

I hereby give notice that a meeting of the Strategy and Policy Committee will be held on:

**Date:** Tuesday, 9 September 2025  
**Time:** 10.00am  
**Venue:** Tararua Room  
Horizons Regional Council  
11-15 Victoria Avenue, Palmerston North

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## **STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

### **AGENDA**

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#### **MEMBERSHIP**

<b>Chair</b>	Cr RJ Keedwell
<b>Deputy Chair</b>	Cr JM Naylor
<b>Councillors</b>	Cr AL Benbow
	Cr EM Clarke
	Cr DB Cotton
	Cr JT Edmonds
	Cr SD Ferguson
	Cr EB Gordon
	Cr FJT Gordon
	Cr GM McKellar
	Cr NM Riley
	Cr AR Taylor
	Cr WK Te Awe Awe
	Cr T Teira

**Michael McCartney**  
**Chief Executive**

Contact Telephone: 0508 800 800  
Email: [help@horizons.govt.nz](mailto:help@horizons.govt.nz)  
Postal Address: Private Bag 11025,  
Palmerston North 4442

**Full Agendas are available on Horizons Regional Council website**  
**[www.horizons.govt.nz](http://www.horizons.govt.nz)**

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**Note:** The reports contained within this agenda are for consideration and should not be construed as Council policy unless and until adopted. Items in the agenda may be subject to amendment or withdrawal at the meeting.

for further information regarding this agenda, please contact:  
Julie Kennedy, 06 9522 800

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<b>CONTACTS</b>	<b>24 hr Freephone :</b> <b>0508 800 800</b>	<b>help@horizons.govt.nz</b>	<b>www.horizons.govt.nz</b>	
<b>SERVICE CENTRES</b>	<b>Kairanga</b> Cnr Rongotea & Kairanga-Bunnythorpe Rds, Palmerston North	<b>Marton</b> 19-21 Hammond Street	<b>Taumarunui</b> 34 Maata Street	<b>Woodville</b> Cnr Vogel (SH2) & Tay Sts
<b>REGIONAL HOUSES</b>	<b>Palmerston North</b> 11-15 Victoria Avenue	<b>Whanganui</b> 181 Guyton Street		
<b>DEPOTS</b>	<b>Levin</b> 120-122 Hokio Beach Rd	<b>Taihape</b> 243 Wairanu Rd		
<b>POSTAL ADDRESS</b>	Horizons Regional Council, Private Bag 11025, Manawatū Mail Centre, Palmerston North 4442			

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## AGENDA

1 Welcome / Karakia

2 Apologies and Leave of Absence

At the close of the Agenda no apologies had been received.

3 **Public Forums:** Are designed to enable members of the public to bring matters, not on that meeting's agenda, to the attention of the local authority.

**Deputations:** Are designed to enable a person, group or organisation to speak to an item on the agenda of a particular meeting.

Requests for Public Forums / Deputations must be made to the meeting secretary by 12 noon on the working day before the meeting. The person applying for a Public Forum or a Deputation must provide a clear explanation for the request which is subsequently approved by the Chairperson.

**Petitions:** Can be presented to the local authority or any of its committees, so long as the subject matter falls within the terms of reference of the council or committee meeting being presented to.

Written notice to the Chief Executive is required at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting. Petitions must contain at least 20 signatures and consist of fewer than 150 words (not including signatories).

Further information is available by phoning 0508 800 800.

4 Supplementary Items

To consider, and if thought fit, to pass a resolution to permit the Committee/Council to consider any further items relating to items following below which do not appear on the Order Paper of this meeting and/or the meeting to be held with the public excluded.

Such resolution is required to be made pursuant to Section 46A(7) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (as amended), and the Chairperson must advise:

- (i) The reason why the item was not on the Order Paper, and
- (ii) The reason why the discussion of this item cannot be delayed until a subsequent meeting.

5 Members' Conflict of Interest

Members are reminded of their obligation to declare any conflicts of interest they might have in respect of the items on this Agenda.







## REGULATORY MANAGEMENT REPORT - 31 DECEMBER 2024 TO 31 MARCH 2025

Report No 25-47

Mr Bevin (Manager Regulatory) introduced the report which provided a high level summary of the Regulatory Programme for the financial year to date (up to 31 March 2025) and answered Members' questions.

Cr F Gordon declared a potential conflict of interest in the item and did not participate.

**SP 25-68**                      **Moved**                                      **Benbow/McKellar**

*That the Committee recommends that Council:*

- a. *receives the information contained in Report No. 25-47.*

**CARRIED**

## PALMERSTON NORTH CLIMATE RESILIENCE PROJECT - SALE OF PROPERTY

Report No 25-46

This report sought Councils approval to sell part of the property at 14 Belvedere Crescent. This property was purchased as a part of the Palmerston North Climate Resilience Project for the purpose of subdividing to enable works, with the intent of resale for part of the property. Mr McCartney (Chief Executive) presented the item and he and Mr Maxfield (Senior Project Engineer) clarified Members' questions. Following debate around what, if any, upgrades to the property were warranted prior to sale, additional wording was included in recommendation c.

**SP 25-69**                      **Moved**                                      **McKellar/Benbow**

*That the Committee recommends that Council:*

- a. *receives the information contained in Report No. 25-46.*
- b. *declares the subdivided part of the property at 14 Belvedere Crescent, Palmerston North that includes the house as surplus to the Councils property requirements; and*
- c. *authorises the Chief Executive to sell the subdivided part of the property that includes the house, with repairs as necessary to secure a sale, at 14 Belvedere Crescent, Palmerston North.*
- d. *approves the proceeds of the sale of the property to be allocated to the budgets for the Palmerston North Stopbanks Climate Resilience Project.*

**CARRIED**

## STRATEGY AND POLICY UPDATE

Report No 25-48

Mrs Almond (Manager Policy & Strategy) updated Members on the policy work programme being undertaken by the Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience Team and she and the Chief Executive responded to Members' questions.

**SP 25-70**                      **Moved**                                      **Ferguson/Taylor**

*That the Committee recommends that Council:*

- a. *receives the information contained in Report No. 25-48.*

**CARRIED**

The meeting closed at 10.43am.

Confirmed

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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CHAIR

Report No.	25-125
Information Only - No Decision Required	

## DISTRICT ADVICE UPDATE

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This report is to inform Members of the District Advice land development information requests carried out year to date (from 1 July 2025 to 26 August 2025), and other District Advice activities since the last report in April 2025.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-125.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. The management of this function is part of the role of the Team Leader District Advice and is included in the 2024-34 Long Term Plan, under Transport and Regional Services Activity.

### 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. This is a public item, therefore Council may deem this sufficient to inform the public.

### 5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There is no significant business risk impact.

### 6. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 6.1. This report deals with administrative matters only, so there is no direct climate change impact as a result. However, advice provided to the public and **Territorial Authorities (TAs)** on natural hazards helps the community to understand climate change and build resilience in our region.

### 7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The District Advice service is responsible for responding to requests for information from the general public and TAs for properties in our region.
- 7.2. The service provides information to the public to inform on land valuations, insurance matters, prospective property purchases and hazard risk for new developments and activities.
- 7.3. The service also provides comments and advice to the region's TAs to assist with their assessments of building consents, land use consents and subdivisions. Comments and advice include any relevant information that **Horizons Regional Council (Horizons)** may hold on the property, particularly around natural hazards, relevant One Plan objectives/policies and rules, as well as other regional/national considerations.
- 7.4. District Advice manages Horizons' obligations to the Building Act in relation to dams which includes the **Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022**.

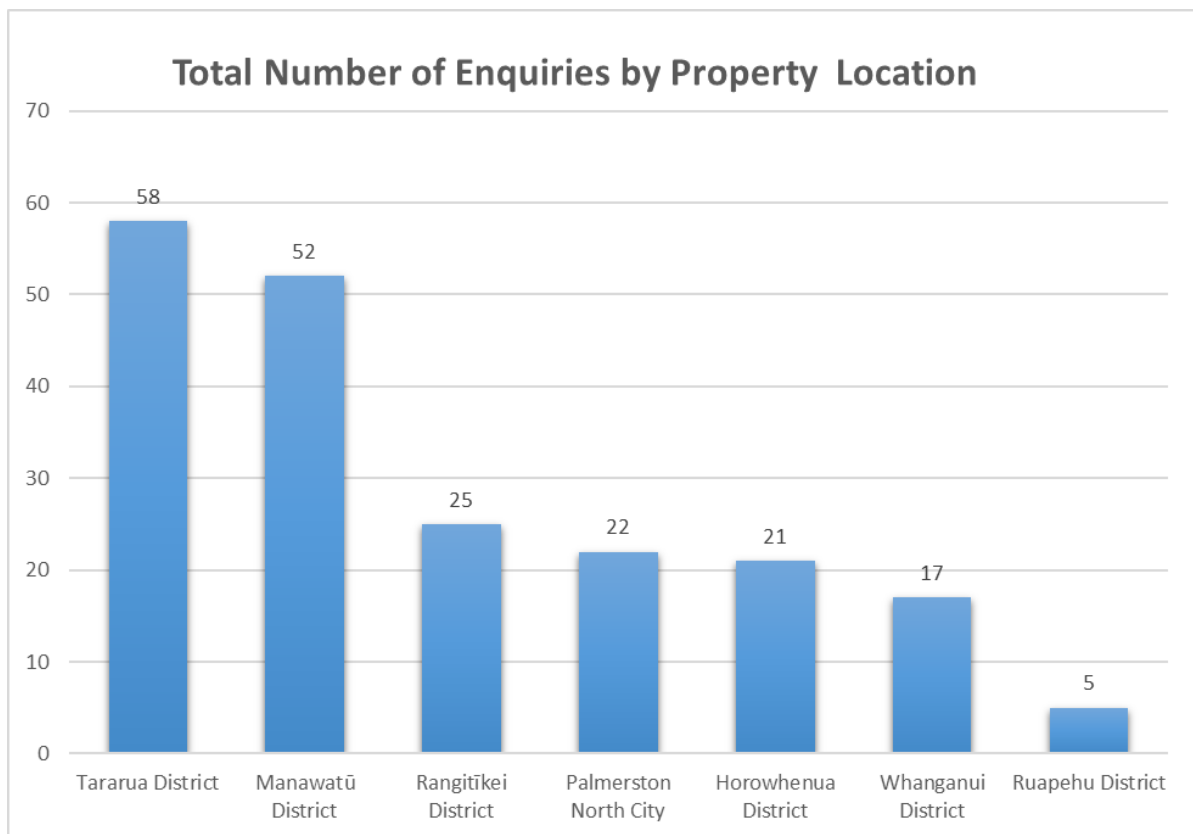
7.5. District Advice also contributes to Horizons’ responses to draft and proposed plan changes that are notified by TAs within our region and provides relevant knowledge on urban growth.

**8. LAND DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION REQUESTS**

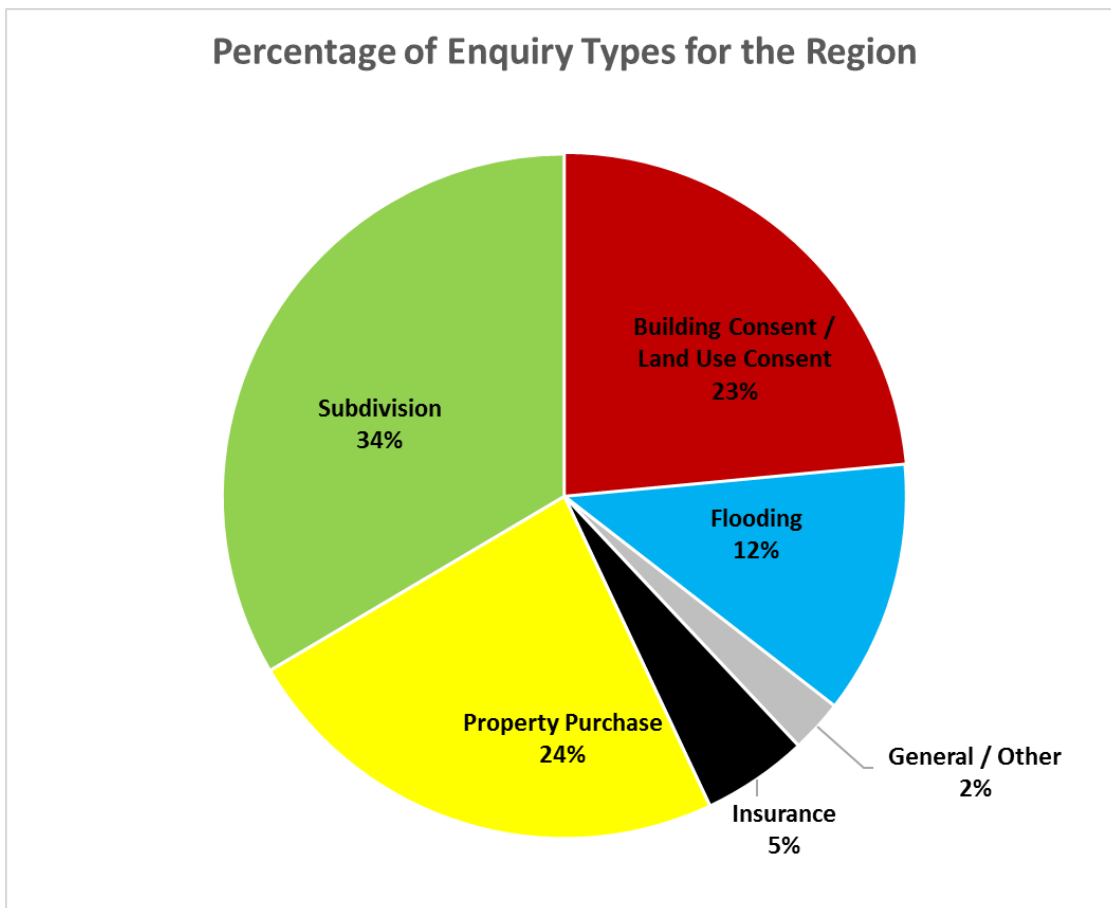
8.1. This Report provides the summary of statistics for year to date from 1 July 2025 to 26 August 2025. So far this Financial year the District Advice Service has responded to a total of **200** requests - **141** of these requests were for the general public and **59** for the TAs. The total requests responded to for the same time last year (1 July 2024 to 26 August 2024) were **181**. This is a **10% increase**, compared to the same time period last year.

8.2. We expect this to continue to increase as we received more enquiries about natural hazard information which will be provided on LIMs from mid-October 2025.

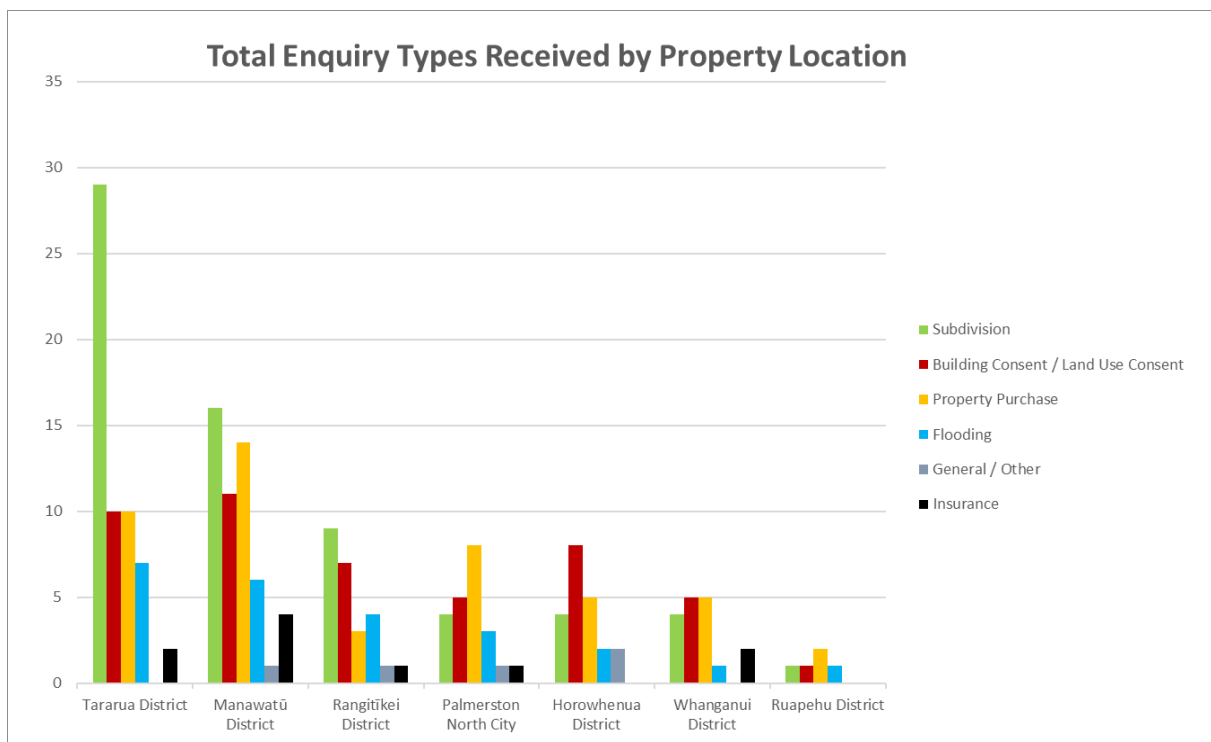
8.3. During the financial year 2024-25 District Advice responded to 1076 requests for information, which is a three per cent increase on the previous year (1049 requests in the 2023-24 year). The promotion and the success of the [Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer](#) has meant fewer direct enquiries as people are better able to gather information for themselves. There continues to be a higher percentage of subdivision enquiries compared to previous years, and generally, these are more time consuming because of their increased complexity.



