support further discussion with iwi and the formation of the alliance structures that will enable projects to be determined and rolled out. The rollout of this programme is being led by the DOC.

#### SELECTION OF PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS FOR HORIZONS FUNDING

4.2.3 Council approved the revised structure for the Biodiversity Partnerships Programme and adopted "*Empowering communities to reconnect with and improve biodiversity*" as the programme's goal, after the Strategy and Policy Committee meeting in August 2020.

The new structure includes:

- Biodiversity collaborations: A small number of “icon” projects are able to be funded on a longer-term basis at Council’s discretion to be funded through targeted rates. Table 3 below overviews projects and funding allocations for these projects.
- Contestable biodiversity grants fund: This fund enables a more contestable approach to the funding of community projects supported by clear assessment criteria. The contestable fund is not available this year and the contestable process will run from the 2021-22 financial year. Table 4 shows projects and funding allocation for the current financial year.
- Community engagement programme: An increase in staff capacity and reallocation of budget to further support community engagement and mobilise community groups and members around biodiversity was approved by Council as part of Annual Plan consultation. This aims to provide opportunities to engage and mobilise community members at an individual or household level through a calendar of community events and activities, e.g. BioBlitz, planting days, trapping workshops etc.

4.2.4 **Rangitikei Environment Group** (REG) and Waiterere Beach Community Project works are funded through targeted rates. No changes were made to these projects. Options to make changes to the funding structure of these projects could be made through the Long-term Plan process.

Table 3 Council has approved the following as Biodiversity Partnerships icon projects and funding allocations for the 2020-21 year as follows:

<i>Icon projects</i>	<i>2020-21 FY (excluding GST)</i>
<i>Te Āpiti Manawatu Gorge</i>	<i>\$244,856</i>
<i>Kia Whārite</i>	<i>\$150,000</i>
<i>Rangitikei Environment Group (REG)*</i>	<i>\$95,000</i>
<i>Pūkaha Mt. Bruce</i>	<i>\$37,292</i>
<i>Bushy Park</i>	<i>\$20,000</i>
<i>Waiterere Beach Community Project*</i>	<i>\$7,000</i>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>\$554,148</i></b>

*\*These projects are funded through targeted rates.*

Table 4 “Biodiversity Grants” projects for the 2020-21 financial year.

<i>Partnership Projects</i>	<i>2020-21 FY (excluding GST)</i>
<i>Manawatū Estuary</i>	<i>\$25,000</i>
<i>Turitea Reserve</i>	<i>\$20,000</i>
<i>Tawata Eco-sanctuary</i>	<i>\$15,000</i>
<i>Te Pōtae o Awarua Predator Control</i>	<i>\$15,000</i>
<i>Cape Turnagain</i>	<i>\$10,000</i>
<i>Awahuri Forest – Kitchener</i>	<i>\$8,000</i>
<i>Kahutarawa Stream</i>	<i>\$8,000</i>
<i>Ahimate Reserve</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>
<i>Massey Hill</i>	<i>\$3,500</i>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>\$109,500</i></b>

### 4.3 Project Updates – 2020-21

This section provides updates on the activity of the projects funded in 2020-21.

#### **RANGITIKEI ENVIRONMENT GROUP (REG)**

- 4.3.1 Old man’s beard (OMB) is the main focus for REG and work is split between urban, rural and public reserves in the Rangitikei District, mostly around Taihape. In rural areas, REG encourages and assists OMB self-help groups with control works. The REG programme will commence immediately after Labour Weekend, following the guidelines of their operational plan. Financial support comes from Horizons, Rangitikei District Council and WINZ. This project is funded by a targeted rate and Horizons’ contribution is \$95,004 this year.

#### **WAITARERE BEACH COMMUNITY PROJECT**

- 4.3.2 The **Waitarere Beach Progressive & Ratepayers Association** (WBPRA) approached Horizons in 2010 about a problem with coastal wattle and other exotics invading the dunes and affecting views and the aesthetic appeal of the beach. Most of the weeds present were not among the plants that Horizons dealt with under the Regional Pest Plant Management Strategy; therefore the Council had no mandate to control them.
- 4.3.3 Horizons commissioned an independent report and presented the findings to a public meeting with the Waitarere Beach community. The community agreed to pay a targeted rate to Horizons for the purposes of controlling the exotic plants and restoring the native plants on the dunes.



