



BIODIVERSITY

1 ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

1.1.1 The non-regulatory biodiversity programme seeks to enhance biodiversity and engage the community in biodiversity enhancement. The biodiversity activity is presented in three sections:

- The Priority Sites Programme;
- The Biodiversity Partnerships Programme; and
- Tōtara Reserve Regional Park Management.

2 ANNUAL PLAN TARGETS

2.1.1 A summary of the Annual Plan targets and progress to date is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Progress reporting for the Biodiversity Activity Annual Plan targets for 2019-20.

Long-term Plan Target	Target	Allocated	Completed	% of target completed
Protect/enhance priority habitat remnants				
Additional top 100 wetlands actively managed	4	2	0	0%
Additional top 200 bush remnants actively managed	7	5	1	14%
Support community involvement in biodiversity protection				
Support existing community-based biodiversity improvement projects	12	29	0	0%
Tōtara Reserve Regional Park				
Annual report on the management of Tōtara Reserve Regional Park for biodiversity and recreational values, including managing the camping facility.	1	n/a	1	100%

3 PRIORITY SITES PROGRAMME

3.1 Programme overview

3.1.1 The Priority Sites Programme was initiated to deliver on a One Plan method to have 100 of the region's priority wetlands and 200 of its best bush remnants under active management. Over time the timeframe for this to be achieved has been moved by Council to 2028-29. At the end of the 2018-19 year, the programme reported 69 priority wetlands and 145 priority bush remnants to be under active management. The programme was reviewed in 2017-18 when some changes were made to the way sites are assessed and managed; much of this November-December 2019 reporting period has been dedicated to work to implement that system. The Annual Plan targets and year-to-date progress on these are provided in Table 2 below.

3.1.2 The review of the Priority Sites Programme introduced changes to the way sites are assessed and managed. These changes include the introduction of a new classification of the level of management sites are receiving. This adds more detail to the previous reporting on sites being actively managed (or not). The management level rating (see Box 1 on the following page) incorporates assessments of the level of knowledge of the biodiversity at a site through a Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) and whether Horizons has completed some restoration work at the site, which was previously the mechanism the programme used to indicate if a site was actively managed or not. The programme review also introduced the requirement for site management plans which, along with frequency of visits are key factors for achieving management level 3. The level of priority works in the site management plan being implemented are also part of the management level index with level 4 being where all priority works are being completed. Levels 5 and 6 reflect sites receiving a greater level of management. NB: the management level index framework continues to be refined as we gain more experience in implementing it.

Table 2 Progress reporting for the priority sites programme Annual Plan targets for 2019-20.

Long-term Plan Target	Target	Allocated	Completed	% of target completed
Protect/enhance priority habitat remnants				
Additional top 100 wetlands actively managed	4	2	0	0%
Additional top 200 bush remnants actively managed	7	5	1	14%

BOX 1: MANAGEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

To achieve consistency in reporting over the coming 18 months, the site list has been reconciled and the number of sites at each management level will be reported. Draft management levels are outlined below.

Management Level Zero: Sites that we know exist but we have not visited yet. Will not be reported.

Management Level 0.5: A holding level for sites that have received a contribution toward management from Horizons but have not yet received a Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) or the REA has expired (i.e. is greater than 10 years old). Many of these sites existed in the Whanganui and Ruapehu districts. The Biodiversity team has visited most of the sites previously listed at this level and completed REAs, moving these sites to a level 2.

Management Level 1: Sites at management level 1 will have been assessed using the REA process. Sites will be included in the Horizons inventory, including the GIS layer. This management level is valid for 10 years at which point a new REA must be completed or the site returns to the 0.5 level. Sites that were at level 1 and are returned to level 0.5 will still exist in the inventory and GIS layer but the level reflects the dated (and possibly now incorrect) data that we have on that site.