8.4. **Figure 1** above illustrates the number of enquiries responded to year to date by property location.



8.5. **Figure 2** above shows the total enquiry type by percentage that has been responded to year to date for the region.



8.6. **Figure 3** above shows the enquiry types that the District Advice Team has responded to year to date by property location.

## 9. CHANGES TO LAND INFORMATION MEMORANDA (LIMs)

- 9.1. New legislation under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Amendment Act 2023 introduces a new statutory requirement for regional authorities to provide natural hazard and climate change information for **Land Information Memoranda (LIMs)**.
- 9.2. In late 2024, the **Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)** consulted on the draft regulations that will support councils to implement the changes. District Advice and Horizons Policy and Strategy team coordinated Horizons' submission, which included feedback from Council. As anticipated these regulations, officially known as the Local Government (Natural Hazard Information in Land Information Memoranda) Regulations 2025, were gazetted in mid-April will come into force later, on 17 October 2025.
- 9.3. DIA released part one of the guidance material in July 2025 and plan to release part two of the guidance in mid-September 2025. The Team Leader District Advice is a member on DIA's Practitioners Working Group and continued work with DIA to ensure the material provides clarity and practical guidance.
- 9.4. The Team Leader District Advice has continued to convene and facilitate a Regional LIM Working Group which has representation from all TAs in the region.

## 10. IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

- 10.1. With support from the Information Management Team and GNS Science, District Advice continued to facilitate improvements to the [Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer](#) to ensure it is easily accessible and up-to-date for the public and staff to view regional hazard maps and other information. This has been an ongoing success with **17,100** views in the last 12 months and **11,600** views in the last six months.
- 10.2. The Team Leader District Advice supported the Regional Flood Vulnerability Assessment project team, providing advice on 'case users' and spatial information.
- 10.3. District Advice continued to make improvements to Horizons District Advice "General Considerations" document for the public and TAs, which provides guidance on regional and national matters which may need to be considered for proposed land development, urban growth areas, or property related decisions/assessments.
- 10.4. The Team Leader District Advice Co Chairs the Hazard Mapping Working Group, which is an internal forum that shares natural hazard mapping information to improve capability and relationships across Horizons teams.

## 11. DAMS – BUILDING CONSENTS AND DAM SAFETY REGULATIONS

- 11.1. All dam building consent and dam safety enquiries have been responded to within the required timeframe. For this reporting period, District Advice has not issued any **Project Information Memorandums (PIMs)**, and has not received any new or remedial dam proposals to assess if a building consent is required.
- 11.2. In May 2022, the new regulations on dam safety (**Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022**) were announced by the **Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)**. On 28 March 2024 the Government agreed to raise the height threshold of the dam safety regulations from one metre to four metres, so that smaller dams will not be subject to dam safety compliance costs. As expected the regulations commenced on 13 May 2024, with the higher threshold. Dam owners had three months to complete the first step of the regulatory process, by submitting their dam classification certificates to District Advice by 13 August 2024 for processing. High potential impact dams have 12 months from the approval date of the classification certificate to provide Horizons with the dam safety assurance programme for approval. Medium potential impact dams have 24 months from the approval date.

- 11.3. The Team Leader District Advice continued to work closely with the Regional/Unitary Council Collective Dam Steering Group and MBIE to implement the regulations.
- 11.4. The Building Act requires Horizons to:
- administer and monitor the dam safety regulations, this involves:
    - establishing and maintaining a register of dams in its region;
    - considering and approving or refusing dam classifications;
    - approving or refusing dam safety assurance programmes; and
    - receiving the annual dam safety assurance programme compliance certificates.
  - take action, if necessary, if any dam, poses an immediate danger to the safety of persons, property, or the environment;
  - provide building consent processing and inspection services for classifiable dams, such as issuing PIMs, building consent processing (Waikato Regional Council), compliance monitoring, and enforcement of the Building Code and regulations; and
  - review Horizons' Policy on Dangerous Dams, Flood-Prone Dams and Earthquake-Prone Dams (which was reviewed and adopted by Council in May 2024).

Guidance to support regional authorities with their responsibilities, are available on MBIE's website: [www.building.govt.nz/managing-buildings/dam-safety/regulations-background/](http://www.building.govt.nz/managing-buildings/dam-safety/regulations-background/).

- 11.5. To date, District Advice has received **67** dam classification certificates for the region. Thirteen are high potential impact dams, seven are medium potential impact dams and the remaining 47 are low potential impact dams. There is a register of classifiable dams and District Advice, with support from Information Management, has made this information and locations available for staff and the public on [LocalMaps](#).
- 11.6. To date, Horizons Region has received **11** dam safety assurance programmes as required to be submitted for high potential impact dams in August and September 2025.
- 11.7. In recent weeks, Horizons have been notified of our region's first classified 'dangerous dam' which is in the Rangitīkei District and is managed by **Rangitīkei District Council (RDC)**. Horizons [Policy on Dangerous Dams, Earthquake-Prone Dams and Flood-Prone Dams](#) outlines the approach and priorities Horizons may take in performing its functions in relation to dangerous dams. Horizons, RDC staff and engineers met on Friday 15 August to confirm next steps. Risk reductions measures have been undertaken and planned by RDC. RDC have an emergency action plan and will be engaging relevant stakeholders. RDC's engineer has confirmed that there is no immediate danger, however, in a large rainfall event there could be potential impacts. At this point, all key steps required under legislation have been identified and an action plan has been drafted.

## 12. DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

- 12.1. The following is a brief update on the District Advice Team's involvement and contribution to proposed Plan Changes, notice of requirements and other TA engagements since our last report in April 2025. This includes coordinating and providing Horizons' initial feedback and comment on urban growth planning.

### Horowhenua District Council

- 12.2. On behalf of Horizons the Team Leader District Advice submitted on the **Notice of Requirement (NOR)** to designate land for the purpose of the construction, operation and

maintenance of a water storage reservoir for water supply purposes, 71 Poads Road, Ōhau (Levin Water Supply Reservoir).

#### **Manawatū District Council**

- 12.3. Continued to support **Manawatū District Council (MDC)** staff, MDC's consultants and relevant Horizons staff on various draft plan changes, particularly MDC Proposed Plan Change A, B and E.

#### **Palmerston North City Council**

- 12.4. District Advice has continued to support **Palmerston North City Council (PNCC)** and their agents particularly in regards to proposed private plan changes.
- 12.5. The proposed private plan change called Bunnythorpe Business Park (near Te Utanganui) proposes changing zoning rural land to industrial land. District Advice worked with PNCC staff and consultants to coordinate Horizons initial comments on the proposal.
- 12.6. Team Leader District Advice continued to work with PNCC and their agents on Palmerston North's Stormwater Strategy which is a requirement of the Future Development Strategy. In late May the Team Leader coordinated and provided Horizons high-level feedback on PNCC's Draft Stormwater Strategy.

#### **Rangitīkei District Council**

- 12.7. District Advice continued to provide flood modelling and other relevant information predominantly within and surrounding Marton and Bulls townships.

#### **Ruapehu District Council**

- 12.8. District Advice continued to provide information and comment on proposed land developments predominately within and surrounding Taumarunui and Manunui areas.

#### **Tararua District Council**

- 12.9. District Advice has worked closely with **Tararua District Council (TDC)** and their consultants on their District Plan review, particularly around flood mapping information.
- 12.10. District Advice continued to provide information and comment on proposed land developments, predominantly within and surrounding the Woodville and Pahiatua townships.

#### **Whanganui District Council**

- 12.11. District Advice continued to provide information and comment on proposed land developments including a proposed private plan change within Whanganui city.

### **13. SIGNIFICANCE**

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

Sarah Carswell  
**TEAM LEADER DISTRICT ADVICE**

Ged Shirley  
**GROUP MANAGER REGIONAL SERVICES & INFORMATION**

#### **ANNEXES**

There are no attachments for this report.

Report No.	25-126
<b>Decision Required</b>	

## ONE PLAN REVIEW: PLAN STOP

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform Council of recent changes to its legal obligations under the **Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)**, advise on any decisions required at this stage, and outline the implications for Council's resource management policy programme, including proposed next steps.

### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025 introduced changes that pause most plan making process through to 31 December 2027. The Government refers to this pause as 'Plan Stop', which is intended to avoid councils investing in plan changes that may be made redundant by the future replacement of the RMA.
- 2.2. Proposed Plan Change 2 (relating to existing intensive farming land use) is not affected by the Plan Stop, as it is well past the notification and hearing stages. However, most of Council's remaining One Plan review work cannot be notified until after 31 December 2027, unless an exemption applies or is granted.
- 2.3. The Oranga Wai | Our Freshwater Future programme is partially affected by Plan Stop. While some components have been paused in line with national direction, technical and policy work is continuing where it remains relevant and useful. Officers are reviewing this work to ensure it supports future plan development and aligns with the requirements of the new resource management system.
- 2.4. The Amendment Act provides for two exemption pathways from Plan stop. Some planning instruments may be automatically exempt where specific criteria are met (e.g. Treaty settlement obligations, natural hazards), while other may require ministerial approval. Officers are currently assessing whether any current or proposed plan changes may necessitate and qualify for exemption.
- 2.5. Officers are reviewing the broader One Plan work programme with a focus on ensuring that necessary preparatory work (including across freshwater, air quality, natural hazards and coastal environments) is well advanced ahead of the anticipated transition to the new planning system in 2027. Spatial planning is expected to be a key early priority. Given Cabinet's direction to move quickly from mid-2027, early preparation will be essential to position the region for successful implementation and to achieve good environmental economic, and community outcomes.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-126.
- b. notes that the Resource Management (Consenting and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2025 has:
  - i. Extended the prohibition on Council notifying a freshwater planning instrument until 31 December 2027.

- ii. Suspended the requirement under s79 of the RMA to review the One Plan every 10 years under s79(1), and the power to commence a voluntary full review under s79(4) of the RMA, until 31 December 2027.
- iii. Prohibited Council from notifying any change to the One Plan until 31 December 2027, except where an exemption applies.
- c. notes the Government's intent to avoid council resources being used on work that will not be compatible with the intended new resource management system.
- d. notes the Government's intent for councils to begin implementing the new resource management system from mid-2027.
- e. notes that Proposed Plan Change 2 (existing intensive farming land use) is not required to be withdrawn and will continue through the appeals process.
- f. suspends the review of the One Plan, which was commenced under RMA s79 of the RMA.
- g. defers notification of its freshwater planning instrument (i.e. Oranga Wai | Our Freshwater Future) until after 31 December 2027.
- h. notes that the Government may replace the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020, which could allow (or potentially require) Council to notify a freshwater planning instrument earlier than 31 December 2027.
- i. defers notification of its highly productive land plan change until after 31 December 2027.
- j. notes that the Government intends to amend the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2023, which may require Council to notify a plan change to give effect to this NPS sooner than 31 December 2027.
- k. note that exemptions to the Plan stop provisions may apply where a planning instrument is required to give effect to a deed of treaty settlement obligation or (subject to ministerial discretion) better enable any deed of settlement and the Crown's obligations under that deed, to be upheld, and that officers are engaging with settled iwi on these matters.
- l. notes that officers will
  - i. direct their efforts to preparing Council for the new resource management system, and
  - ii. bring a revised resource management policy work programme, including advice on Council's relevant treaty settlement obligations, to a future Committee meeting.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 4.1. In adopting the 2025-26 Annual Plan, Council reduced funding for its Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience Activity from levels previously allocated in the 2024-34 Long-term Plan. This decision reflected the ongoing uncertainty associated with Government's resource management reform programme.
- 4.2. The policy planning work programme will now pivot toward preparing for the implementation of the new resource management system. Officers will provide further advice on future funding needs as part of the 2026-27 Annual Plan process.

#### 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. No general community engagement has been undertaken specifically for this item.

- 5.2. Iwi representatives engaged in the Oranga Wai | Our Freshwater Future programme were informed of the likely implications of the RMA amendment at a Hui held on 13 August.
- 5.3. Officers are engaging with settled iwi to understand and respond to potential impacts of the Amendment Act on the implementation of their treaty settlements.
- 5.4. Communication will go out to the community, stakeholders and tangata whenua to inform them of the committees decisions.

## 6. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 6.1. The recent amendments to the RMA restrict Council's ability to notify changes to the One Plan, unless an exemption pathway under the legislation applies. Council will need to comply with these new statutory requirements, and officers will provide advice to support decision-making in line with the legislation.
- 6.2. With the exception of the Urban Form and Development chapter and proposed Plan Change 2, the One Plan is now over ten years old. As regulatory and environmental contexts evolve, this increases the potential for misalignment between the One Plan and current needs – for both Council and resource users.

## 7. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 7.1. There is no direct climate impact associate with this item.

## 8. BACKGROUND

- 8.1. The Coalition Government is progressing a reform programme with the intention of repealing and replacing the Resource Management Act 1991 during this term of Parliament.
- 8.2. This Committee has previously received information on governments reform programme at its 8 April meeting (Report No. 25-48). A further update including an overview of the main changes affecting Horizons, is provided in a separate report for today's meeting (Report No. 25-130).

### The Amendment Act

- 8.3. The Government has signalled its intention to avoid councils undertaking costly plan changes or plan reviews that may be incomplete or incompatible with the proposed resource management system.
- 8.4. In response, the Resource Management (Consenting and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2025 introduces restrictions on certain planning processes through to 31 December 2027 - an approach the Government refers to as 'Plan Stop'. These provisions came into force on 21 August 2025.
- 8.5. Unless an exemption applies (or is granted), councils:
  - Cannot notify plan changes until after 31 December 2027; and
  - must withdraw any proposed instrument where a hearing has not commenced within five working days of the Amendment Act coming into force (unless exempted).
- 8.6. The Ministry for the Environment has published information on understanding plan stop [on their website](#). This report outlines key details most relevant to Horizons.

### EXEMPTIONS FROM A PLAN STOP

- 8.7. The Amendment Act provides for two exemption pathways: **automatic** and **ministerial**.
- 8.8. Councils may continue to notify 'proposed planning instruments' if it meets the criteria for an **automatic** exemption. These include instruments that:
- implement a national policy statement (NPS) published after 21 August 2025, where that NPS requires implementation before 31 December 2027;
  - relate to natural hazards;
  - give effect to obligations under a Treaty of Waitangi settlement Act or deed of settlement;
  - are freshwater planning instruments giving effect to the **National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM)** (these are the subject of an earlier pause and separate exemption framework).
- 8.9. Council is responsible for determining whether an automatic exemption applies.
- 8.10. If a proposed planning instrument does not meet the auto-exemption criteria, a council may apply to the Minister for the Environment for an exemption. The Minister may grant an exemption where the instrument would:
- rectify unintended consequences or inefficiencies in the current planning framework;
  - better enable climate change to be managed;
  - support the transition of high-risk land to reduce erosion risk;
  - better uphold Treaty settlement obligations;
  - enable a response to an Environment Court recommendation;
  - progress other matters the Minister considers appropriate.

### Existing One Plan review programme

- 8.11. Council is currently working on a number of changes or reviews of the One Plan. These are outlined in the table below.

Planning instrument	Purpose	Status
<b>Proposed Plan Change 2 (existing intensive farming land use)</b>	Address implementation issues and to give effect to the Regional Policy Statement	Under appeal, awaiting Environment Court decision
<b>Plan Change 3 (urban development)</b>	Give effect to the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020	Operative
<b>Highly Productive Land Plan Change</b>	Give effect to the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022	Some technical work underway. Previously required to be notified by 17 October 2025. The Minister has consulted on extending the deadline to 2027 or 2028.