4.3.4 The targeted rate has been used to control coastal wattle, yucca, cape ivy, lupin and other unwanted plants, and to propagate native spinifex grass for replanting cleared areas of the dunes. This project is funded by a targeted rate and the budget is \$7,000 this year. Most of the weed control work is undertaken during summer.

#### TE ĀPITI MANAWATŪ GORGE

4.3.5 The Te Apiti Manawatu Governance Group met via video link on May 5, 2020. Key Topics of discussion included:

- An updated Terms of Reference which was approved in principle, providing the process around addition of a further iwi group be followed.
- A presentation by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) on the new gorge road process.
- An overview of the work by Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) on tourism opportunities for the area.
- An update by Palmerston North City Council on the development of a Master Plan for the area and discussion of how this relates to other potential plans for the area including a destination management plan being prepared by the Department of Conservation and other plans being prepared by NZTA.
- An update on progress on the new animal pest control work being funded through additional investment by Horizons Regional Council and NZTA.
- The next Governance Group meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2020 and will focus on the Master Plan including the vision and goals for the project, an operational update (including pest control, improving communication and planned track upgrades) updates on the tourism opportunities work by CEDA and an NZTA update on the new road project are also planned.

4.3.6 Activity in the first quarter of the financial year has included the following:

- The weed control contract has been signed and the contractor will start in October.
- A working group comprising Horizons, NZTA, and DOC are working collaboratively to deliver a significant increase in pest control in Te Āpiti. This will provide complete coverage over the Te Āpiti site and bring much more protection to the species that inhabit the site.

- The Te Āpiti Biodiversity Management Plan 2017 is being reviewed to develop an increased monitoring programme to measure progress in improving the biodiversity activity at Te Apiti.
- Additional memorial plantings, in association with the Woodville Domain Board and RSA, were undertaken at Ferry Reserve. The original plan was to include the greater Woodville community, schools, NZ Defence Force, and Te Apiti stakeholders; however, Covid-19 Level 2 restrictions caused the planned event to be postponed. Instead, there will be a celebration of the living memorial planting in early November involving all who would have been at the planting event. This will be much the same as our previously planned event, i.e. welcome and blessing, mulching around all the trees, educational walk for the school children and ending with a BBQ. Date to be confirmed.



Photo 1 The RSA memorial planting at Ferry Reserve, August 2020.

## KIA WHĀRITE

- 4.3.7 Predator trapping has continued in the Rētāruke, Manganui o te Ao and Whanganui River Catchments for whio (blue duck) protection and in the Waimarino area for North Island brown kiwi protection. Ground and aerial goat control operations were also undertaken in the Waimarino area. Horizons' activity for this year has been contracted and is underway.
- 4.3.8 DOC is currently undertaking a review of the Manganui o te Ao whio security site to refine the requirements for ongoing protection and enhancement of this taonga species. The review will

include consideration of DOC's ongoing funding of the project. An update of the review will be provided to Council later this financial year.

#### **BUSHY PARK**

- 4.3.9 Horizons contributes \$20,000 per year to pest control within the 100 ha Bushy Park site, near Whanganui. Additionally, staff from our Biodiversity and Science teams occasionally assist by spending a day servicing rodent monitoring lines through the forest.
- 4.3.10 The Bushy Park board has approved the retirement from grazing of land within the predator fence at the eastern end of the site. This area will be replanted with species that will create habitat suitable for the reintroduction of native skinks.
- 4.3.11 A translocation project for whitehead/pōpokotea birds is underway. Establishing whitehead in Bushy Park may have the added advantage of attracting any nearby long-tailed cuckoo/koekoeā as they only lay their eggs in the nests of whitehead, brown creeper or yellowhead.

#### **PŪKAHA MOUNT BRUCE**

- 4.3.12 Pūkaha Mount Bruce is a community project involving Horizons, Greater Wellington, DOC, iwi, and local landowners. The 942ha reserve straddles the boundary of the Horizons and Greater Wellington regions just south of Eketahuna. Pūkaha has thriving wild kokako, kiwi and kaka populations, native lizards, longfin eels, and other special inhabitants. The forest itself is a dense lowland podocarp remnant of Seventy Mile Bush. Pūkaha is managed as a "mainland island" without predator-proof fencing, which means pest control in and around the reserve is essential to protect its vulnerable wildlife.
- 4.3.13 Environmental pest plants such as old man's beard and Darwin's barberry have the ability to destroy and replace native vegetation and habitats. Both of these are in Pūkaha and the surrounding landscape. To tackle these issues, a Technical Advisory Group including Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre, DOC, Horizons, Greater Wellington, and landowners was formed to assist with providing guidance on best practice control for these plant pests.
- 4.3.14 Currently, Horizons Regional Response Team is servicing perimeter mustelid traps every two weeks and continuing the landscape-scale possum control operations. The budget for trap servicing is \$27,292 this year. Trap catch data is presented below.