Management Level 2: Sites at management level 2 will fulfil the requirements of level 1 and have had a previous contribution to their management from Horizons. This may have been a one-off contribution such as fencing or other management contribution that no longer occurs. This would include sites that were previously managed but where support has been withdrawn for any reason. These sites will have brief site summaries which detail why management is not continuing though for historical sites this will only be possible where this information is available.

Management Level 3: Sites at management level 3 will fulfil the requirements of level 1 and have site visits to assess works required at least biannually. These sites will have a site summary and management plan. Identified works required will be prioritised. Some work may be deferred if appropriate. Landowners will be supported and encouraged to contribute to the management of these sites.

Management Level 4: Sites at management level 4 will fulfil the requirements of level 3 and have all high priority works carried out as required. Landowners will be supported and encouraged to contribute to the management of these sites. Tōtara Reserve is an example of a site at this management level.

Management Level 5: Sites at management level 5 will fulfil the requirements of level 4 management and have true management partnerships established. Alternatively they may be managed by a landowner, iwi or community group with only surveillance and advice from Horizons. Manawatū Gorge and Cape Turnagain are examples of sites at this management level.

Management Level 6: Sites at management level 6 will meet at least management level 4 requirements and be receiving control for all animal pests. Bushy Park near Whanganui is the only site that meets the criteria for this level.

3.2 Activity Update

General

3.2.1 Table 3 below provides a summary of the management level index status for all sites on the managed list. The current assessment identifies that 10 sites are at management level 4, i.e. have been assessed and priority works have been carried out as required.

Table 3 Priority Sites Management Level Index

Management Level	Bush sites	Wetland sites	All sites
6	1	0	1
5	1	2	3
4	7	3	10
3	37	12	49
2	100	52	152
Sub-total for Level 2+	146	69	215
1	334	65	399
0.5	4	6	10
Total	484	140	624

3.2.2 A further component of the review of the Priority Sites Programme was the review of priority sites to target for inclusion in the programme. This is overviewed in the Natural Resources and Partnerships (NRP) Group's Operational Plan¹. The review completed an assessment through Zonation software, after which ground-truthing is required to confirm the biodiversity status of the site. During October, November and December 2019 the Biodiversity Team visited 76 sites that the Zonation model had flagged as potentially important. Ground-truthing is necessary as models are only as accurate as the data used to create them; discrepancies in any of the GIS layers can lead to errors. Of the 76 sites visited, 20 were found to be significantly inconsistent with the Zonation results and were noted as such. REA results for the other 56 sites have been added to the table above at management level 1.

¹ <http://www.horizons.govt.nz/calendar/strategy-policy-committee-2019-10-09.aspx>

4 BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

4.1 Programme Overview

4.1.1 Community engagement projects are arranged in three groups of projects within the Biodiversity Partnerships programme: Biodiversity Collaborations, Community Biodiversity Projects and Community Grants. The Annual Plan targets and year-to-date progress on these are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Progress reporting for the Biodiversity Partnerships programme for 2019-20.

Annual Plan Target	Target	Allocated	Completed	% complete
Support community involvement in biodiversity protection				
Support existing community-based biodiversity improvement projects	12	29	0	0%

4.1.2 The 29 projects approved in 2019-20 are made up of seven Biodiversity Collaborations, 13 Community Biodiversity Projects and nine Community Grant Projects as shown in Table 5. Further information on these projects is provided in the Natural Resources and Partnership Group's Operational Plan (pages 59 to 65).

Table 5: Projects within the Biodiversity Partnerships Programme for 2019-20.