<p><b>Freshwater plan review (Oranga Wai   Our Freshwater Future)</b></p>	<p><b>Give effect to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 and review the Resource Management Overview provisions under s79 of the RMA</b></p>	<p><b>Some technical work underway, other work has already been paused.</b></p> <p><b>Council previously agreed to notify by early 2027 (resolution 24-243)</b></p> <p><b>Council also agreed to expand the scope of the review to include the Resource Management Overview provisions (resolution SP 24-57).</b></p>
<p><b>Indigenous biodiversity Plan Review</b></p>	<p>Give effect to the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023</p>	<p>Minimal work underway; intended to commence work mid-2026.</p> <p>Range of implementation dates, the first plan change must be notified by 4 August 2028.</p>
<p><b>One Plan Sectional Review</b></p>	<p>Give effect to s79 of the RMA, and other national direction</p>	<p>Council previously agreed to a sectional or rolling review programme (resolution SP 24-57). No additional work was planned until mid-2028 outside the above plan reviews.</p>

## 9. DISCUSSION

### Consequences for the existing One Plan work programme

- 9.1. The commencement of the Plan Stop provisions under the Amendment Act requires changes to the One Plan review programme previously adopted by Council. As with previous reforms, Council must continue to implement the legislation as it stands, even as further reform is signalled by the Government.
- 9.2. Proposed Plan Change 2 (existing intensive farming land use) is unaffected by the Plan Stop, as it has progressed beyond a council-level hearing and is currently before the Environment Court.
- 9.3. The requirement to give effect to national policy statements has not been revoked, but their implementation timelines under the policy statements have been deferred. Council must still prepare planning instruments to implement these national directions but cannot notify them before 31 December 2027 unless an exemption applies.
- 9.4. The 10-year review requirements under s79 of the RMA has been suspended until 31 December 2027. This means Council is no longer required to undertake this review now, but will need to do so from 2028 if the RMA was to remain in force.

### Treaty Considerations

- 9.5. The Amendment Act provides for automatic exemption pathway to notify a planning instrument where that instrument gives effect to a Treaty settlement. A ministerial exemption pathway also exists where the planning instrument better enables any relevant Treaty of Waitangi settlement Act or deed of settlement, and the Crown's obligations under that settlement to be upheld (see 8.7 – 8.10).

- 9.6. Freshwater planning instruments are already subject to a separate legal pause under the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024, which prohibited freshwater plan notification until 31 December 2025. The Amendment Act's Plan Stop extends this constraint through to 31 December 2027, unless an exemption applies. However, freshwater plans required to give effect to Treaty settlement obligations retain their own exemption pathways under both regimes, recognising the importance of continuing Treaty-related planning where necessary.
- 9.7. Several Treaty settlements within the Horizons Region interact with Council's RMA plan making functions. For example, s38 of Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017, requires Council to consider initiating a One Plan review under s79 of the RMA following the approval of Te Heke Ngahuru ki Te Awa Tupua. Te Heke Ngahuru was approved in 2024.
- 9.8. A similar requirement exists under s124 of the Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act 2019, relating to Te Tāhoratanga o Te Waiū. However, this provision has not yet been triggered, as the first Te Tāhoratanga is still to be approved by Ngā Wai Tōtā.

#### **Other potential exemptions**

- 9.9. Council could elect to progress a plan change relating to natural hazards, which is an eligible exemption category. Officers have previously identified improvements needed in the One Plan's natural hazard provisions, which are housed largely in the regional policy statement. However, given the significant uncertainty about how regional policy statements will transition into the new system, careful consideration would be needed as to the merits of pursuing a plan change under this exemption.

#### **A future policy work programme**

- 9.10. Officers are reviewing the One Plan work programme in light of the Government's direction to focus council resources on preparing for the new resource management system. Cabinet has indicated a rapid transition to the new system. This will likely require Council to review and replace the One Plan on a much shorter timeframe than currently planned and budgeted. For instance, the Expert Advisory Group has suggested 12 months to prepare the region's first draft spatial plan.
- 9.11. Under the existing programme, work on certain topics such as the coastal environment, air quality and natural hazards, was not scheduled to begin until at least 2028. This work will now need to be brought forward and integrated into a broader, more holistic programme.
- 9.12. While some aspects of the Oranga Wai | Our Freshwater Future work programme have been paused in response to national direction and legislative uncertainty, other technical and policy work is continuing as it remains useful and appropriate. This includes work that can underpin or inform future freshwater planning decisions under the new resource management system. Over time, some of the work already completed may need to be updated or refreshed later to ensure that it remains current and fit-for-purpose for plan development or notification under the new system.
- 9.13. The immediate focus for the policy work programme will likely shift to building an evidence base across all domains (air, water (freshwater and coastal), soil, and ecosystems). This includes understanding the region's key resource management issues, development constraints and their locations, broad management options, and identifying key data or information gaps. Officers are currently scoping this work with a view to preparing Council for fast-paced implementation, particularly regional spatial plans, and will provide further advice to the incoming council.

### **10. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS**

- 10.1. Officers are currently reviewing the One Plan work programme and will bring further advice to a future Committee meeting. This includes identifying the workstreams required to

prepare Council for the transition to the new resource management system, and in particular the regional spatial plan. Given the Government has signalled a rapid implementation timeline from mid-2027, early preparation will be essential to position the Council for successful delivery under the new system and to support positive outcomes for the region's communities.

- 10.2. Officers are engaging with settled iwi on the impact of the Plan Stop amendments on the implementation of treaty settlements obligations and will bring advice to a future Committee meeting.

## 11. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Nicolaas Portegys

**TEAM LEADER POLICY**

Yvonne Legarth

**PRINCIPAL POLICY PLANNER**

Dr Elizabeth Daly

**GROUP MANAGER STRATEGY, REGULATION AND SCIENCE**

## ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.



Report No.	25-127
Information Only - No Decision Required	

## SCIENCE PROGRESS REPORT 2024/25

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this item is to provide members of Council's Strategy and Policy Committee with an overview of the Science team's activities from the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-127.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

### 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. This is a public item and therefore Council may deem this sufficient to inform the public.

### 5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There is no significant business risk associated with recommendations in this paper.

### 6. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 6.1. This report is for information only so there is no or minimal climate change impact. The impacts of climate change are considered across research programmes where possible.

### 7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Delivery of the Science work programme requires staff time to oversee the management of science portfolios, carry out monitoring and research, and provide support for policy effectiveness monitoring, policy development, and implementation. The role of the science team also includes the provision of technical advice and information to Horizons staff, Council and the public, as well as participation in national research programmes and reporting on the State of the Environment. This includes support for both regulatory functions such as consents and consents monitoring; and non-regulatory functions such as the Manawatū River Leaders Accord, land management – including the **Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI)**, and biodiversity and biosecurity work programmes.

- 7.2. Main activities for the year include:

- Coordinating the monitoring and reporting of water quantity for surface water and groundwater, and the quality of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coasts and groundwater.
- Swim spot monitoring at more than 80 sites during the bathing season (November to April inclusive).
- Freshwater science and research to support evidence-based policy development for the Oranga Wai process.
- Land, Fluvial, Biodiversity and Air monitoring and research.

- Annual State of the Environment reporting, public education campaigns and sharing our monitoring data via **Land Air Water Aotearoa (LAWA)**.

## 8. MONITORING PROGRAMMES

- 8.1. **Water Quality Monitoring** | Water quality monitoring is undertaken across rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries and groundwater bodies across the region. A total of 174 river and stream sites were monitored monthly for **State of the Environment (SoE)** and Point Discharge monitoring. The SoE monitoring continued at 17 lakes each month. Across the Region 6 estuary sites and 4 coastal sites were monitored each month. For groundwater 35 bores were sampled each quarter for groundwater quality for SoE monitoring.
- 8.2. **Contact Recreation** | Monitoring for contact recreation is undertaken at popular swimming spots across the region and was delivered collaboratively by a combination of Horizons staff from Science and Freshwater teams, and by Iwi. Monitoring occurs weekly from the start of November until end April, with results being uploaded weekly to the LAWA website. This programme includes 11 beaches, 10 estuaries, 4 lakes and 56 river/stream sites every week.
- 8.3. **Periphyton** | Periphyton is the community of algae, cyanobacteria and fungi living on the beds of rivers and streams (Figure 1). Periphyton is an important component of river ecosystems providing food and habitat for freshwater fish and invertebrates. However, excess periphyton due to nutrient enrichment can cause impacts on ecosystem health and recreational activities. Monthly monitoring has continued throughout the 2024-2025 financial year at 63 sites across the region. Data collected through this programme contributes to the assessment of river health and is, or will be, incorporated into state and trend reports for the Region's waterways.



*Figure 1: Periphyton on the bed of a river*

- 8.4. **Fish** | Freshwater fish monitoring is undertaken annually between December and March at twelve SoE sites. The presence or absence of fish is an important measure of ecosystem health in rivers and streams. For the 2024-2025 summer, five SoE and four exploratory sites were fished. The results are available in the New Zealand Freshwater Fish Database, administered by **National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA)**.



*Figure 2: Brown Trout (left); Redfin Bully (right)*

- 8.5. **Mudfish** | Mudfish monitoring is carried out annually during August and September to assess the presence or absence of mudfish populations. Unlike other freshwater fish species, mudfish require a specialised monitoring approach due to their unique habitat preferences. They are typically found in swampy lowland environments, including wetlands and slow-moving streams. In 2024, ten mudfish sites and were fished, including eight known and two exploratory sites. Mudfish were caught at seven out of the ten sites.



**Figure 1: Mudfish at Foxton Loop**

- 8.6. In 2024, ten sites were surveyed—eight known locations and two exploratory sites. Mudfish were detected at seven of the ten sites.

- 8.7. **Macroinvertebrates** | Freshwater aquatic macroinvertebrates provide a holistic view of water quality and ecosystem health. Annual sampling for freshwater macroinvertebrates was completed by the end of March 2025 for 106 sites (including National Environmental Monitoring Standards comparison sampling), with samples sent to the laboratories for processing. Results are expected in the middle to the end of the 2025-2026 financial year. All results are displayed on the LAWA website and are incorporated with relevant state and trends assessments as they are undertaken.
- 8.8. **Didymo and Golden Clam** | **Environmental DNA (eDNA)** survey sampling for golden clam (*Corbicula fluminea*) and didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*) was undertaken twice in the 2024-2025 FY period. Sampling was undertaken after periods of high recreational use at 5 sites. Golden clams are a highly invasive freshwater mollusc which were detected in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2023. For the financial year 2024-25 all results returned were negative.
- 8.9. **Continuous Lake Level** | Lake level is now continuously recorded at 13 sites in the Region and the data is available through the Envirodata website. Continuous monitoring substantially improves understanding of the variability in lake level to inform management actions. Lake levels at these sites were manually recorded monthly prior to their installation. The Environmental Data team undertook the installation of the monitoring equipment and will continue to maintain the recording sites and manage the data through their work programme.
- 8.10. **Continuous Dissolved Oxygen** | Continuous dissolved oxygen is monitored at 26 sites across the region spanning lakes and rivers. Dissolved oxygen is a key water quality attribute which fluctuates significantly on a daily cycle. Continuous monitoring provides a more holistic understanding of the fluctuation in levels including the frequency and duration of periods with low dissolved oxygen which can be stress aquatic biota. The Environmental Data team undertook the installation of the monitoring equipment and will continue to maintain the recording sites and manage the data through their work programme.
- 8.11. **Air Quality Monitoring** | Horizons performs **Beta Attenuation Mass (BAM)** monitoring for Particulate Matter less than 10 microns (PM10) and Particulate Matter less than 2.5 microns (PM2.5) at the two gazetted airsheds in the region – Taumarunui and Taihape. Air quality tends to be worse over cold periods and in locations with a higher density of wood-burning. The **National Environmental Standards for Air Quality (NES-AQ)** sets the limit on the PM10 daily average value as 50 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** guidelines for PM2.5 set the daily average limiting value as 15 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.
- 8.12. In Taumarunui there have been no exceedances for PM10 since 2016 (when there were 4 days which exceeded the NES-AQ limits). However, PM2.5 exceeded the WHO guidelines on 27 days in 2024.
- 8.13. In Taihape PM10 last exceeded the NES-AQ limits in 2023, but there were 63 days in 2024 where the WHO guidelines for PM2.5 were exceeded.

Monitoring location	Number of days PM10 NES-AQ guidelines exceeded in 2024 (vs 2023)	Number of days PM2.5 WHO guidelines exceeded in 2024 (vs 2023)
Taumarunui	0 (0)	27 (2023 data incomplete)
Taihape	0 (1)	63 (43)

- 8.14. In other parts of the region little is known about the quality of air. The science team has taken advice on how to identify other towns and locations in our region which may be hot-spots for poor air quality. A pilot study using low-cost sensors is currently being undertaken in Woodville.

## 9. FRESHWATER WORK PROGRAMME

- 9.1. Freshwater science and research is a significant focus for the Science Team. In the previous financial year the team contracted work with a number of Crown Research Institutes and environmental consultants. These work packages cover a range of topics in relation to the Oranga Wai process including surface water quality and quantity, groundwater quality and quantity and freshwater dependant threatened species.
- 9.2. **Estuary vulnerability** | A draft estuary vulnerability assessment has been received from SALT Ecology. This is the first part of a multistage contract to assess load reductions required to maintain/improve estuary health. It has been internally peer reviewed and is back with the SALT Ecology team for finalisation. The second part, which cover a risk assessment, is due at the end of September.

Roberts KL, Stevens LM, Forrest BM. (In Press). Estuary Contaminant Load Assessment Stage 1: Ecological Vulnerability Assessment of Horizons Estuaries. Salt Ecology Report 157, prepared for Horizons Regional Council, May 2025, 139p.

- 9.3. **Estuary water quality Targets** | In the 2023/2024 financial year NIWA provided recommendations for water quality targets for estuaries from a western science perspective (Dudley *et al.* 2024). During the 2024/2025 financial year these recommendations were reviewed internally and a technical report was drafted using this and local water quality information to provide recommendations for updating the estuary water quality targets in schedule 9 of the One Plan (Patterson M E., In Press). Both the NIWA report and the internal report were externally peer reviewed by **Pattle Delamore Partners (PDP)** (Madarasz –Smith, 2025). The Patterson (in press) report is currently in the final stages of production taking consideration of the peer review by PDP and the updated estuary typology from the estuary vulnerability assessment work in progress by SALT Ecology.
- 9.4. The Patterson (In press) report has identified that there is further work that needs to be undertaken to set nutrient concentration criteria and Mātauranga Māori targets and attributes for estuaries in the Region. The following paragraphs identify work streams necessary to complete this.
- 9.5. Nitrogen and phosphorus targets have not been explicitly recommended for estuaries at this point. The NIWA report recognises that there are gaps in information around estuary physiographics (for example the tidal prism - the volume of water that flows in and out of an estuary with the tide) limiting the ability to suggest Target Attribute State for these estuaries. In the meantime, the NIWA recommendation is to utilise conservative provisional values as targets for all estuaries. The current work with SALT ecology in partnership with NIWA and DHI Group will provide a priority group of estuaries that are identified as being vulnerable to nutrients and/or sediment. In these estuaries, the previously identified instream load reductions of nitrogen and phosphorus necessary for other attributes may not provide for estuary health. This priority list will guide future work defining information needs.
- 9.6. Mātauranga Māori targets and attributes need to be identified for estuaries where appropriate. This is not something western science can provide although it may be determined that there are western science indicators that can be used. It is recommended that a work programme is developed with iwi and hapū including identification of such attributes and targets and these are added into the tables.

Patterson M.E., (In Press) Recommended Target Attributes States for Estuaries in the Manawatu- Whanganui Region. Technical report to support policy development.

Madarasz-Smith A., (2025) Peer Review of the Water Quality Targets for Estuaries in the

Horizons Region. Memorandum prepared for Horizons Regional Council by PDP Napier. Horizons Report Number 2025/EXT/1968. ISBN 978-1-991351-74-6.

- 9.7. **Assessment of Nutrient Load Reductions – model platform update** | LWP Ltd were engaged to extend previous load reduction modelling to include requirements for estuaries and lake water quality, alongside rivers and streams. The end goal of this work is to be able to produce nutrient load reductions required in each water management sub-area, accounting for nutrient-sensitive downstream receiving environments (lakes and estuaries). The updated model also enables more flexibility in setting different targets in different areas. The outputs included both a technical report, and the code necessary to undertake this modelling in-house. This will allow a range of scenarios to be tested.

