

Report No.	25-92
<b>Information Only - No Decision Required</b>	

## STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT SYNTHESIS REPORT 2025

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to present to Council the 2025 State of Environment Synthesis Report and release the report to the public.

### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. Horizons' State of Environment (SoE) Synthesis Reports provide an overview of the state and trends of the region's environment, as required every five years under Section 35 of the Resource Management Act 1991.
- 2.2. The 2025 report synthesises monitoring data, research, and technical work completed since 2019, highlighting community actions, environmental issues, and gaps in the organisation's environmental knowledge, including mātauranga Māori.
- 2.3. There are three primary chapters, focusing on Air, Land, and Water, as well as a comprehensive case study on Cyclone Gabrielle and its impact on the region, including both the environment and people.
- 2.4. The report supports decision-making, policy development, accountability, and public education, and references 70 sources for further reading. An outline of the report and key topics were presented at Council workshops in February and April 2025.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-92 and Annex.

### 4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 4.1. There is no financial impact associated with recommendations in this paper.

### 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. Between July and September 2024, the Horizons' Science and Communications team ran a Creative Arts Competition, requesting artistic submissions that express how nature contributes to our communities' wellbeing. We received over 200 submissions, providing insights into the ways communities interact with, rely on, and otherwise value the environment, which have been reported in the 2025 SoE Synthesis Report.
- 5.2. Some of the artwork submitted through the Creative Arts Competition is presented within the report including the winning entry on the front cover.
- 5.3. Members of the reporting team spoke with iwi representatives at the Oranga Wai | Our Freshwater Future hui on 22 August 2024 on how Horizons should acknowledge mātauranga Māori in our reporting. The conversations at the hui helped shape the mātauranga Māori section of the document

### 6. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 6.1. No significant business risk has been identified.

## **7. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT**

- 7.1. There is no or minimal climate change impact associated with the recommendations of this paper.
- 7.2. The report includes several references to climate change and its role in environmental change from both adaptation and mitigation perspectives. It also includes the influence of climate change on rainfall during Cyclone Gabrielle.

## **8. DISCUSSION**

- 8.1. State of Environment (SoE) Synthesis Reports are published regularly to inform New Zealanders about the environment's health over a certain period and its changes over time. Legislation (Section 35 of the Resource Management Act 1991) requires Regional and Unitary Councils to publish a region-wide report every five years. Horizons last published an SoE Synthesis Report in 2019. A synthesis report is a document that distils (summarises) data and technical information from various sources to provide an overview of the Council's scientific understanding of the region's environment.
- 8.2. Horizons publishes SoE Synthesis Reports to: enable the public and decision-makers to know what impact we are having on the environment; present data as useful information, enabling the evidence-based analysis, decision-making, and policy development needed for effective environmental stewardship; inform communities on progress towards achieving the Council's environmental goals (e.g., One Plan targets); educate people about their local environment and actions they can take in their communities to achieve desired environmental outcomes; provide some accountability in terms of expenditure on Council activities; support other reporting and review processes (e.g., Section 35 One Plan Chapter evaluations).
- 8.3. The 2025 SoE Synthesis Report summarises findings from Horizons' environmental monitoring data, science reporting, and other technical work undertaken since the publication of the 2019 SoE Synthesis Report. The report also draws upon research done at the national scale to provide additional context for readers. The document aims to acknowledge community actions that are progressing us towards desired environmental outcomes, while also presenting the clear areas for improvement in the region's environment. The report also acknowledges the gaps in Horizons' environmental monitoring, including mātauranga Māori, which affects our understanding of the environment. Science reports and other documentation have been referenced throughout the report, resulting in 70 sources that readers can consult for further information.
- 8.4. The report comprises three primary chapters, focusing on Air, Land, and Water, as well as a comprehensive case study on Cyclone Gabrielle and its impact on the region, including both the environment and people. Te Ao Māori is woven throughout the introduction of each chapter. The purpose (discussed in point 8.2), key findings, and the reporting team's approach to developing the document were presented to Council in workshops earlier this year.

## **9. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS**

- 9.1. The official release of the 2025 State of Environment Synthesis Report is scheduled for 24 June 2025.
- 9.2. We will promote the SoE Synthesis Report gradually over a six-month period to encourage quality engagement across various publics.
- 9.3. The report will be circulated via email to identified interested parties in early July.
- 9.4. Throughout July and August, the SoE Synthesis Report will be promoted to the community via Horizons social media channels (e.g., Facebook and Instagram), and a more extensive campaign will be launched on LinkedIn, reaching more technically engaged stakeholders.

24 June 2025

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- 9.5. We are also investigating the possibility of exhibiting the artworks submitted to the Creative Arts competition alongside key messages from the report at suitable venues in Palmerston North and Whanganui over the remainder of the year.
- 9.6. The Science and Communications teams are investigating small, in-person presentations on the SoE Synthesis Report by our Subject Matter Experts to Catchment Care Groups over the remainder of the year.

## 10. SIGNIFICANCE

- 10.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

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## ANNEXES

- A State of Environment Synthesis Report 2025 (Supplementary Item)