Biodiversity Collaborations	Community Biodiversity Projects	Community Grant Projects
1. Kia Whārite	8. Te Potae o Awarua Predator Control	21. Bulls River Users Group.
2. Rangitikei Environment Group (REG)	9. Massey Hill	22. Castlecliff Coast Care and Progress Castle Cliff Inc.
3. Weedbusters Palmerston North	10. Turitea Reserve	23. Dannevirke High School
4. Tawata Mainland Island	11. Bushy Park	24. Hunterville Consolidated School
5. Waitarere Beach Community project	12. Kahuterawa Stream Biodiversity Restoration	25. Nga Tawa Diocesan School
6. Pukaha Mount Bruce	13. Foxton River Loop	26. Ohau school
7. Te Āpiti Manawatū Gorge	14. Manawatū Estuary	27. Puddleducks Montessori preschool
	15. Awahuri Forest – Kitchener Park	28. Taihape Area School
	16. Ahimate Reserve	29. Westmere Lake Volunteers
	17. Gate Pa Bush Restoration	
	18. Ohau Beach Walkway	
	19. Cape Turnagain	
	20. Genesis Moawhango River Restoration	

4.2 Activity Update

General

- 4.2.1 Many of the Biodiversity Partnerships projects do not get underway until later in the financial year and this report provides some brief updates.

Te Āpiti Manawatū Gorge

- 4.2.2 The Te Āpiti Manawatū Gorge Governance Group work programme has continued to be implemented over the reporting period with activity including plant and animal pest control in some areas and work led by the Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) on a tourism opportunities report, further development of pest control options to enhance biodiversity and release of the Te Āpiti Manawatū Gorge book. The Governance Group has also been involved in some forums related to the new gorge road. The next Governance Group meeting is scheduled for 26 February 2020.

Te Potae o Awarua Predator Control

- 4.2.3 This collaborative pest control programme in the Northwestern part of the Ruahine Ranges aims to protect whio (blue duck) and also benefit kiwi populations. Stoat traps were checked in mid-October 2019 – the first check for many of the new traps that had been put in around Puketaramea to protect kiwi in this area. Nearly all traps were full, with very high numbers of stoat and rat captures, as expected due to the 2019 beech mast. Some traps around Ruahine Corner Hut had stoats removed on the Saturday afternoon, but had already caught further stoats when volunteers checked them again Sunday morning. Bird highlights included several whio families, yellow-crowned kakariki seen at several sites and kiwi recorded on acoustic recorders left out overnight near the Te Potae track. DOC carried out a Tiakina Nga Manu aerial pest control operation throughout the area on 21-23 November to control the rats, stoats and possums across 30,000 ha of the Northern Ruahine. A post-aerial control trap check was completed in mid-December 2019. Again, the traps were very full, particularly with rats and mustelids, but no recaptures were noted overnight this time. Whio families and many fernbirds were noted on this trip.

Biodiversity Partnerships Review

- 4.2.4 A review of the Biodiversity Partnerships projects was signaled in the previous report and a paper on this has been developed for consideration by Council.

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 maintenance.

5.1.2 The Annual Plan target and year-to-date progress against this are reported in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Progress update for the Regional Park Annual Plan target.

LTP Performance Measure	Target	Completed	% of target completed
Annual report on the management of Tōtara Reserve Regional Park for biodiversity and recreational values, including managing the camping facility.	1	1 ²	100%

5.2 Activity Update

5.2.1 The Tōtara Reserve Regional Park campground maintenance contract was awarded to Fulton Hogan for a three year term.

5.2.2 The damaged tank in the effluent treatment plant has been replaced with two new tanks holding the equivalent volume. Work is underway to upgrade the weather protection for the treatment plant electrical board after an issue caused a pump to cut out on New Year's Eve.

5.2.3 The next Tōtara Reserve Advisory Group meeting is being scheduled for a date in February-March.

Aaron Madden
ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR – BIODIVERSITY

Rod Smillie
BIODIVERSITY, BIOSECURITY & PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER

Jon Roygard
GROUP MANAGER NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

² The Annual report on Totara reserve was reported to Environment Committee in August 2019 and is available at the following link. <http://www.horizons.govt.nz/HRC/media/Media/Agenda-Reports/Environment-Committee-2019-14-08/19118%20Annex%20D%20Biodiversity%20Activity.pdf>