Fraser C., (2024) Assessment of load reductions required for rivers, lakes and estuaries of the Manawatu-Whanganui Region Model Platform Update. Prepared for Horizons Regional Council by Land Water People Limited, Christchurch. Horizons Regional Council Report Number 2025/EXT/1955, ISBN 978-1-991351-61-6

- 9.8. **Sediment** | During the 2024/2025 financial year, work continued to improve our understanding of sediment sources, the level of work and the risk of sediment mobilisation post forestry harvest. Manaaki Whenua were contracted to provide:
- An estimation of relative contribution of sediment from native cover vs. pasture cover based on work undertaken in the Taranaki Region. This will enable us to determine the load of sediment that cannot be reduced through management interventions and enable better communication of the split of different sources with the community.
  - Advice around plantation forestry and the window of vulnerability post-harvest which can increase erosion susceptibility. Although the National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry is set to remove requirements around the **National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM)**, the requirements around the NZ Coastal Policy Statement remain. As such estuaries vulnerable to sedimentation will need to be considered with regards to rules on plantation forestry.
  - An estimate of the increase in area of erosion mitigation options modelled in 2022-23 on a sub-area basis. This will give us information to ensure the land use is as consistent as practicable across all bio-physical models used for modelling mitigation scenarios.
- 9.9. **SedNetNZ modelling to assess suspended sediment contributions from natural cover areas** | Natural cover comprises 35% of the region (15–55% across **Freshwater Management Units (FMU)**) and is estimated to contribute 1.1 Mt/yr or 12% of the regional suspended sediment load based on land use as at 2018 and SLUI works to 2021. As we implement mitigations going forward (Implementing SLUI and freshwater programmes at different rates as outlined in the work of Vale et al 2024) this proportion coming from natural cover increases to 24 – 31% by 2100. This is because the amount coming from natural cover remains the same, while other land uses contribute less (as they are mitigated through works) making the natural cover a larger proportion. These contributions vary across the different FMUs.
- 9.10. An estimated 160 km or 0.4% of the stream network cannot achieve the National Bottom Line for suspended fine sediment under the modelled mitigation scenarios, because the required reductions are greater than the sediment load from areas with non-natural cover (i.e. the proportion able to be mitigated).

- 9.11. **Estimating areas of erosion mitigation works in SedNetNZ scenario modelling |** Areas of erosion mitigation works completed across the FMUs were estimated to be 1,648– 4,375 ha/yr (mean 3,012 ha/yr) under current implementation rates and 2,028– 5,409 ha/yr (mean 3,720 ha/yr) under accelerated implementation rates. Larger FMUs (Whanganui, Rangitikei-Turakina, and Manawatū) have the highest rates (up to 1,084 ha/yr), while smaller FMUs such as Kai Iwi and Waiopehu have much lower rates (as low as 7 ha/yr).
- 9.12. Estimated area of erosion mitigation type were based on actual implementation rates (Vale & Smith 2023). These are: afforestation (44%), bush retirement (30%), space planting (14%), riparian planting (10%), and gully planting (2%). The modelled future implementation of works generally align with these proportions, varying within each FMU based on the farm priority class and erosion terrain.
- 9.13. **Spatial index of susceptibility to post-harvest shallow landslide erosion |** The spatial index provides an indication of the susceptibility to increases in shallow landslide erosion from forest harvesting that may occur on average over multiple rotations relative to permanent forest cover under steady-state conditions.
- 9.14. The susceptibility index based on a landslide-triggering rainfall threshold of 125 mm in 48 hr was recommended over other thresholds. The index can be used in combination with current or future spatial information on land cover/use to assess susceptibility to post-harvest landslide erosion relative to a non-harvest alternative.

Vale S., Smith H. and Neverman A., (2025) SedNetNZ modelling and analysis of natural cover, erosion mitigation and post-harvest scenarios in the Horizons Region. Report prepared for Horizons Regional Council by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, Palmerston North. Horizons Regional Council Report no. 2025/EXT/1976. ISBN 978-1-991351-80-7.

- 9.15. **Review of Cawthron River Targets Report |** Traverse Environmental were contracted to conduct a peer review of the Cawthron report: *Review of compatibility of Horizons One Plan Targets with attributes and limits of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management* (Eveleens et al, 2023) and the councils review of One Plan targets memorandum (dated 9 December 2022). They produced a letter outlining the findings of the review and workshopped the review and recommendations with Science and Policy staff.
- 9.16. The review identified that overall the report is well set out, easy to read and meets the original work scope. However,
- The implications of adding additional “regional” attributes over and above the compulsory attributes in the NPS-FM had not been considered in its entirety and have recommended some changes in the scope of attributes. This includes a recommendation that council should look at what attributes might only apply in certain circumstances such as below a point -sourced discharge.
  - More consideration needs to be given to the proposed periphyton attributes. For example given the National Objectives Framework identifies chlorophyll a as biomass a mandatory attribute for ecosystem health, the use of periphyton cover for this value as well is not required.
  - The proposed band B chlorophyll a target for natural form and character/ amenity values and threatened species was not supported with technical evidence that the value requires a more stringent target than that identified for aquatic ecosystem health.
- 9.17. The next steps in this work stream is to close off this package of work by undertaking an assessment of all of the proposed attributes for river water quality looking at the suitability

and implications of having the attribute in the plan and making recommendations for the future use of attributes in policy development.

Milne J., Ausseil O., and Heath M., (2025) Review of Cawthron's One Plan targets review report. Letter prepared for Horizons Regional Council by Traverse Environmental Wellington.

- 9.18. **Flow Naturalisation** | Traverse Environmental and subcontractors Headwaters Hydrology were engaged to derive and report on naturalised flow records and estimate naturalised 1-day and 7-day **mean annual low flow (MALF)**, mean and median flow statistics for all flow recorder sites in the Rangitikei and Manawatū Catchments.
- 9.19. The Rangitikei naturalisation report provides estimates of naturalised flow statistics for the Rangitikei catchment for the period 2004 to 2024 and describes the method used to naturalise the river flow records. In the context of this report, flow naturalisation refers to removing the effect of consented abstractions and discharges on river flows. The influences of the **Tongariro Power Development (TPD)** (specifically, abstraction from the upper Moawhango River and flushing flow releases from the Moawhango Dam, which impact flow in the Rangitikei River downstream of the Moawhango confluence), permitted water abstractions and permitted discharges are not considered in this report. The naturalised flow statistics indicate low depletion of the Rangitikei River as a result of consented abstraction (excluding the abstraction associated with the TPD).
- 9.20. The Manawatū naturalisation report provides estimates of naturalised flow statistics for the Manawatū catchment for the period 2000 to 2024. In the context of this report, flow naturalisation refers to removing the effect of consented abstractions and municipal wastewater discharges on river flows. The influences of the Mangahao Power scheme, permitted water abstractions, industrial and agricultural discharges, and small dams were not considered in the flow naturalisation method. The naturalised mean, median and summertime (December to March) median river flow statistics at nearly all sites were within 5% of the measured flow statistics, indicating overall low alteration of river flows. The exceptions were the small tributaries utilised for public water supply (Tamaki River, Mangapapa Stream and Turitea Stream), where a larger difference between measured and naturalised mean, median and summertime median flows was estimated to have occurred. The naturalised MALF were up to 5% higher than measured MALF at sites on the mainstem Manawatū River and up to 27% higher in the tributary sites (excluding Turitea Stream). Again, the small tributaries that are utilised for public water supply showed the largest relative difference between naturalised and measured flows. The naturalised MALF for Turitea Stream downstream of the dam was estimated to be nearly three times higher than the measured MALF.

Keenan L, and Kitteridge M., (2025), Naturalised flow statistics for the Rangitikei Catchment. Report prepared for Horizons Regional Council by Traverse Environmental Ltd. Wellington., Horizons Report no. 2025/EXT/1969, ISBN 978-1-99-1351-75-3

Keenan L, and Kitteridge M., (2025), Naturalised flow statistics for the Manawatū Catchment. Report prepared for Horizons Regional Council by Traverse Environmental Ltd. Wellington.

- 9.21. **Regional Threat Assessment for Freshwater Fishes** | A Regional Threat Assessment was completed for freshwater fish in May 2024, with the report finalised February 2025. The purpose of this assessment was to provide insight into the state of regional fish populations, identify the most threatened species in the Region and support targeted and

effective management of freshwater fish. The report also summarises the primary drivers of decline of threatened fish species in the Region.

- 9.22. Thirty-eight species were identified as occurring currently or historically in the Region, and each was assigned a regional conservation status based on population state and trend. Fifteen indigenous species were identified as Regionally Threatened or At Risk, indicating that regional pressures have resulted in considerable population declines. The most threatened species, the Regionally Critical giant kōkopu, is vulnerable to regional extirpation (local extinction). The results of this assessment are being used to inform decisions regarding the implementation of a threatened species framework in the Oranga Wai process. Additionally, these results may be used to inform future monitoring network design and drive research initiatives.

Hickey L., Dunn N., Baker C., Brown L., Patterson M., Cook L., (2025), Regional Threat Assessment – Freshwater Fishes, Prepared by Horizons Regional Council Palmerston North. Horizons Regional Council Report Number 2025/EXT/1945, ISBN 978-1-991351-54-8.

Hickey L., Cook L., Portegys N., Kendrew J., (2024), Inclusion of Regionally Threatened freshwater fish in the NPS-FM Threatened Species Framework , Memorandum prepared by Horizons Regional Council Palmerston North.

- 9.23. **Implementing NPS-FM Clause 3.26(2) |** Clause 3.26 of the NPS-FM requires regional councils to address fish passage by incorporating objectives and policies into their regional plan and preparing an action plan. A report was prepared that summarises the information requirements of this clause, including identification of desired species, undesired species and desired species habitat. A recommendation was made that fish passage is impeded via exclusion barriers at specific locations to protect dwarf galaxiids in the Horizons Region.

Hickey L., (2025), NPS-FM Clause 3.26(2) Information requirements and recommendations, Prepared by Horizons Regional Council Palmerston North.

- 9.24. **Lakes Surface Bacterial Trophic Index (SBTI) |** Understanding the health of our lakes is important in order to effectively manage resource use to ensure the balance between lake health and resource use. Currently our lake monitoring is focussed on the lakes within the coastal dune area. However, there are a number of other lake types across the Region that we rely on modelling to inform decisions.
- 9.25. Work undertaken during the Lakes380 programme and subsequent consultancy reports provided by Cawthron Institute for Horizons (Cawthron report 3793, 3949, 4000) used statistical modelling, survey calibration and palaeolimnological approaches to estimate the current water quality and past lake reference condition. This work highlighted the need to validate these approaches by the collection of physical data from a selection of representative lakes in the Manawatū-Whanganui Region. A key recommendation was to undertake a baseline / validation one-off sampling campaign of representative lakes. The baseline/validation sampling campaign of up to 33 representative lakes commenced during the 2024/2025 financial year and will continue into the 2025/2026 financial year. This monitoring is being delivered by The Earth Sciences Institute (formerly the GNS part of the institute) and Lincoln University in collaboration with staff from Horizons.
- 9.26. During the 2024/2025 financial year sampling was undertaken on 7 of the 33 proposed lakes. The sampling included samples of Lake surface sediment, water quality sampling, sediment cores (at selected lakes) and analysis for SBTI.

- 9.27. **Wetland Mapping** | A project plan was produced to lay out the objectives, timeframe and methodology for mapping the region's wetlands by 2030. This was peer reviewed by Senior Scientist Biodiversity Roger Uys and Senior Wetland Scientist Helen White from Greater Wellington Regional Council.
- 9.28. The project objective is to map all wetlands in the Horizons region down to 0.05 ha in size or less if naturally smaller, excluding wetlands under forest cover, and excluding Public Conservation Land and Defence Force land. This results in 13,357km<sup>2</sup> of land to cover. Mapping will be done primarily via desktop identification using aerial imagery with field assessments where possible to determine extent and wetland type. The methodology follows the best practice guidance produced by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research for regional councils.
- 9.29. Wetland mapping will be carried out with internal resourcing. A Research Associate for Wetlands was recruited and mapping began in high priority areas of the region.

Cook, L., Macdonald, A., Chawla, S. (2025). Horizons Regional Council Wetland Mapping Project Plan. Prepared by Horizons Regional Council Palmerston North.

- 9.30. **Santoft Numerical Model Review** | Declining groundwater trends have been identified in the Santoft area since around 2007. In 2013 – 2014 they were assessed via Eigen modelling and water abstraction was considered the most likely cause. A numerical model was developed and went through several rounds of review and iteration from 2015 – 2023 to produce the updated numerical model.
- 9.31. In 2024 the updated numerical model was peer reviewed by experts at Stantec and the recommendations were shared with the stakeholders including the model developer at PDP. The model developer and the reviewer agreed to develop a new model and incorporate suggested changes.

Zarour, H., Santoft Groundwater Model and Rangitikei Groundwater Management Zone Allocation Limit -Technical Review, prepared by Stantec New Zealand. Horizons Regional Council Report No. 2024/EXT/1874 ISBN 978-1-99-106183-6.

- 9.32. **Response to the Stantec Review of the Santoft Model** | The Stantec review of the Santoft ground water numerical model recommended modifications to the numerical model to improve its reliability and predictability. As a next step a technical expert conference was organised between the model developer, model reviewer and the Groundwater scientist from Horizons Regional Council. The experts discussed the report's comments to determine the focus of the next steps.
- 9.33. In summary, the model developer agreed to the recommendations and that a new model needs to be developed to improve its reliability and predictability.

Thomas, N., Response to the Stantec review of the Santoft model and next steps -Technical Review, prepared by PDP New Zealand.

- 9.34. **Santoft – trigger level methodology** | This work is to support the regulatory team with processing consent applications in the Santoft area and built upon the Santoft Groundwater Model and the Rangitikei zone allocation study.
- 9.35. The goal of this work was to outline a methodology for setting trigger levels by applying a dynamic limit to annual volumes, ensuring that further groundwater decline can be

effectively managed. The proposed trigger level methodology was shared with consent applicants and their representative environmental consultants via email for their feedback.

- 9.36. **Policy Support – Water Quality Targets Report** | To implement the NPS-FM for groundwater, **Horizons Regional Council (HRC)** engaged PDP to develop a set of groundwater attributes for the values identified in the NPS-FM. The results of this work were presented in a report that is based on the groundwater data collected through the SoE monitoring network of Horizons Regional Council. The report is in draft under internal review.
- 9.37. **Massey PhD support** | Horizons Regional Council and Massey University signed an agreement to support and provide a direct contribution to four PhD signed on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2018. Two of the four PhD's have been completed (in 2019) and a third one is in progress.
- 9.38. The third PhD is focused on refining estimates of nitrogen attenuation in New Zealand to inform modelling of catchment water quality management scenarios. Two papers have been published from this work during the financial year. The first paper assesses an available groundwater quality dataset from across New Zealand landscapes to characterise the spatial variability and temporal stability of groundwater redox conditions against landscape hydrogeochemical characteristics. The second paper applies the learnings from the first to model and map a subsurface nitrate- attenuation index in the Manawatū-Whanganui Region. The findings of this work was presented to staff in a workshop in June.

Collins S.B., Singh R., Mead S.R., Horne D.J., Roygard J.K.F. (2025) Assessment of spatial variability and temporal stability of groundwater redox conditions in New Zealand. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* 197,58 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-024-13427-y>

Collins S.B., Singh R., Mead S.R., Horne D.J., (2025) Modelling and mapping of subsurface nitrate-attenuation index in agricultural landscapes. *Journal of Environmental Management* 384 (2025) 125628.

- 9.39. **PFAS Monitoring Programme - review** | Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), is used for their resistance properties in products like firefighting foam and was found to have contaminated water at Palmerston North Airport and Ohakea Air Base. Testing in 2017 found high levels at Ohakea, prompting investigations, alternative water supplies, and a 3D model to track the contamination as it travelled through the environment.
- 9.40. Since October 2020, PFAS levels in surface and groundwater have been monitored biannually by Horizons Regional Council and **New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF)**. In 2024, the monitoring programme was put on hold. The NZDF organised a review of the existing data/information to develop a long-term monitoring plan, with a peer review set for 2025–26.
- 9.41. **Horowhenua Groundwater Management Zone Integrated Management** | PDP prepared a report to support improved groundwater management in the Horowhenua Groundwater Management Area. The objectives were to define updated subareas based on groundwater dynamics, assess the effects of groundwater abstraction on surface water bodies, and propose an integrated management approach for groundwater and surface water.
- 9.42. A numerical groundwater model was developed and calibrated using regional hydrological data, including rivers and lakes (notably Lake Horowhenua and Lake Waiwiri). Based on model results, three subzones were defined: a coastal subzone, a lakes subzone, and a streams subzone. These can be managed separately.
- 9.43. The model showed that current groundwater abstraction has limited impact on most surface water bodies in this area. However, more significant effects are observed in Lake

Horowhenua (approx. 30 L/s reduction) and the Ōhau River (approx. 20 L/s from consented pumping). Impacts on Lake Waiwiri are uncertain due to limited data.

