



Climate Action Strategy

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Horizons Regional Council

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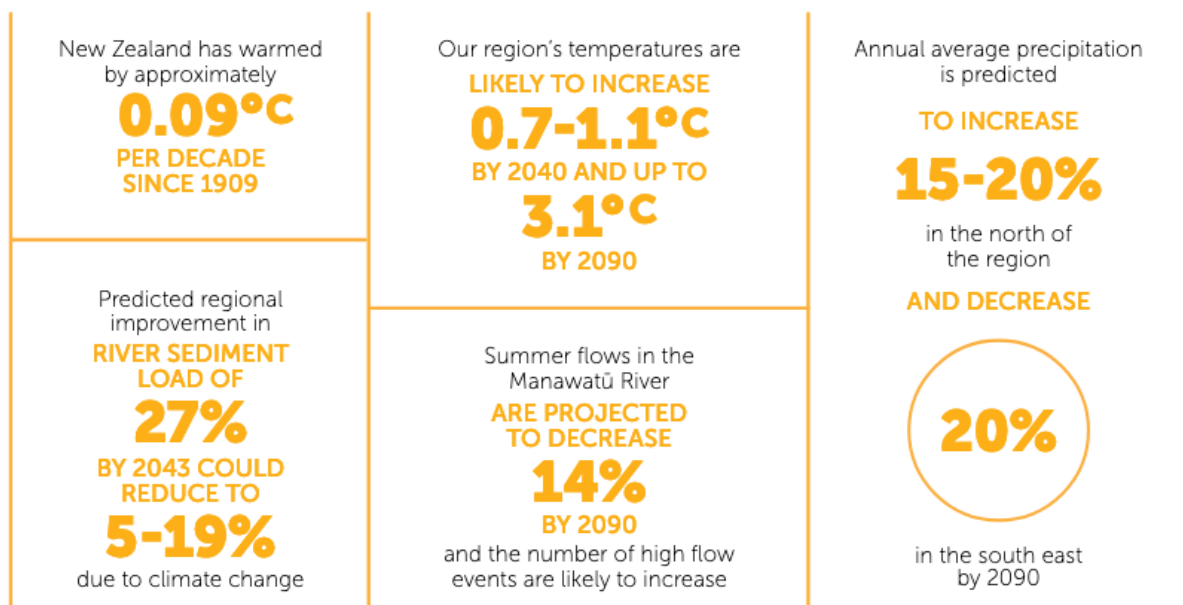
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We share a vision for a healthy environment and thriving, resilient communities. Realising that vision demands that we take action on climate change.

Climate change may be the biggest environmental challenge we face. It will affect ecosystems, the economy, and our way of life. Tangata whenua are already noticing the subtle changes in seasonal rainfall, species migrations and bloom times: they will feel the impacts of climate change deeply because of their enduring connection to land and water.

Over the coming decades, our region is likely to see both longer dry spells and more intense rainfall. Stormier weather will exacerbate erosion in the hill country and on the coast. Rivers will flood more often. In a warmer climate, threatened species may struggle to survive while pest species thrive. These changes are happening now.

Concern about climate change is growing. Protest movements, public submissions, discussions with community groups and our iwi partners all show us that local people want to see action. We need to prepare for a future that is different from today – and we must do so with urgency.



CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH THE EYES OF A TUNA

As the climate changes, so will the lives of taonga species. Tuna (eel) are a particularly iconic species in Aotearoa. They can live as long as a human, can travel across land, and make two long ocean migrations during their life cycle. They are connected to tangata whenua through whakapapa, they are mentioned in stories and some have been regarded as kaitiaki. They are important to local people, not only as a food source, but also as an expression of manaakitanga (hospitality) offered to guests.