Table 5 Pukaha trap catch results for the reporting period.

	July	August	September	Year to date
Ferret	3	1	-	4
Stoat	6	-	-	6
Weasel	1	-	-	1
Rat	21	14	10	45
Cat	8	6	1	15
Hedgehog	13	3	4	20
Other	-	-	13	13
Sprung	-	9	11	20

4.3.15 The Biodiversity Team, alongside DOC, is managing the environmental pest plants within the reserve and the buffer. This contracted work is done during summer. Horizons is currently spending \$10,000 per season on pest plant work this site.

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.3.16 Community engagement is a priority and through the 2020-21 Annual Plan process, Council resolved to fund an additional position to add capacity and grow the current programme of community participation in biodiversity projects across the region. As part of the Biodiversity Review, Neil Gallagher was appointed to the new Community Biodiversity Advisor role and will begin the new role in November 2020.

4.3.17 Bettie Tripe Reserve is a 4.5 ha native forest remnant in Rangitikei and is part of our Priority Sites Programme. Tall mature trees in the remnant include kahikatea, tōtara and matai. The Tripe family received funding from the DOC Community Fund to replant areas of rank grassland around the existing native forest remnant in natives, and help protect the Mangatipona Stream that runs through the reserve. The family didn't have the resources to plant the site so they came to Horizons for assistance and we made the project into one of our Big 5 staff planting days. On 24 July 2020, 4000 native plants were planted at the site on the northern side of the forest remnant in a Horizons community planting day with assistance from Ngāti Apa and Rangitikei Forest and Bird.



Photo 2 Planting day at Bettie Tripe Reserve, July 2020.

- 4.3.18 Horizons is supporting the next Coastal Restoration Trust NZ conference to be held in Whanganui on 10-12 March 2021. The conference brings together experts and community groups from all over the country and is an opportunity for Horizons to highlight some of the work we are doing in the coastal environment.

#### **WEEDBUSTERS PALMERSTON NORTH**

- 4.3.19 This program involves the public who are our eyes and ears when it comes to pest plant sites that are hidden away in back yards and other places. It operates during the spring and summer period. The areas covered include all of the PNCC TLA and the Feilding urban area. The programme includes the follow up of previous pest sites treated to make sure we have eradicated those plants and on-going treatment until we do. All these sites are GPS recorded so they can be revisited the following year. It also includes advice and information on other plants and herbicide treatment options. Weedbusters is a partnership between PNCC, MDC, and the Community. A 56% decrease in the size of the Weedbusters budget this year will result in a reduction in the level of service that can be provided under this project.



## CAPE TURNAGAIN

- 4.3.20 Cape Turnagain is a significant natural landscape on the East Coast north of Herbertville. Covering 121 hectares, it is home to many rare and threatened plants and animals, some of which are found nowhere else. Most of it is protected by a QEII covenant, however this doesn't address the pest issues that threaten the vulnerable flora and fauna.
- 4.3.21 In 2018, QEII National Trust with Horizons were successful in applying for Lotteries Commission funding to embark on a three-year protection project. We are currently in the third and final year of the project. Horizons has contributed \$10,000 per year and Biodiversity staff time. The total project budget across the three years is \$144,000.
- 4.3.22 Work includes contracted goat, possum, rat, cat, and mustelid control, pest plant control (specifically pampas and marram), population monitoring of the nationally critical "Cape Turnagain" day-flying moth (*Notoreas perornata*), revegetation planting of the sand daphne it lives on, and community engagement with Weber School and Herbertville residents.
- 4.3.23 Trapping and baiting is occurring monthly and pest plant work is seasonal, mostly during summer. Horizons has increased the number of possum bait stations around the perimeter. Monitoring protocols were established at the beginning and will be run again at the end to measure what has been achieved.