- 9.44. An integrated allocation approach is proposed, combining surface and groundwater takes under a single allocation limit based on stream depletion effects. This approach may lead to over allocation in the Manakau subzone but is unlikely to have these issues in the Waikawa and Ōhau subzones.
- 9.45. For the lakes, no formal surface water allocation limits currently exist. Applying a 10% of MALF approach would imply an allocation limit of about 60 L/s for Lake Horowhenua, close to the current estimated abstraction impacts (67 L/s). Further investigation into lake health impacts is recommended before setting limits.
- 9.46. In the coastal subzone, rather than an integrated approach, a specific allocation limit based on 25% of annual groundwater recharge is proposed to mitigate the risk of saline (saltwater) intrusion.

Thomas, N., (2024), Horowhenua Groundwater Management Zone, Integrated Management, Prepared by PDP. Horizons Regional Council Report No. 2024/EXT/1936 ISBN 978-1-991351-44-9

- 9.47. **Source Water Risk Management Area Update** | An initial review was undertaken by PDP to review the drinking water **Source Protection Zones (SPZ)** delineated in 2019. The review investigated which of the currently mapped SPZ's would need updating to align with the new Ministry for the Environment 2023 guidelines for **Source Water Risk Management Areas (SWRMA)**. This initial review was undertaken during the 2024/2025 financial year.
- 9.48. The review identified 37 sources which need updating. The process of updating these sources includes increasing the SWRMA1/SPZ1 to a 5m radius around bores, increasing SWRMA2/SPZ2 from 2km to 2.5km, and/or defining sources as conjunctive, in line with the updated guidelines. This will be undertaken during the 2025/26 financial year.

## 10. LAND AND FLUVIAL RESEARCH

- 10.1. **S-map Upper Manawatū** | In partnership with the Ministry of Primary Industries, HRC contracted Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research to map the soils of Upper Manawatū as part of the S-map programme. The contracted area is 150,700 hectares (shown in [Figure 4](#)). The mapping work started in 2021 and finished in June 2025. The primary output is S-map data to be published on S-map Online, the Land Resource Information System (LRIS) data portal, and Overseer B2B. This data will be available from August 2025 via the LRIS portal. A report outlining the methodology and outputs has been produced to support the data.

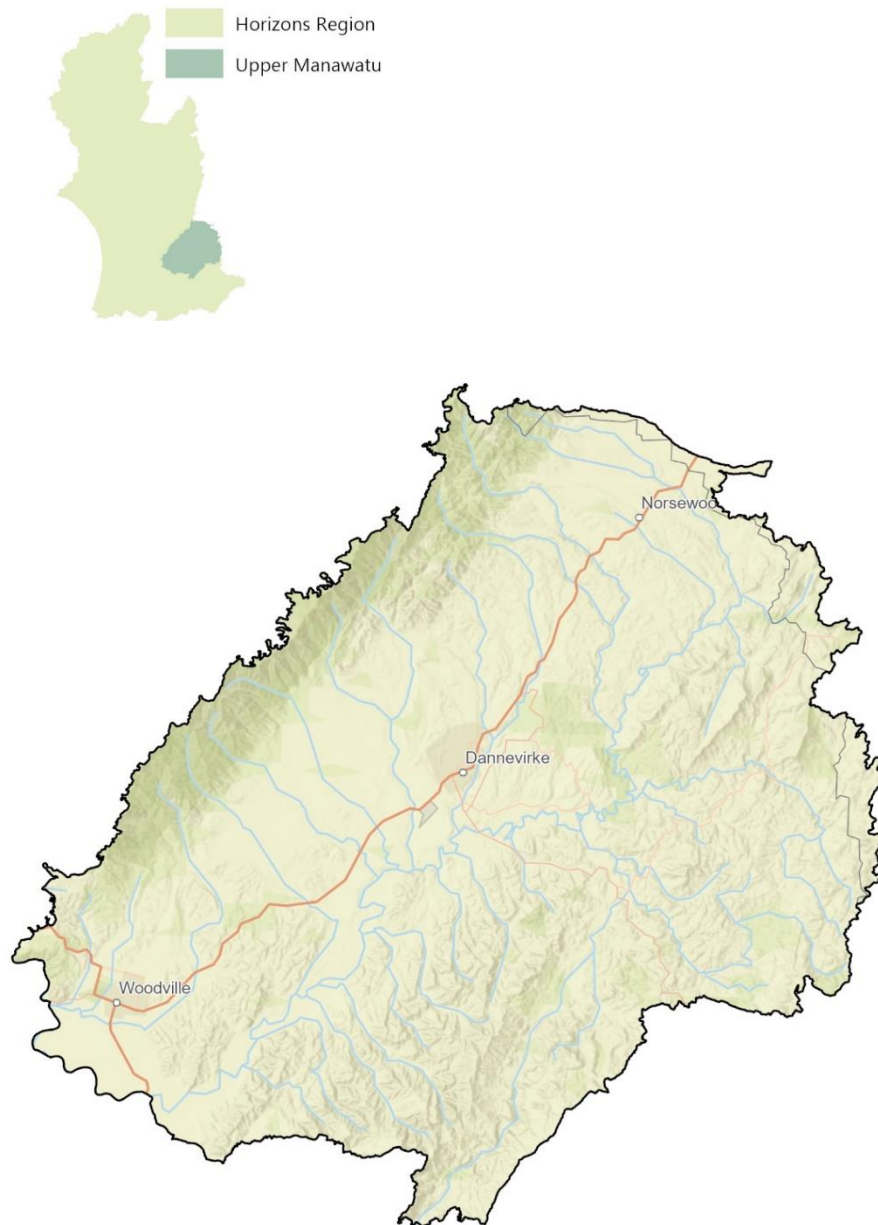


Figure 4: Upper Manawatu S-Map area

Ward A., Manderson A., McCollum K and Palmer A. (2025) S-map Upper Manawatu, Report prepared for Horizons Regional Council by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research Palmerston North.

- 10.2. **Onsite Wastewater** | The Manual for On-site Wastewater Systems Design and Management (2010) review stage 1 was completed which gave a comparative review of the manual with other approaches in New Zealand and internationally. This was to assess whether there were more relevant approaches available since the last manual update was completed in 2010 or if the Horizons approach was still appropriate. The report recommended that the current manual, with updates, would be suitable for ongoing use as a design guideline. The report remains in draft form for consultation, with finalisation to occur in the 2025/26 financial year.

- 10.3. **Fluvial cross sections** | The Environmental Data Survey team have completed most of the cross-sectional survey of the Rangitīkei River this year. The lowest 10 km to the sea remains to be completed due to requiring particular river conditions. It is scheduled in the 2025-26 year.
- 10.4. **Digital Surface Model** | Horizons commissioned the generation of a Digital Surface Model for the region based on 2022/2023 imagery. This is a spatial dataset with many potential applications across the organisation but for the fluvial programme in particular, it will be used to identify river geomorphological characteristics as well as identify changes over time when used in conjunction with the 2016 Digital Surface Model (acquired previously).

## 11. BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH

- 11.1. **Chilean needle grass gravel trial** | A two-year research project began in association with Hawkes Bay Regional Council, Environment Canterbury and AgResearch, to investigate the impacts of gravel extraction on the survival of invasive weed seeds such as Chilean needle grass. It involves spiking gravel with known amounts of weed seeds and putting the gravel through different types of processing.
- 11.2. To date results show a major reductions in weed seeds germinating under sieving and crushing processing of the gravel, with moderate reductions with crushing only. Additional treatments and strategies will be applied in the coming year, with formal reporting occurring in the second year.
- 11.3. **River and coastal shorebird survey** | Between November 2024 and January 2025, the rivers and coastline of the Horizons region were surveyed for birds, with a focus on native shorebirds that utilise these habitats for breeding. These are the banded dotterel (with a national threat ranking of At Risk, Declining), South Island pied oystercatcher (At Risk, Declining), black-billed gull (At Risk, Declining), and black-fronted dotterel (At Risk, Naturally Uncommon).
- 11.4. This survey completed a wider study of river and coasts of the lower North Island in suitable shorebird habitat. It was conducted by experienced ornithologists who have previously led similar surveys in the Hawkes Bay, Wellington, Canterbury and Marlborough regions.
- 11.5. A total of 58 bird species was recorded during the survey, including 37 native or endemic species, 16 of which are ranked as either Nationally or Regionally Threatened or At Risk under the New Zealand Threat Classification System.
- 11.6. A total of 509 adult banded dotterels were counted, representing 2.7% of the global population of this species. Both the Rangitīkei and Manawatū Rivers support internationally significant numbers of banded dotterels and therefore qualify to be recognised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.
- 11.7. The region was found to be a national stronghold for black-fronted dotterels. A total of 806 were counted during the survey, representing 31% of the national population of this species. The Rangitīkei, Manawatū and Oroua Rivers all support internationally significant numbers.
- 11.8. South Island pied oystercatchers have colonised the rivers of the Horizons region since the late 1990s and a total of 55 adult birds were counted during this survey, representing 68% of the North Island breeding population.
- 11.9. The results of the survey highlight the fact that river management decisions made by Horizons not only affect the biodiversity values of rivers within this region but also those at

national and international scales. Such information is critically important for informing policy development around activities in these areas.

- 11.10. The coastal survey reconfirmed the importance of the Manawatū Estuary as a hotspot for shore and sea birds in the region. The Ōhau River mouth and Cape Turnagain coasts were also found to be important refuges for shorebirds in the region. Being quieter with less foot and motorized traffic, these were the only spots where the Nationally Endangered New Zealand dotterel was found to be breeding.

McArthur, N.; Bauckham, R.; Cook, L.; Gregg, E.; Porter, A.; Toy, R., Tuffley, C. (2025). A baseline survey of the abundance and distribution of riverbed-nesting shorebirds on the rivers of the Manawatū-Whanganui region. Client report prepared for Horizons Regional Council, Palmerston North.

McArthur, N.; Bauckham, R.; Cook, L.; Toy, R. (2025). A baseline survey of the abundance and distribution of birds on the coastline of the Manawatū-Whanganui region. Client report prepared for Horizons Regional Council, Palmerston North.

## 12. AIR QUALITY RESEARCH

- 12.1. **Investigative monitoring plan** | The Air Quality Collective was contracted to develop an investigative monitoring plan for air quality in the Horizons region, with a focus on Palmerston North, Whanganui, and some regional towns. The report was to outline how Horizons could use low-cost clarity sensors to identify a) where within Palmerston North and Whanganui air quality problems (PM10 and PM2.5) exist (if any), and b) where air quality problems exist in smaller settlements in the region (if any).
- 12.2. Horizons currently monitors fine particle levels (PM10 and PM2.5) at the two gazetted airsheds in the Region, Taumarunui and Taihape. The National Environmental Standards for Air Quality (NES-AQ) requires establishment of airsheds where monitoring shows breaches of the National Environmental Standards. The One Plan requires monitoring in other parts of the region where practicable. However, there has been no monitoring of PM10 outside of the two airsheds for approximately 20 years.
- 12.3. In Horizon's 2024-2034 Long Term Plan, additional funding was allocated for increased air quality monitoring across the region. This report was procured to allow Horizons to define a practical and cost effective way to identify "hot spots" of poor air quality in the region. Once these hot spots are identified further work will be required to determine if long-term compliance monitoring (using BAM) is necessary.
- 12.4. Three methods of hot spot identification were discussed in the report. Emission-dispersion modelling, mobile monitoring, and grid monitoring. Grid monitoring was recommended as a lower-cost, robust way to identify locations of poor air quality in a city or town as it is scalable, has low demand on human labor, is the least prone to error, and it is less complicated to analyse the results. This monitoring method involves placing multiple lower-cost sensors in a grid across an airshed simultaneously which gives a spatial quantification of air quality in a town or city. These sensors are battery powered and have a solar panel to maintain a charge, and can easily be mounted on existing infrastructure such as light-poles or bus stops. The grid of sensors is typically deployed for a three-month period over winter, and data is transmitted at regular intervals to a cloud server.
- 12.5. The report contains a schedule to perform grid monitoring in Woodville, Palmerston North, Whanganui, Ohakune, Feilding, Levin, Dannevirke, Ashurst, and Pahiatua between Q3 2025 - Q4 2029. Depending on the city or town being monitored, this plan would use between 9 and 28 clarity sensors in a grid monitoring layout at any one time. An alternative rapid schedule was also defined for the same towns and cities between Q3 2025 - Q4 2027, but would use between 21 - 44 sensors at one time and thus would be more costly in

any given year, but less costly over the 4 year period. Multiple options were presented for coverage in each city or town. For example, options were presented to monitor Palmerston North with 20, 21, 27, or 35 sensors, which represent a balance of cost versus coverage of the city. A pilot study of grid monitoring using nine clarity sensors is currently underway in Woodville.

Longley I. (2025) Investigative monitoring plan for air quality in the Horizons region, Report prepared for Horizons Regional Council by The Air Quality Collective.

### 13. EVIDENCE, ADVICE AND DATA PROVISION

- 13.1. **Land Air Water Aotearoa** | The science team provided data to the end of June 2023 for surface water quality, lakes, contact recreation and macroinvertebrates to the LAWA database. This data results in a large portion of the regions environmental data being made readily available for public consumption. This data is now available on the website: <https://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/manawatu-whanganui-region>.
- 13.2. **Data Requests** | The science team responded to 442 data and information requests relating to water quality (lakes, rivers estuaries, groundwater), freshwater biomonitoring, groundwater and water allocation, and 139 requests relating to biodiversity. This includes only requests to the Science team; the Environmental Data team oversee the provision of data requests for all continuous monitoring e.g. river flow, levels and rainfall. Requests were received from both internal (other teams with the council) and external clients.
- 13.3. **Habitat Assessments** | Habitat assessments continue to be provided, as requested by the public or the regulatory team (consents and consents monitoring), to identify Threatened, At Risk or Rare habitats as defined in the One Plan. These also now include assessments of wetland presence and extent as wetlands are defined in the NPS-FM.
- 13.4. **Regulatory Support** | The Science Team continue to provide support for the Regulatory Team. This includes technical advice and ecological assessments as required for resource consents. Advice is also provided for consents monitoring for cases that involve Schedule 6 habitats, wetlands as per the NPS-FM definition or native fauna, and offences impacting water quality.
- 13.5. **Biodiversity Strategic Direction** | Technical advice and direction was provided to the Biodiversity team Priority Habitats Programme in terms of identification of ecosystem types and sites for prioritisation. Biodiversity monitoring methods for forest condition are in year two of an investigation project through Envirolink funding with Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research.
- 13.6. **Environmental DNA (eDNA)** | The Science Team has developed a Python program that automatically downloads publicly available eDNA sampling data and checks for detections of species of interest. This leverages monitoring undertaken both by Horizons staff, but also by members of the community or other organisations. As a result, routine eDNA monitoring of rivers and lakes across the region has led to incidental detections of pest species. Recent eDNA sampling identified Rum Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) in a previously unrecorded location in northern Whanganui. Additionally, Senegal Tea (*Gymnocoronis spilanthoides*) was detected in the Manawatū near Tokomaru. These incidental findings are now being used by the Biosecurity team to inform targeted communication strategies and active surveillance in the areas of detection.
- 13.7. **Manawatū Accord Support** | During this period the Manawatū Leaders Accord set out to form their third generation action plan and incorporate the newly developed Mātauranga-a-Iwi framework in to this plan. The science team were asked to work alongside Dr Hone Morris and Dr Jonathon Proctor from Massey University to weave western science into the Manawatū River Mātauranga-a-Iwi framework and provide the state and trends of water

quality in the catchment in a presentation for the Manawatū River Leaders Forum meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2025. The presentation focused on different sub-areas of the Manawatū Catchment presenting the identified key issues in each sub area and an example of how different actions undertaken by the accord partners have contributed to improvement in the state of the sub-area and where these actions sit in the Mātauranga-a-Iwi framework.

- 13.8. **Plan Change 2** | The Science Team continued to support Plan Change 2. This support has been as part of the working group looking at the implementation roll out of the Plan Change once a decision has been received from the court.