Most people encounter tuna in creeks and lakes, where they spend most of their lives. These freshwater bodies are likely to be affected by both heavier rain and longer dry periods as the climate changes. Heavier rain washes more sediment into rivers: the water can become murkier and the bottom muddier, making it easier to hide but harder to find food. If there's enough sediment in the water, it can damage sensitive gills. Rain also carries nutrients into the water. This encourages the growth of aquatic plants – especially if the rain is followed by warm, settled periods of weather, as we expect with climate change. Some plants are good, but too much algae can smother the stream bed and affect the abundance of the bugs and small fish that tuna eat. The longer and warmer those summer dry periods, the less water in the river and the less habitat will be available. There's another problem, too – fish need oxygen just as we do, and there's much less of it in warm, stagnant water. This means that, in a drought, fish may actually suffocate.

After many years in our rivers and lakes, tuna travel thousands of kilometres into the Pacific Ocean to spawn. Nobody knows exactly where they go or how they find their way there – but it's fair to assume that ocean currents and temperatures will be important for their breeding cycle, and for the successful return of juveniles to Aotearoa.

Tuna, like people, are a resilient species. Nonetheless, a changing climate will present them with challenges that may impact on their future wellbeing. Taking a look at the world through the eyes of a tuna challenges us to consider environmental issues differently, taking a little time to reflect on what climate change may mean for them and other species. Generally speaking what is good for the tuna, is good for the people.

Our wellbeing depends on the environment, and our actions impact on the environment. There is perhaps no clearer demonstration of this relationship on a global scale than climate change. Our response must recognise this reciprocity, both reducing our impact on the environment and responding to a changing climate.

OUR REGION'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

On a per capita basis, our region's emissions are slightly above the national average (about 24t CO₂-e, compared to about 17t CO₂-e). The region's emissions fell by 2 percent over the 2007-18 period – slightly faster than the national average.

Most emissions in our region (around two-thirds) are from livestock agriculture – however, these emissions fell by about 7 percent over the decade 2007-18.

Emissions from other sources have been increasing, reflecting a growing population. Energy use is the region's second biggest source of emissions, with the main component being transportation.

As a region, a relatively small proportion of our emissions are offset by forestry (about 18 percent, compared to a national average of 30 percent). The exception to this pattern is Ruapehu District, where most emissions are offset by 'removals' through forestry.

REDUCING OUR IMPACT: MITIGATION

Mitigation means reducing the amount of greenhouse gases we put into the atmosphere. A certain amount of change is locked in, due to past emissions – but we can limit future impacts by reducing emissions from now. The Paris Agreement seeks to limit temperature increase to 1.5-2.0°C above pre-industrial levels. Global temperatures have already risen by 0.8-1.0°C, so the window to respond is closing quickly.

New Zealand's national targets align with the Paris Agreement goals. They require us to:

- **reduce net emissions of all greenhouse gases except biogenic methane (methane emissions from waste and agriculture) to zero by 2050; and**
- **reduce emissions of biogenic methane to 24–47 per cent below 2017 levels by 2050, including to 10 per cent below 2017 levels by 2030.**

Each individual, household, organisation, and industry will need to make changes if we are to meet these targets.

In line with national targets and our shared responsibility, Horizons has adopted a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions associated with our organisation's activities of 30 percent by 2030 as an interim target. We are undertaking work to better understand our emissions profile and opportunities to make reductions or enhance offsets to meet this target and inform further action.

RESPONDING TO A CHANGING CLIMATE: ADAPTATION

Adaptation means modifying the way we do things to reduce the impact of a changing climate on us. Although it's not entirely clear how climate change will affect our communities, we can be sure that things will change. We also have a good idea of the sorts of impacts to expect.

The climate affects where it's safe to live, infrastructure (like roads and water pipes), jobs, food supply, health, cultural practices and recreational activities. Some of these impacts will be minor; others will be challenging for us to manage – but they will also present opportunities if we are able to respond proactively and collaboratively.

REGIONAL ACTION

Horizons acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the place of tangata whenua in local decision making. We are committed to upholding the Treaty's principles of partnership, protection, and participation as we respond to climate change. We will work through what this looks like in practice together with iwi and hapū.

Horizons' role is to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of communities – now, and for the future. The potential impact of climate change on future wellbeing makes it relevant to everything we do.