## MANAWATŪ ESTUARY

- 4.3.24 Horizons is currently undertaking work to get operational plan(s) prepared for the 558 ha estuary site. The Manawatū Estuary Management Plan requires the production of plans for weeds, pest animals, flora and habitat management. Horizons is engaging with iwi, Horowhenua District Council and DOC about undertaking this work. We will be engaging with community groups and the general community once work is underway.
- 4.3.25 Migratory adult bar-tailed godwits/kuaka started arriving in mid-September with juvenile birds over-wintering at the Manawatū Estuary.
- 4.3.26 Monthly checks of the DOC 200 series traps targeting mustelids continues. Although there were 40 traps, currently only 34 are usable as others have been stolen or vandalised. Replacement traps are being purchased. Trap catch data is presented below.

Table 6 Manawatū Estuary trap catch data for the reporting period.

	July	August	September	Year to date
Stoats	8	4	5	17
Weasels	-	-	-	0
Ferrets	-	-	-	0
Rats	4	5	4	13
Hedgehogs	-	-	-	0
Other	-	1	-	1

#### TE PŌTAE O AWARUA PREDATOR CONTROL

4.3.27 Horizons' funding supports the Aorangi Awarua Trust with the costs of servicing remote predator traplines on their land and also with the cost of transporting volunteers from the Ruahine Whio Protectors Trust to service the traplines on public land. This project of servicing predator traps in a remote location supports and enhances a large whio and North Island Eastern Brown Kiwi protection project on the adjoining DOC estate in the Northern Ruahine Forest Park. Recent monitoring in the project area has detected more kiwi than initially thought to be present, and DOC have expanded the predator trapping network. Currently the Ruahine Whio Protectors Trust service more than 2,500 predator traps in the Ruahine Forest Park.

#### TURITEA RESERVE

4.3.28 This project has an over-arching strategy to protect and enhance biodiversity values in Palmerston North's water supply catchment. It is a partnership with Palmerston North City Council and Horizons provides funding assistance for pest plant and animal control, and outcome monitoring within the reserve. Monitoring trends for pest levels and bird recovery have been very encouraging for the reintroduction of bird species. Horizons will contribute \$20,000 to the work within this 3,500ha reserve this year. Animal pest control is ongoing and pest plant control is likely to begin in November.

#### AWAHURI FOREST – KITCHENER PARK

4.3.29 Awahuri Forest-Kitchener Park is a valuable wetland forest remnant with strategic importance for the future walkway network and recreational opportunities in and around Feilding. It is also one of Horizons' managed Priority Sites, a critically endangered kahikatea pukatea forest ecosystem type. Horizons provides advice on ecological matters to the Awahuri Forest-

Kitchener Park Trust and \$8,000 of funding for revegetation planting and pest plant control in this 14 ha reserve.

- 4.3.30 In the last week of July, more than 2,600 natives were planted in gaps created by tree deaths caused by thick silt deposits from the February 2004 flood event. Willow removal, mostly along the edge of the oxbows on the northern side of the park, was also undertaken in preparation for future native planting work.

#### AHIMATE RESERVE

- 4.3.31 This 22ha Palmerston North reserve beside the Manawatū River was formerly called Waitoetoe Park. Horizons supports the Ahimate Reserve community with planting days, plant maintenance and weed control. Rangitāne and Palmerston North City Council are partners in the project. Horizons' contribution in 2020-21 is \$5,000.
- 4.3.32 This area continues to grow and develop with visitor numbers increasing every month. Walkers, runners, cyclists, families and dog owners make it the place to go. We planted out more than 1,000 native trees during the planting season with the community heavily involved.



Photo 3 Planting day at Ahimate Reserve, 18 July 2020.



- 4.3.33 Horizons is part of the PNCC stakeholder group involved with the development of the old Higgins metal crushing plant site further downstream. Plans are being considered to connect the site to Ahimate Reserve.

#### **TAWATA MAINLAND ISLAND**

- 4.3.34 After a year of no work being carried out due to changing personnel at Tawata Whanau Trust, work has resumed in the 360 ha sanctuary area with bait stations filled for possum and rat control, and goat control undertaken to allow the continued regeneration of the forest. The Covid-19 lockdown curtailed activities and only \$17,400 of the \$50,000 allocated was spent. The Trust is very keen to progress this project and is reviewing and updating their operational plans to move forward successfully. This year (2020-21) Horizons will contribute \$15,000 towards the project and will also treat the bait stations as it is part of our possum control programme.