#### 14. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

- 14.1. The Environmental Reporting activity includes state of environment reporting, science communication, provision of environmental data to the [Envirodata Portal](#) and [Horizons](#) websites and undertaking public education campaigns.
- 14.2. **Science Communication** | An important part of the science team activity is to ensure up-to-date and relevant scientific information is effectively communicated to Horizons' staff, Councillors, consent holders, iwi, the public, and any other parties interested in aspects of natural resource management. Over the 2024/2025 financial year, Horizons' Science & Innovation and Communications teams produced two science-based public education campaigns.
- 14.3. **Good Wood | 2024-2025 Air quality public education campaign** | This year, the Science and Communications teams split the annual air quality campaign into two distinct parts to avoid conflating messages and to target specific communities:
- 14.4. *Outdoor burning (December 2024 - March 2025)* - This campaign aimed to discourage outdoor burning practices and also promote Horizons' Pollution Hotline. The content encouraged people to dispose of waste through transfer stations, composting and recycling instead of burning it in the backyard, where it contributes to poor air quality, and consequently, adverse health outcomes and annoys neighbours.
- 14.5. The messaging targeted the region's urban population, more specifically, Palmerston North communities. The majority of calls to the Pollution Hotline are triggered by smoke-producing activities, like people burning waste in their backyard. Of these, Palmerston North residents report the highest number of incidents across the region. Our consents monitoring duty officers spend much of their time responding to these reports.
- 14.6. The campaign's messages reached audiences via the following methods:
- Two radio advertisements broadcast across the region's Mediaworks networks, Peak FM, and Ski FM;
  - Phantom Billstickers campaign across Palmerston North's central business district (six posters);
  - Three social media posts on Horizons' channels (Facebook and Instagram).
- 14.7. *Good Wood (December 2024 - July 2025)* - The "Good Wood" campaign informs communities about early collection and storage of firewood, efficient ways to run wood burners, and recommends upgrading to compliant heating alternatives. The campaign also explains why these actions are important for air quality and the flow-on effects on human health. This year, we spent our efforts targeting communities in Taumarunui and Taihape. Horizons' two gazetted airsheds that are more prone to lower standards of air quality.

- 14.8. The campaign's messages reached audiences via the following methods:
- Five social media posts on Horizons' channels (Facebook and Instagram)  
Two social media posts each on Ruapehu and Rangitikei District Councils' channels (Facebook);
  - Two newspaper advertisements published in three mastheads: Talk Taihape, the District Monitor, and the Taumaranui Bulletin.
- 14.9. For the entire air quality campaign, we adopted a flexible approach to our social media content, allowing us to change materials depending on the levels of engagement. We also circulated messages from the full air quality campaign via:
- One article summarising the campaign in April 2025's edition of *Across the Region*;
  - Two media releases: one in February and the other in July 2025.
- 14.10. **Under the Microscope | 2025 Environmental science public education campaign |**  
Between 22 April and 2 May 2025, Horizons' Communications team, in collaboration with Science's biomonitoring staff, ran a social media campaign showing what water samples from our summer monitoring programme look like under the microscope.
- 14.11. The purpose of the campaign was to:
- Educate the public on the importance of Horizons' water quality monitoring programmes;
  - Increase awareness of the risks associated with cyanobacteria (potentially toxic algae) in waterways;
  - Encourage people to check LAWA for the latest water quality monitoring results before swimming at their favourite swim spot.
- 14.12. The team created four social media posts for Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. These posts are as follows:
- A 30-second reel (video) that shows one of Horizons' research associates collecting water samples from a popular swim spot and preparing them for transport to the lab;
  - A static post of microscope images showing three forms of freshwater life found in our water samples. The post challenges the audience to identify the life forms and provides answers in the comments, explaining how they impact water quality;
  - A carousel post showing what cyanobacteria look like at a lake (an algal bloom), and what they look like under the microscope. The post explains that these algae are why Horizons sometimes advises against swimming in a lake for a week or two.
- 14.13. **Te Oranga o te Taiao – State of the Environment | Horizons Region 2025**  
On 24 June 2025, Horizons' Science and Communications teams published the organisation's latest State of the Environment Synthesis Report: *Te Oranga o te Taiao – State of the Environment | Horizons Region 2025*.
- 14.14. The 2025 report summarises findings from Horizons' environmental monitoring data, science reporting, and other technical work undertaken since the publication of our 2019 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. The council's science reporting and other documentation have been referenced throughout the report, resulting in 70 sources that readers can consult for further information.

- 14.15. 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 report aims to support decision-making, policy development, accountability, and public education, among other activities in the Horizons Region.
- 14.16. The Science and Communications teams have been, and continue to be, promoting the report through Horizons' social media channels, presentations with key stakeholder groups (i.e., staff, Catchment Care Collectives, and Massey University), and exploring other communications opportunities as they present themselves. The promotion of the report will cease before the end of 2025.

## 15. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Michael Patterson  
**SCIENCE MANAGER**

Staci Boyte  
**ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST NATURAL RESOURCES**

Lorraine Cook  
**ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST ECOLOGY**

Luke Fullard  
**TEAM LEADER SCIENCE DATA & ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING-**

Laura Hickey  
**FRESHWATER SCIENTIST**

Ian Hurst  
**ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING SCIENTIST**

Maree Patterson  
**PRINCIPAL SCIENTIST**

Huma Saeed  
**TEAM LEADER SCIENCE WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY**

Rhianne Tod  
**SCIENCE COMMUNICATOR**

Dr Elizabeth Daly  
**GROUP MANAGER – STRATEGY REGULATION AND SCIENCE**

## ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.



Report No.	25-128
Decision Required	

## INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME - CONFIRMING GENERAL DIRECTION

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to confirm the general direction for the Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Programme.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-128.
- b. notes the indicative high-level phasing and the feedback received from elected members at the August 2025 workshop, as outlined in section 8 of this report.
- c. endorses the general direction of the Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Programme to enable officers to proceed with more detailed planning and engagement.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. There is no additional financial impact associated with this report. Funding for the ICM Programme is provided for in the current Long-term Plan 2024-34 (LTP).

### 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. Community engagement is not required on the decisions in this report. Community consultation on the ICM Programme was completed as part of the LTP deliberations in 2024.
- 4.2. Tangata Whenua and Community Engagement has been identified as a specific work stream in the ICM Programme planning. More detailed engagement planning will be undertaken in the coming months.

### 5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There are no significant business risks associated with the adoption of recommendations in this report.

### 6. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 6.1. This report does not generate any climate change impact. However, climate change implications are being considered in the planning of the ICM Programme.

### 7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. In 2023 Council prepared a Business Case outlining the justification for introducing an ICM approach to planning and service delivery.
- 7.2. Council agreed to include the ICM Programme and funding in the draft LTP 2024-34 for community consultation. The move to a holistic approach, *from the mountains to the sea (integrated catchment management) - he ara torowhārahi – mai I ngā maunga ki te moana (Whakahaere Riu)* was identified as one of Council's four strategic priorities.

- 7.3. Following community consultation and deliberations Council confirmed the inclusion of the ICM Programme in the final 2024-34 LTP.
- 7.4. The ICM Programme is also included as an Organisational Performance project in the Council's "Future Fit" Programme. The focus of this programme is creating flexible and agile structures, fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation and making data-driven decisions. It also aims to ensure that systems and process and staff capability remain capable of operating efficiently and effectively in a dynamic environment.
- 7.5. An ICM Programme Lead was appointed in February 2025 and is responsible for scoping and designing key elements of the programme. One of the initial deliverables is to confirm the programme's general direction with Elected Members.
- 7.6. A workshop with Elected Members was held on 14 August, where valuable feedback was received to inform the ICM Programme's development. This workshop marked the beginning of programme planning and building an understanding of the ICM Programme.

## 8. DISCUSSION

- 8.1. This section includes the following:
- 1) A high level phasing, scope and indicative timeline for the programme; and
  - 2) A summary of workshop content, elected member feedback and key themes.
- 8.2. High level phasing and indicative timeline.

YEAR	PHASE	WORKSTREAMS	OBJECTIVES
2025	1	a. Programme Management	Initiate, plan, execute and monitor programme using appropriate tools and techniques.
		b. Policy Direction	Confirm guiding principles for the programme.
2026	2	a. Levels of Service (LOS) Review	Develop options for future LOS for inclusion in the 2027-37 LTP.
		b. Funding Model Options	Develop options to deliver revised LOS.
2027	3	a. Operational Planning Process	Design a system to ensure alignment across teams with statutory obligations and operational plans as they impact on local areas. Take into account other existing and emerging systems e.g. Spatial Planning.
		b. Performance, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	Design a system to provide information on the effectiveness of ICM.
2028	4	a. Formal Consultation	Socialise the concept of ICM, and need for change, test options with community.
		b. Implementation	Develop implementation plan and execute.

**TANGATA WHENUA AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OCCURS IN EVERY WORK STREAM ACROSS ALL PHASES.**

- 8.3. Summary of key workshop themes.
- 8.4. Elected Members considered the current state, future vision, and potential actions across the following five programme areas:
- 1) Fundamentals and Principles,
  - 2) Levels of Service Review,
  - 3) Funding Model,
  - 4) Operational Planning and Monitoring, and
  - 5) Tangata Whenua and Community Engagement.
- 8.5. **Fundamentals and Principles**
- 8.6. **Build awareness and shared understanding** | The programme should be clearly defined and communicated in simple, accessible ways to help build wider public awareness. Tailored messaging will be required for different audiences.
- 8.7. **Community engagement and relationships** | Building and maintaining strong, inclusive relationships will be important. Engagement with iwi, hapū, community groups, and local communities should be practical and grounded - such as cups of tea, informal conversations, hui on marae, or in community halls. This might also involve including those who don't normally engage, and working alongside groups already active in their catchments, and exploring ways of sharing decision-making and responsibilities. Iwi Environmental Management Plans and local knowledge should be recognised and drawn on to help guide priorities.
- 8.8. **Direction and leadership** | The ICM vision should remain adaptive and responsive to local contexts, acknowledging that te Taio varies across places. Leadership should connect environmental, economic, and cultural values. Reconsidering the 'working as one' approach, linking strategic plans, science, and community engagement.
- 8.9. **Integration and catchment approach** | Integration should mean whole-of-catchment thinking, recognising upstream, downstream, and cross-stream connections, and considering wider influences like land use, weather, and climate. Shifting from scheme-based to whole or sub-catchment approaches will be explored, balancing both regulatory and non-regulatory tools. Seek integration both within council and with external partners including Territorial Authorities.
- 8.10. **Challenges and risks** | Managing expectations is critical. Acknowledge that challenges such as climate change will not be solved by ICM alone. Externalities and the role of natural systems in risk reduction must be considered.
- 8.11. **Take action** | The programme will require good investment decisions, sufficient resources, and the right people. Some believe there is merit in taking a 'just do it' approach by starting early, while still ensuring actions are careful, considered, and done right the first time.
- 8.12. **Levels of Service Review (LOS)**
- 8.13. **Ratepayer Expectations and Equity** | Protecting ratepayer rights by keeping people informed and involved will be important, also recognising the need to manage expectations around service levels within limited budgets. Include exploring fairer funding models by broadening costs across catchments, balancing local and collective good, and recognising that different catchments may require different LOS.
- 8.14. **Gaps in Current Scheme** | Consider a whole-of-catchment approach and make schemes more inclusive by recognising unproductive areas and the importance of biodiversity alongside productive land.

- 8.15. **Reviewing LOS** | Consider the ongoing need to review LOS, how it is measured, how it changes over time, and if reviews should take place after major flood or storm events. Suggestions include LOS that could be shaped to reflect risk within each catchment, including upstream and downstream impacts, while being clear about what Council can, will, and won't do. Questions have been raised about whether LOS is for people or the awa, and some believe flood protection LOS should be revisited, as noted in the last Long-Term Plan. It has also been suggested that LOS should not be too narrow, with scope widened to include regulatory functions, biodiversity, monitoring, and corporate responsibilities. Considering interconnected environmental, economic, and cultural values, the role of natural systems in reducing risk, and how LOS decisions in one area (e.g. drainage) can affect others.
- 8.16. **Balancing Expectations with Available Resources** | Delivery of services requires constant re-balancing to meet need, the community's expectation, and ability to pay. Suggestions have been made about managing or lowering community expectations, while demonstrating value for money in LOS decisions and the link to rates.

#### **Funding model**

- 8.17. **Simple, Clear, and Transparent Funding Model** | The current funding model should be reviewed for one that is simpler, clearer, and easier for ratepayers to understand. Greater transparency around what each dollar funds including the balance between local and regional benefits and activity breakdowns ('what do my rates pay for') could also be useful. Other suggestions include reviewing the model regularly to keep it relevant, streamline what is shown on rates invoices, and simplify categories of targeted rates such as biodiversity, biosecurity, and freshwater.
- 8.18. **Fairness and Equity** | It is recognised that river management benefits extend beyond artificial boundaries; so a more universal model could be explored. Some see value in considering both direct and indirect benefits, including upstream and downstream impacts, with broader cost-sharing options such as flat rates or catchment-wide approaches. There is interest in how other councils manage fairness across large and diverse areas.
- 8.19. **Innovation and Alternatives** | It has been suggested that other types of funding beyond rates could be explored, such as Green Bonds or community and business sponsorships. Some see potential in using AI tools to better manage complexity and improve efficiency. There may also be value in reframing rates so they are seen less as a bill and more as an investment in catchment outcomes.
- 8.20. **Principles for rating** | Strong support for reviewing the funding model with a view to making it simple to administer and one that balances spreading costs broadly and recognising individual or local benefits. Some suggestions include the wellbeing of the awa could serve as the guiding principle, with externalities such as sediment and nitrogen factored into how costs are allocated.

#### **Operational Planning and Monitoring**

- 8.21. **Vision, and Outcomes-Based Planning and Service Delivery** | A clear, outcome-focused vision for ICM is needed, with planning and information linked to measurable outcomes for awa wellbeing. Aligning existing action plans with ICM outcomes and viewing activities in terms of whether they add to or detract from the awa could also be beneficial.
- 8.22. **Community Roles and Relationships** | Suggestions include strengthening relationships with rural communities and building a better understanding of upstream–downstream connections to help communities see themselves as part of the wider catchment, not only their immediate area. Collective ownership could also be encouraged through inclusive engagement with iwi, river groups, and catchment care groups.
- 8.23. **Catchment-Based Planning** | Recognition that each catchment may require a specific plan reflecting its unique topography, soil type, biodiversity, and biosecurity. Whole-of-

catchment or sub-catchment approaches could be carefully defined, with boundaries aligned to iwi rohe. The growth and integrity of Asset Management Plans may also need to be factored into planning.

- 8.24. **Pilot approach** | Strong support for piloting an ICM project, and suggestions that Tararua and Foxton East to Awahou be considered as logical starting points. Pilots are recognised a good way to test outcome-driven, holistic, and coordinated planning from mountains to sea, while also exploring the potential of funding catchment care groups to take on planning and monitoring roles.

#### **Tangata Whenua and Community Engagement**

- 8.25. **Strengthen relationships and collaboration** | It has been suggested that iwi and hapū be recognised as distinct partners while staying connected with wider communities and catchment groups. Building long-term relationships, encouraging collaboration across groups, and valuing both science and Mātauranga Māori could help strengthen outcomes.
- 8.26. **Inclusive and targeted engagement** | Engagement could go beyond schemes to include iwi, landowners, community groups, and other interests. Emphasising collaboration and partnership – rather than a top-down approach – will help build trust and support. Connecting with people where they gather, focusing on those most interested, and drawing on the networks of elected members and Territorial Authority councillors may help strengthen outcomes.
- 8.27. **Building awareness and understanding** | Awareness of ICM is currently limited but growing, particularly in urban areas. Providing clear, accessible information could help communities better understand the connections between upstream and downstream environments. Communicating the benefits, values, and opportunities for positive impact—framed in ways that answer “what’s in it for me?”—may support greater interest and involvement. There is an opportunity to encourage community contribution, shared benefit, and local input into setting priorities and actions.
- 8.28. **Existing structures and processes** | Lessons from past projects suggest a guiding and coordinating approach would be beneficial as well as strengthening links between groups and retaining structures like Oranga Wai and the Manawatū River Leaders’ Accord. More active use of elected members, structured meetings, along with exploring options for devolved decision-making could also be helpful.