Climate change calls for leadership at a local and regional level. Horizons is a signatory to the *Local Government Leaders' Climate Change Declaration*, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding with other councils in our region. These documents commit us work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience to the effects of a changing climate. To help us do so, we have agreed to establish a joint Climate Action Committee with representation from each of the region's eight councils as well as iwi involvement.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Everybody has a role to play in responding to climate change – central government, local councils, tangata whenua, community groups, businesses and individuals. At Horizons, we see our role as facilitating an effective, constructive response to climate change in our region. We aim to:

- **Build the resilience of communities and our environment to the effects of a changing climate.**
- **Support the transition to a sustainable, carbon-neutral regional economy by 2050.**
- **Ensure central- and local-government efforts are aligned to the needs of our region.**

OUR APPROACH

Horizons cannot achieve these outcomes alone. We recognise that we must cooperate and support the work of others to ensure our environment and communities continue to thrive. We will do this by:

- **Working together toward shared outcomes**
- **Involving local communities in decisions that affect them**
- **Sharing what we know, being open about what we don't**
- **Supporting people to make a difference**
- **Considering the climate in everything we do**
- **Prioritising the most vulnerable**
- **Remaining open to new information and ways of doing things**
- **Acting now, with future generations in mind**

DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

We cannot know exactly what the future will bring – it depends on future emissions, new technologies, community responses, and complex global environmental processes. There is uncertainty in the science and in estimates of the risks. There are competing ideas about what should be done.

Nor can we afford to wait. Decisions must be made now to manage the transition to a low-emissions economy and ensure our communities thrive in a changing climate. These decisions will need to be 'adaptive', enabling us to progress towards agreed long-term objectives and make adjustments as we learn more or circumstances change.

WHAT WE ALREADY DO

Many of Horizons' existing activities take climate change into account. It is identified as an issue in both the One Plan and our Infrastructure Strategy. Core functions like flood protection and land management provide a starting point for an action plan that will evolve as we better understand risks and opportunities, and reach agreement on what needs to be done.

Resource management: managing the use of natural resources and effects of development on freshwater, land, air and the coast; avoiding further risks from natural hazards, and supporting renewable energy generation.

Sustainable land and riparian management: supporting the fencing and planting of riparian margins and sustainable land use in erosion-prone hill country.

Biosecurity: regional pest management to minimise the adverse effects of plant and animal pests on indigenous biodiversity and habitat and on the regional economy.

Biodiversity: protecting and enhancing the region's indigenous biodiversity through active management of priority sites, monitoring, and support for community and landowner action.

Transport: regional land transport planning and public transport services across the region, including low-emissions and active transport options.

Hazard and emergency management: working with territorial authorities and other agencies to reduce the risk of hazards, raise awareness, maintain readiness and provide response and recovery capabilities.

Flood protection and river control: protecting people, property and infrastructure from flooding by containing floods, building and maintaining drainage infrastructure, and reducing the effects of river erosion.

Information, research and monitoring: collecting reliable environmental data and carrying out research, and ensuring its availability within and outside Horizons, as a basis for the development of sound policies and actions.

Strategic management: providing proactive, coherent policy responses across the organisation on emerging and ongoing issues; engaging with central government and other regional councils to ensure national policy reflects local realities, and that the right tools are available to achieve change.

Council operations: incremental changes to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions from our offices and vehicle fleet.

From September 2020, we are making changes to ensure that decisions across all Council activities consider climate impacts.

WHAT'S NEXT

This strategy provides a framework to guide Horizons' response to climate change. During the July 2020 – June 2021 year, we will focus on three key initiatives:

Climate Action Committee: a joint committee is being established to ensure an effective local-government response for our region. Its first meeting is planned for December 2020.

Regional Climate Change Risk Assessment (RCCRA): together with territorial authorities and tangata whenua, we are working to identify risks to local communities, significant sites, and our environment, to inform decisions about which issues to tackle first.

Corporate responsibility: we will work to better understand our own carbon footprint and identify options to reduce our emissions by 30 percent by 2030.

Decisions about our programme of work and resource commitments beyond June 2021 will be made through the **2021-31 Long-Term Plan** process. This will be informed by the RCCRA, evolving government policy, and consultation with communities, and further discussion with iwi partners.