#### **KAHUTERAWA STREAM BIODIVERSITY RESTORATION**

- 4.3.35 The project aims to enhance the biodiversity values of the Kahuterawa Stream site of approximately 65 ha, from the bridge at Linton to the confluence with the Manawatū River. Horizons contributes to revegetating the stream corridor with eco-sourced native plants and removing willows and other weeds. Massey University and New Zealand Defence Force are partners in this project, with each of the three partners contributing \$8,000 this year. The new walkway/cycle way between Palmerston North and Linton passes through the project area and the revegetation work has made a positive contribution to making the route popular with Manawatū residents and visitors alike.
- 4.3.36 Massey University supplied 1,200 eco-sourced plants and that was matched by the Keebles Bush Trust. Between community working bees and our contractors, 8,000 plants were planted this season.
- 4.3.37 Palmerston North Rotary Club have approached the project and wish to develop and fund an area within the reserve adjacent to the stream with seating and educational signage. Staff are presently working with Rotary on the plan and signage, hoping to have this recreation area for picnics and swimming completed by February.

#### **MASSEY HILL**

- 4.3.38 This project is a partnership between Ferguson Hall, PNCC, Massey University and Horizons. This site has expanded from its original 4 ha to link in with Green Corridors, Summerhill green belts and the development of the Massey University Arboretum. Weed control here is ongoing. The

budget for this year is \$3,500 and is focused on treating weeds where access is available, noting not all of the area is available for weed control due to the multiple ownership of land parcels.

## 5 TŌTARA RESERVE REGIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT

### 5.1 Programme Overview

5.1.1 Tōtara Reserve Regional Park is focused on providing visitors with enjoyable biodiversity and recreational experiences. The work includes plant and animal pest control, flood protection, walking tracks and campground management and maintenance. Tōtara Reserve is one of the last and best remaining examples of lowland forest ecosystems in the Pohangina Valley and is also valued as an important site under the Biodiversity Priority Sites Programme

### 5.2 Activity Update

#### REMOVAL OF POPLARS

5.2.1 During a wind event in January 2020 a camper was seriously injured by a poplar tree falling on her. The area of the Kererū campground has been closed since the incident due to the risk of the trees falling.

5.2.2 Council received an item in July 2020 and resolved to remove all the poplars bordering the stopbank at the Kererū Campground. The procurement process has been completed and the contract approved by Council. The work will begin in October and will be finished in time for the summer camping season, however there will be a delay in opening part of the campground.

#### PEST ANIMAL CONTROL

5.2.3 Horizons' Annual Plan provided additional funding to substantially upgrade animal pest control programme for the entire reserve. The pest control operations will be targeting possums, rats and mustelids to improve ecological biodiversity and visitor experience in the reserve, which contains two campgrounds. A plan has been developed to be implemented this spring by the Regional Response Team. The pest targets are to reduce possum abundance to <5% **residual trap catch** (RTC), and rat abundance to < 10%, to enhance the reserve's biodiversity and amenity values.

5.2.4 The bait station network has been installed by Horizons Regional Response Team and pre-control pest monitoring is underway. The baiting is planned for November and a new toxin called Double Tap is being trialed. It is designed to be less persistent in the environment. This trial will help evaluate the performance of the toxin and should it prove effective wider trials

within the Horizons Possum Control Programme will be considered to evaluate its appropriateness and cost-effectiveness.

#### **PEST PLANT CONTROL**

- 5.2.5 A stocktake on the progress made by the weed control programme is planned for 2021-22. This work will review progress to date and provide direction to ensure we continue to build on the results achieved so far.

#### **COMMUNICATION**

- 5.2.6 Staff are working on several aspects of improving communication around the work at the site including a regular update to the Advisory Group, on-site signage about activities and further information through social media and Horizons' website.

#### **CAPITAL PROJECTS**

- 5.2.7 Planning has progressed for the approved capex spending in the 2020-21 financial year. Priorities for the capex projects include a platform with safety rails around the septic system inspection point, and water storage and treatment upgrades to provide drinking water along with reliable source of water. Once these two projects are costed, further allocation of unspent capital for remaining projects will occur. Options for additional capital spending (in no particular order) include an upgrade of the Kahikatea campground ablution block, sealing of the entranceways to both campgrounds and the caretaker's house, a website booking and payment system for the campgrounds, and electrical upgrades at the powered camping sites. There is a capex allocation of \$157,930 for the 2020-21 year and work is underway to prioritise projects and undertake procurement and implementation.

#### **TŌTARA RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP**

- 5.2.8 The development of Terms of Reference for the group and a strategy for Tōtara Reserve are tasks to be undertaken once the priority work of poplar removal and remediation of the site water supply upgrades and other health and safety actions are completed.

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