## **9. COMMENT**

- 9.1. This report brings together an indicative high-level work programme and summarises insights received from Elected Members at the recent August 2025 workshop. The programme reflects five key areas: Fundamentals and Principles; Levels of Service Review; Funding Model; Operational Planning and Monitoring; and Tangata Whenua and Community Engagement.
- 9.2. The ICM Programme is a long-term, strategic shift in how the Council and communities approach catchment management—from the mountains to the sea. It provides a platform for more integrated thinking and action, aligning with our organisational goals and responding to environmental, cultural, and community expectations.
- 9.3. While much of the early work will focus on confirming direction, building relationships, and developing the tools and frameworks required, the programme will also allow for adaptive delivery over time. Ongoing involvement from tangata whenua, stakeholders, and the wider community will be essential to its success.
- 9.4. This paper seeks confirmation of the programme’s general direction so that more detailed planning can proceed, including specific workstream design, engagement planning, and the identification of early actions and pilot opportunities.

## 10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1. Consultation with Horizons Regional Council teams includes: Corporate and Governance, Science, Strategy, Regulation and Science, Catchment Operations, and Finance.

## 11. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

- 11.1. Development of the ICM Programme will continue throughout the coming months. More specific workshops and a similar report to this one will be presented to the new council after the local body elections in October 2025. The purpose of the report will be to build on and re-confirm the direction for the ICM Programme.

## 12. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Tracey Hunt

**INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT - PROGRAMME LEAD**

Lizzie Daly

**GROUP MANAGER STRATEGY REGULATION AND SCIENCE**

## ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.

Report No.	25-129
Decision Required	

## FIRST STEP - COMMUNITY, IWI/HAPŪ-LED ADAPTATION PLANNING FUNDING UPDATE

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To inform the Strategy and Policy Committee of a pilot project to fund community, iwi/hapū-led adaptation planning in the 2025-26 financial year.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-129.
- b. notes the approach Officers will take, as outlined in sections 8, 9 and 10 of this report.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. Funding for this pilot project in the 2025-2026 financial year has been accommodated within existing budget.
- 3.2. Council have no commitment to implement actions arising from community-led adaptation plans beyond its existing responsibilities, consistent with Horizons' current policies and strategies.

### 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. As a public item, Council may deem this report sufficient to inform the public.

### 5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There is no significant business risk associated with this item.

### 6. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 6.1. Supporting communities, iwi and hapū to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change is a key component of **Horizons Climate Action Plan**. By funding community, and iwi/hapū led adaptation planning, Horizons will enable place-based approaches that reflect local needs, priorities, and aspirations. These adaptation plans are expected to enhance community resilience, raise awareness, and improve preparedness for both current and future climate-related risk.

### 7. ADAPTATION PLANNING INCLUDES RESILIENCE PLANNING

- 7.1. For the purposes of this report, adaptation planning is understood to include aspects of resilience planning. While adaptation planning focuses specifically on preparing for the unavoidable impacts of climate change,<sup>i</sup> resilience planning takes a broader view – considering how communities can absorb, recover from, and adapt to a range of shocks and stressors, including natural hazards such as earthquakes.

- 7.2. Including resilience planning within the scope of this pilot acknowledges the interconnected risks communities face, and the importance of holistic, place-based approaches to long-term wellbeing.

## 8. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY AND IWI-HAPŪ-LED ADAPTATION PLANNING AS PART OF HORIZONS CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE

- 8.1. Communities, both rural and urban, as well as iwi and hapū are increasingly exposed to climate-related risks. These include natural hazards, the retreat of insurance coverage and transitional risks associated with climate change. Cyclone Gabrielle, was wetter and more intense due to climate change<sup>ii</sup>. Its impacts across the Tararua and Manawatū Districts were a stark reminder that extreme weather events are becoming more severe and unpredictable as the planet warms.
- 8.2. Adaptation planning helps address both current and future climate-related risk. Community-led adaptation planning, undertaken by those who are ready and willing, can be more cost-effective than council or consultant led processes, as it often begins beyond the initial engagement phase. These plans are also likely to be enduring and effective, as they are developed by and with communities, not for them, fostering greater ownership and long-term commitment.
- 8.3. The **Manawatū-Whanganui Climate Change Risk Assessment 2021** identified inland flooding as the most pressing climate related risk for the region. Emerging risks, such as coastal inundation and wildfire, were also highlighted. Adaption planning enables communities to assess and prepare for both current and emerging risks, and to respond to changing risk profiles over time.
- 8.4. In addition to preparing for long-term climate impacts, adaptation planning also contributes to the reduction, readiness, response, and recovery components of emergency management. Community-led planning typically begins with addressing current risk and identifying adaptive pathways for the future. Funding this work will also strengthen localised emergency planning and preparedness.
- 8.5. A key benefit of adaptation planning is its value during recovery from extreme events. Where plans are in place, communities have already identified and assessed recovery options – including opportunities to ‘build back better’. Post-event, affected communities often lack the capacity to develop such plans and decisions made under pressure can lead to maladaptive outcomes, increased long-term risk, and wasted resources. The time to plan is before disaster strikes.
- 8.6. While council-led adaptation planning, even when supported by community engagement, can produce technically sound outputs, these plans can be costly and lack local ownership, leading to limited implementation. The Coalition Government’s response to Parliament’s Finance and Expenditure Committee’s **Climate Adaptation Inquiry and Monitoring Report** has signalled a possible ‘beneficiary pays’ principle within a future adaptation funding framework. If adopted, this approach will further necessitate genuine community ownership and leadership in adaptation planning.
- 8.7. A key role for Horizons in partnership with territorial authorities, is to support communities by ensuring that relevant hazard and risk information is available to inform planning. This pilot will provide an opportunity to assess the capacity and resource requirements for scaling up community-led adaptation planning in the future.
- 8.8. While the Coalition Government has signalled an intention to progress a national climate adaptation framework in 2025 this work has not yet materialised. Regardless of central government timelines, the development of locally led adaptation plans remains valuable. Once national frameworks and clarity on roles and responsibilities emerge, communities that have already developed plans will be well positioned to move into implementation.

## 9. 2025-26 COMMUNITY, IWI/HAPŪ-LED ADAPTATION PLANNING FUNDING

- 9.1. Running a pilot enables a 'learn as we go' approach, allowing the refinement of fund criteria and a better understanding of the support and advice necessary to develop high-quality adaptation plans. Insights from the pilot, will inform future resourcing requirements to support community, iwi/hapū led adaptation funding into the future.
- 9.2. To maximise the value of the pilot, funding will be targeted to those who are ready and willing to undertake adaptation planning. This includes communities such as Ākitio, who were impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle and participated in research on the recovery phase. Iwi, hapū, and marae who have previously indicated that adaptation and resilience planning are natural next steps following climate change wānanga, will also be invited to apply.
- 9.3. The pilot will draw on the experience of other regional councils, including Bay of Plenty and Northland Regional councils, which have already implemented community-led adaptation planning funds. Their criteria and learnings will provide a foundation for the development of Horizons fund. Both councils have expressed willingness to share knowledge and insights to support the design and delivery of the pilot.
- 9.4. Grants of up to \$20,000 will be available, with up to three grants offered during the pilot year. Experience from Bay of Plenty and Northland Regional suggests this level of funding is typically sufficient to support the development of localised adaptation plans. The pilot will test whether this amount is appropriate in the context of our region.
- 9.5. It is expected that plans will take between 12 and 24 months to develop. The funding will be made available over multiple financial years if required, to ensure recipients have sufficient time to complete their planning.
- 9.6. The pilot has been timed to align with the release of outputs from the **Horizons Region Flood Vulnerability Assessment**. Access to improved flood vulnerability information will assist participating communities in identifying risks and developing informed, locally relevant adaptation responses.

## 10. INCORPORATING ADAPTATION FUNDING INTO PŪTEA HAPORI URUPARE ĀHURANGI | COMMUNITY CLIMATE RESPONSE FUND

- 10.1. Following the most recent funding round in June 2025, the Fund Panel for the **Pūtea Hapori Urupare Āhuarangi | Community Climate Response Fund** (The Fund) recommended a review of the fund's criteria. They suggested placing greater emphasis on encouraging applications that address climate change adaptation, build resilience, and raise awareness of climate impacts and the need for action. In response, fund criteria will be updated to reflect this feedback for the 2026-2027 funding round, which opens in March 2026.
- 10.2. Horizons already administers multiple community funds. Rather than establishing a new standalone fund for community, iwi/hapū-led adaptation planning, this work can be supported as a new funding category within the existing Pūtea Hapori Urupare Āhuarangi | Community Climate Response Fund.
- 10.3. To better support adaptation planning, applications for funding should be accepted and assessed on a rolling basis, when applicants are ready, rather than through a single annual funding round. This flexible model, already used successfully by Bay of Plenty Regional Council, allows sufficient time for communities, iwi and hapū to confirm leadership, identify support needs, and develop well-considered applications. A fixed annual deadline can lead to rushed or underdeveloped applications, reducing the likelihood of successful or meaningful plan development.

- 10.4. Motivation to engage in adaptation planning is often highest soon after an adverse event. A rolling application process would allow communities to apply for funding at a time when they are most motivated and focussed on building resilience.
- 10.5. If the pilot highlights challenges or limitations that warrant delaying a broader rollout of adaptation funding under the Fund, that rollout can be paused and revisited once those issues are resolved.

## 11. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

- 11.1. Over the coming months, criteria and assessment processes for the pilot will be developed. Once confirmed, applications will be invited, assessed, and funding decisions made.
- 11.2. The first three applicants who meet the criteria will be offered funding through the pilot. Any additional applications received beyond the pilot's capacity will be assessed under the updated fund criteria once the expanded fund is in place.

## 12. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Andrew Watt  
**CLIMATE ACTION COORDINATOR**

Lizzie Daly  
**GROUP MANAGER STRATEGY REGULATION AND SCIENCE**

## ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.

Report No.	25-130
Information Only - No Decision Required	

## STRATEGY AND POLICY UPDATE

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the policy work programme being undertaken by the Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience Team

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-130.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience Team fulfils a number of compulsory requirements relating to corporate and resource management planning, including responding to national policy statements, national environmental standards and government regulation.
- 3.2. We set regional policy direction through the Horizons One Plan and develop guidance and frameworks for Councils future work, while also responding to Central Government policy direction for regional councils. This includes undertaking regional resource management planning work including the continued refinement and evolution of the One Plan.
- 3.3. Responding to climate change is a component of most of Horizons activities – both the impacts of a changing climate and in transitioning to a low-emission future. We are responsible for the planning and coordination of climate change work across the organisation. We also work with other councils in our region and other relevant parties on climate action.

### 4. PROJECT UPDATES

#### 4.1. Resource Management Reform

##### 4.1.1. Background on Resource Management Reform

- 4.1.1.1. Following the release of the [Blueprint for Resource Management Reform](#) from the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) in March 2025, Cabinet agreed to progress new planning legislation to replace the **Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)**. This Committee has previously received information on this in its 8 April meeting (**Report No. 25-48**).
- 4.1.1.2. The Coalition Government is progressing a phased approach to resource management reform:
  - Phase one was completed in December 2023, with the repeal of the Natural and Built Environment Act 2023 and Spatial Planning Act 2023.
  - Phase two is currently underway. Initially scheduled for early 2025, this phase was re-scoped to focus on proposals with an immediate effect on the current system, while Phase Three is developed. Phase Two includes:

- The Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2025, introduced to Parliament on 23 May 2024 and in force from 25 October 2025.
- The Fast Track Approvals Act 2024, introduced to Parliament on 7 March 2024 and in force from 24 December 2024.
- The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025, introduced to Parliament on 9 December 2024 and came into force on 21 August 2025 (except for sections 11, 32-36, 41, 89 which comes into force on 20 October 2025 and section 342A(4), which comes into force on 20 August 2027).
- Consultation on changes to national direction instruments under the RMA, released in four packages by the Ministry for the Environment. Timelines for gazettal and further consultation are yet to be confirmed.
- Phase three will replace the RMA with two new acts:
  - a Planning Act, focused on planning to enable development and infrastructure, and
  - a Natural Environment Act (NEA) focused on managing the natural environment.

These are expected to be introduced this year, passed into law next year and be in effect by 2027.

#### 4.1.2. The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025

4.1.2.1. The purpose of the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Act 2025 is to make targeted changes to the RMA ahead of its full replacement. The amendments are grouped into five themes relevant to Horizons, summarised below:

##### **Infrastructure and energy**

- Extends the duration of port coastal permits by a further 20 years and provides requiring authority status to ports to allow them to designate land.
- Sets 35-year default consent durations for renewable energy activities and other long-lived infrastructure.
- Extends default lapse periods for renewable energy consents from 5 to 10 years.
- Extends default lapse periods for designations from 5 to 10 years.
- Introduces a one-year consent processing timeframe for renewable energy activities.
- Simplifies information requirements for requiring authorities.

##### **Housing**

- Allows councils to use the streamlined planning process to de-list heritage buildings.
- Introduces new ministerial intervention powers enabling the Minister for the Environment to direct local authorities to prepare or amend documents required by national policy statements. Where a local authority is non-compliant, with a national policy statement, the Minister may direct the local authority to prepare a plan change.

### **Farming and primary sector**

- Limits councils' ability to regulate fishing, to reduce overlap between the RMA and the Fisheries Act 1996.
- Transfers approval for industry bodies to deliver freshwater farm plan certification and audit services, from regional councils to the Minister for the Environment (Part 9A of the RMA).
- Increases land-use size thresholds determining which farms are required to have a freshwater farm plan.
- Removes certification requirements for certain farms.
- Establishes a one-year consent processing timeframe for wood processing activities.

### **Natural hazards and emergencies.**

- Amends emergency provisions under the RMA. Introduces a regulation-making power for the Minister for the Environment to use in the event of an emergency.
- Clarifies and strengthens councils' ability to decline land use consents or impose relevant conditions where there is significant natural hazard risk.

### **System Improvements**

- Amends the compliance regime aiming to better deter offences under the RMA.
- Amends consenting processes, including changes to information requirements, the ability for councils to request further information, return of abandoned applications, and the ability for applicants to request reviews of draft conditions.

4.1.2.2. The Resource Management (Consenting and Other Matters) Amendment Bill was amended at the Committee of the House stage (after select committee consultation) to amend section 70 and introduce provisions to stop plan notification under the current RM system.

#### **Section 70 changes**

4.1.2.3. Prior to the amendment, councils could not set a permitted activity rule for the discharge of contaminants to water unless they were satisfied that none of the following effects were likely to arise:

- a. the production of conspicuous oil or grease films, scums or foams, or floatable or suspended materials
- b. any conspicuous change in the colour or visual clarity
- c. any emission of objectionable odour
- d. the rendering of fresh water unsuitable for consumption by farm animals
- e. any significant adverse effects on aquatic life.

4.1.2.4. The Bill as introduced proposed allowing councils to include permitted activities for discharges to water if

- a. the council is satisfied that there are already significant adverse effects on aquatic life in the receiving waters, and
- b. the standards required for the permitted activity (in combination with any other provisions in the plan) will contribute to a reduction in these adverse effects over a specified period of time

4.1.2.5. Horizons, along with four other regional and unitary authorities submitted that the amendment should extend to colour and visual clarity, and suitability for consumption by farm animals. While the select committee did not take up this recommendation, the Government subsequently made the requested change in the Committee of the House.

#### **Plan Stop**

4.1.2.6. This provision prevents councils from notifying most plan changes and requires withdrawal of most notified plan changes that have not reached a hearing. It applies from 21 August 2025 until 31 December 2027. The intent is to focus council policy work on preparing for the replacement of the RMA. Further detail and advice is provided in a separate report to this Committee (Report No. 25-126).

#### **4.1.3. Integrated National Direction Consultation**

4.1.3.1. In November 2024, the Government confirmed a refocused package of national direction under the RMA to be consulted on for February 2025. However, in March 2025, the timing of these packages was revised for mid-2025. Consultation ran as follows:

4.1.3.2. Consultation for packages 1, 2 and 3 ran from 29 May to 27 July 2025. Consultation on package 4 ran from 18 June to 17 August 2025. Further information can be found on MfE's website for each package:

4.1.3.3. [Package 1 - Infrastructure and development and Package 2 - Primary sector](#) were consulted on from 29 May to 27 July 2025. These comprised of four new instruments and amendments to four existing national direction instruments. Consultation was part of the statutory process to prepare and amend national direction under section 46A (1) and (2) of the RMA. No gazettal dates have been confirmed.

4.1.3.4. [Package 3 - Freshwater](#) was consulted on from 29 May to 27 July 2025. This was a non-statutory options consultation on amendments to two existing freshwater instruments. Statutory consultation will follow via an exposure draft, with timeframes yet to be confirmed.

4.1.3.5. [Package 4 - Going for Housing Growth](#) was consulted on from 18 June to 17 August 2025. This included a discussion document on key aspects of the Government's Going for Housing Growth policy proposals and indicative implementation options for different components in the new resource management system. Further consultation will occur as the new RM system progresses.

4.1.3.6. Horizons submitted in response to each of the packages, guided by the high-level positions endorsed by Council ([resolution 25-414 refers](#)).

#### **4.2. National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management**

4.2.1. The **National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPSFM)** provides local authorities with updated direction on how they should manage freshwater under the RMA. The Oranga Wai | Our Freshwater Future work programme has been working toward implementation of the NPSFM since its inception.

4.2.2. While some aspects of the Oranga Wai | Our Freshwater Future work programme have been paused due to national direction and legislative uncertainty, officers are continuing technical and policy work where it remains useful and appropriate. This ongoing work will support a future freshwater plan under the new resource management system. However, some already completed work may need updating later to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose for plan development or notification under the new system. Despite this, officers consider it important for Council to keep exploring policy options, mindful of signalled changes to the regulatory framework. Consultation on targets and economic and social impact assessments is currently on hold.

#### 4.3. National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land

- 4.3.1. The objective of the **National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022 (NPSHPL)** is to protect highly productive land for use in land-based primary production, both now and for future generations. Council officers have been progressing work to implement the NPS-HPL.
- 4.3.2. In the April 2025 update to this Committee, officers noted the commentary on proposed changes to the NPSHPL had created a high level of uncertainty for how the plan change work would progress. For this reason, much of the engagement with territorial authorities and iwi was paused while awaiting further clarity on scope and timeframes as part of Resource Management Reform Phase Two.
- 4.3.3. Significant proposed changes to the NPSHPL were consulted on as part the RMA national direction programme. The consultation sought feedback on:
- Amending the criteria of HPL to remove LUC 3. Options included exempting LUC 3 land from NPSHPL restrictions for urban development only, or for both urban development and rural lifestyle. Subsequent questions were raised about whether this exemption would apply for only to local authority rezoning or also to private plan changes.
  - Consequential amendments to mapping criteria. If LUC 3 were to be exempt there further amendments to ensure robust mapping would likely be required. Consultation highlighted potential amendments to the 'large and geographically cohesive areas' criteria, mapping scale, acceptance of site-specific assessments, removing council discretion to map additional land and using more detailed information to better define HPL.
  - Introduce Special Agricultural Areas (SAAs). To ensure key food and fibre production areas are not compromised by the removal of LUC 3, the concept of SAAs was consulted on. These could protect key food growing areas (including Horowhenua), with consultation seeking input on the criteria and processes for defining SAAs.
  - Changes to timeframes. Removal of LUC 3 land from the NPSHPL, and potential inclusion of SAAs, means it is appropriate to extend or suspend NPSHPL requirements for HPL maps to be notified in regional policy statements by October 2025. *This has been addressed as part of Plan Stop.*
- 4.3.4. Officers are awaiting gazettal of any final amendments to confirm the changes to the NPS-HPL and assess their implications for Horizons' region and future implementation.
- 4.3.5. Work to date has focussed on how to responsibly implement the NPSHPL objective without moving ahead of confirmed central government changes. Council continues to work with the Bioeconomy Science Institute (previously Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research) to update the **New Zealand Land Resource Inventory (NZLRI)** for the region and to develop a framework for deriving Land Use Capability information from S-Map and LiDAR. These updates will provide more refined and accurate data, improving the evidence base for identifying highly productive land and ensuring Council is well positioned to respond once changes are confirmed.
- 4.3.6. Officers will keep territorial authorities and iwi updated on the implications of the Plan Stop for the NPSHPL. Technical and preparatory work will continue to ensure readiness for future implementation. Broader engagement to support implementation of the NPSHPL will also be incorporated into the regional spatial planning work programme.

#### 4.4. Regional Pest Management Plan Review

- 4.4.1. In November 2024, Council approved the commencement of a work programme to review the **Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP)** under s100D of the Biosecurity Act 1993.

- 4.4.2. A workshop was held in April 2025 to discuss our role in New Zealand's biosecurity system, our approaches to biosecurity, and the RPMP review process.
- 4.4.3. In June 2025, Council gave in-principle endorsement to the key work programmes related to developing a biosecurity strategic approach and preparing a RPMP discussion document for consultation ([resolution 25-412 refers](#)).
- 4.4.4. The discussion document phase is underway. This includes identifying areas where additional technical input is required, commissioning required work, undertaking early iwi and stakeholder engagement, conducting a gap analysis to confirm the scope of the review, reviewing relevant national direction, and initial drafting.
- 4.4.5. Additionally, the biosecurity strategic approach is being developed as a high-level guiding document that sits above Horizons' regulatory and non-regulatory work. This strategy is intended to be consulted on alongside the RPMP discussion document.

#### 4.5. Palmerston North Future Development Strategy Review

- 4.5.1. Project planning for the review of the Palmerston North **Future Development Strategy (FDS)** is underway.
- 4.5.2. The purpose of the FDS is to guide how Palmerston North will grow over the next 30 years to meet housing, business, and industrial land needs while also achieving well-functioning urban environments.
- 4.5.3. Joint preparation of an FDS by Tier 1 and 2 local authorities is a requirement of the **National Policy Statement for Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD)**. The [Palmerston North FDS](#) was approved by both Councils in June 2024 ([resolution 24-269 refers](#)).
- 4.5.4. The NPS-UD requires regular reviews of the FDS to ensure it reflects up-to-date information and growth projections. Reviews must be completed in time to inform both Councils' next **Long-term Plan (LTP)**.
- 4.5.5. The FDS review is scheduled to be completed by October 2026, which will allow sufficient time for it to inform the 2027-37 LTPs.
- 4.5.6. The FDS review will focus on updating parts of the Strategy that have changed since the first iteration, such as plan changes that have progressed through the planning process, the updated Housing and Business Development Capacity Assessment (due to be complete mid-2026) and infrastructure information. The FDS review will also reconsider the growth scenario assumptions.
- 4.5.7. Key steps in the review will include:
- Finalising the project timeline (in progress).
  - Establishment of a core project team consisting of officers from both Councils and Rangitāne o Manawatū (in progress).
  - Establishment of a Joint FDS Committee to guide the review, approve for consultation and hear and deliberate on submissions. The Joint FDS Committee will include elected members from Palmerston North City Council and Horizons Regional Council, along with representatives from Rangitāne o Manawatū.
  - Early engagement with stakeholders.
  - Preparation of a draft FDS for public consultation.
  - Hearing and deliberation of submissions.
  - Approval of the updated FDS by both Councils.
- 4.5.8. Councils' obligation to review the FDS in time to inform 2027-37 LTPs is not affected by the recent Plan Stop amendments to the RMA. Although the Government has consulted on

making the review of FDSs optional through the non-statutory Package 4: Going for Housing Growth, Horizons officers recommend continuing with a targeted review where needed to inform the 2027037 LTP and ready the FDS to transition into the new resource management system.

#### 4.6. Palmerston North Stormwater Strategy

- 4.6.1. **Palmerston North City Council (PNCC)** have prepared a draft Stormwater Strategy in response to the FDS, which identified stormwater as a constraint to urban development in the City and highlighted the need for a comprehensive stormwater strategy to inform future planning and infrastructure investment in the City.
- 4.6.2. The draft Strategy is being developed by PNCC in partnership with Rangitāne o Manawatū. It seeks to outline a 10-year vision for living and growing with stormwater. It seeks to acknowledge the current state of stormwater management in Palmerston North and identify key challenges that need to be addressed, by setting strategic outcomes and implementation principles at both a district-wide level and within specific stormwater management areas.
- 4.6.3. Horizons officers have provided advice, information and comprehensive feedback on the draft Strategy. While completion was initially expected by mid-2025 to align with the FDS review, it is understood PNCC elected members have directed further stakeholder engagement before bringing the Strategy to Council for approval. With local government elections approaching, completion is now anticipated in early 2026.
- 4.6.4. Horizons officers continue to be committed to supporting the development of the Stormwater Strategy and continue to engage with PNCC staff as needed.

#### 4.7. Submissions

- 4.7.1. Since June, Horizons has made submissions in response to a number of Central Government consultations, and on District Plans.
- 4.7.2. There are some consultations which Horizons' officers assessed using the process for determining when to prepare external submissions, and recommended to not make a submission.
- 4.7.3. These submissions are outlined in the below table.

Submission	Description	Due	Horizons' response
District Plan Submissions			
Manawatū District Council Plan Change B: General Residential	Manawatū District Council has been reviewing the provisions of the Manawatū District Plan General Residential Zone. This project is known as Proposed Plan Change B: General Residential.	25 July	Horizons made a submission.
Manawatū District Council Draft Plan Change E: Feilding Town Centre	Manawatū District Council has been reviewing the provisions of the Manawatū District Plan Town Centre Zone (formerly the Inner Business Zone) and Mixed Use Zone (formerly the Outer Business Zone). This project is known as Proposed Plan Change E: Town Centre.	25 July	Horizons made a submission.
Manawatū District Council Draft Plan Change A: Rural (Flood	Manawatū District Council has been reviewing the provisions of the Manawatū District Plan Rural and Flood		UPDATE: Horizons continues to engage and provide planning

Hazard) Zone	Hazard zones. This project is known as Draft Plan Change A: Rural (Flood Hazard) zone.		and flood hazard advice following recent flood modelling work for the Lower Manawatū.
Horowhenua District Council Proposed Plan Change 6A:	Proposed Plan Change 6A seeks to rezone 22ha of land on the northwest of Levin from Deferred Residential (Future Residential) to Residential.	15 August (further sub)	Horizons made a submission and further submission.
Palmerston North City Council Proposed Plan Change I: Increasing housing supply and choice	Proposed Plan Change I seeks to rezone parts of the city into a medium-density zone. Development within this zone would allow for a wider range of housing types and help meet the need for more homes within the city.		UPDATE: Horizons has submitted planning evidence to the hearing panel.
<b>Central Government Submissions</b>			
Proposed changes to drinking water acceptable solutions	Proposed changes to acceptable solutions for drinking water supplies. Acceptable solutions provide different compliance pathways that suppliers can follow to meet their responsibilities, on a risk management basis.	13 June	Horizons did not make a submission.
Building and Construction (Small Stand-alone Dwellings) Amendment Bill	The Bill seeks to reduce the time and cost of building a granny flat by permitting small stand-alone dwellings up to 70 square metres to be built without obtaining a building consent, given certain conditions are met. These conditions are that— the granny flat must be simple in its design and meet the building code; and building work must be carried out by authorised professionals; and councils must be notified prior to and on completion of building work.	22 June	Horizons made a submission.
Regulatory Standards Bill	The Bill seeks to promote the accountability of the Executive to Parliament for the development of high-quality legislation and regulatory stewardship, and support Parliament to scrutinise bills and oversee the power to make delegated legislation.	23 June	Horizons made a submission.
Action for nature: Implementing New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy 2025-30 discussion document	Consultation on four proposed actions for the next implementation plan for the biodiversity strategy: agreed biodiversity priorities are driving investment and action; increased external funding, revenue and support is delivering more work on biodiversity priorities; an evidence- and knowledge-based approach is driving improvements in practice and decision making for biodiversity; and increased capability and support enables New Zealand to address the state of our biodiversity.	30 June	Horizons did not make a submission.
Predator Free 2050 Strategy review	5-yearly scheduled review of the first national predator free 2050 strategy.	30 June	Horizons did not make a submission.

discussion document	Consulting on a new set of goals across the four focus areas and to retain the current national target species list.		
Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme – Forestry Conversion) Amendment Bill	Currently, the Emissions Trading Scheme creates an incentive to convert land used for pastoral agriculture to production and permanent forestry. The bill would limit whole-farm conversions to exotic forestry with the aim of protecting productive land for agricultural purposes.	7 July	Horizons made a submission.
RMA integrated national direction package 1 – infrastructure and development	Statutory consultation on a new National Environmental Standards for Granny Flats, National Environmental Standards for Papakāinga, National Policy Statement for Infrastructure, and National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards, and amendments to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation, National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission, National Environmental Standards for Electricity Transmission Activities, and National Environmental Standards for Telecommunication Facilities	27 July	Horizons made a submission.
RMA integrated national direction package 2 – primary sector	Statutory consultation on proposed amendments to the National Environmental Standards for Marine Aquaculture, National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry, New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land, Stock Exclusion Regulations, and the mining and quarrying provisions in the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land, National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management, and the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater.	27 July	Horizons made a submission.
RMA integrated national direction package 3 - freshwater	Non-statutory consultation on proposed amendments to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management and the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020.	27 July	Horizons made a submission.
Draft National Infrastructure Plan	The Plan seeks to achieve a better value for money from infrastructure spending across all sectors and highlights specific areas where planning, funding, assessing, and maintaining infrastructure can be improved. The Commission is seeking feedback on the draft on a range of	6 August	Horizons made a submission.

	recommendations across all sectors of infrastructure.		
RMA integrated national direction package 4 – going for housing growth	Package 4 is part of Pillar 1 (Freeing up land for urban development) of the Government’s Going for Housing Growth agenda, and will be implemented through Phase 3 of their Resource Management reforms.	17 August	Horizons made a submission.
Local Government (Systems Improvements) Amendment Bill	The Bill seeks to reduce pressure on council rates by refocusing the purpose of local government, better measuring and publicising council performance, prioritising core services in council spending, strengthening council transparency and accountability, and providing regulatory relief to councils.	27 August	Horizons made a submission.
Legislation Amendment Bill	The Bill seeks to promote high-quality legislation for New Zealand that is easy to find, use, and understand.	28 August	Horizons did not make a submission.
Draft Geothermal Strategy	From the ground up: a draft strategy to unlock New Zealand’s geothermic potential	12 September	Horizons is not planning to make a submission and is reliant on the Te Uru Kahika submission

#### 4.8. Climate Resilience

- 4.8.1. Horizons continues to support the development of an adaptation plan for Tangimoana. Horizons’ Climate Action Coordinator, along with a Manawatū District Council representative are part of the Tangimoana Resilience Group tasked with developing this plan. The plan will address both current and future risks, considering potential impacts of climate change. The risk assessment phase is complete, and the project is now progressing into developing adaptation options. The aim is to have a draft adaptation plan developed and shared with the wider community by the end of 2025.
- 4.8.2. Horizons commissioned two reports to support the Pūtiki Wharanui-a-Tamatea Pokai Whenua (Pūtiki) community: the first is a flood risk assessment, and the second investigates potential options to mitigate flood and stormwater risks. This work has involved collaboration between representatives of the Pūtiki hapū, Horizons, Waka Kotahi, and Whanganui District Council under the framework of Te Awa Tupua. These reports will inform and support future adaptation and resilience planning at Pūtiki.
- 4.8.3. Funding for community and iwi/hapū-led adaptation initiatives will be available this financial year to support localised adaptation and resilience planning. Details of this funding are included in a separate report.

#### 5. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Nicolaas Portegys  
**TEAM LEADER POLICY**

Andrew Watt  
**COORDINATOR CLIMATE ACTION**

Dr Elizabeth Daly  
**GROUP MANAGER STRATEGY REGULATION & SCIENCE**  
**ANNEXES**

There are no attachments for this report.

Report No.	25-131
Information Only - No Decision Required	

## REGULATORY MANAGEMENT REPORT - FEBRUARY TO AUGUST 2025

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This report provides a high level summary of the Regulatory Programme for the 2024-2025 year and provides a summary to Council on the Regulatory work programme for the 2025-2026 year. At the time of writing this report, both sector Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement and Ministry for the Environment reporting was underway. When this sector reporting is finalised this will be brought to Council for their information.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-131.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. As with previous years, we are anticipating there will be significant costs associated with processing large and complex applications, which may in turn be subject to appeal. Ongoing investigations and prosecutions are likely to have an impact on both expenditure and revenue. These areas of work tend to run across multiple financial years. We are also anticipating costs to be incurred in relation to the continued implementation of regulations, Plan Change 2 and resource management law reform.
- 3.2. It is likely that there will be continued challenges recruiting for staff, particularly into senior roles, which is likely to impact year end targets. Other councils are also struggling to recruit into their regulatory teams.

### 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. This is a public item and therefore Council may deem this sufficient to inform the public.

### 5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There is no significant business risk associated with this item.

### 6. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 6.1. As this report relates to statutory functions of Council, there is no direct climate change impact.

### 7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The Regulatory Management Team fulfils a number of legislative requirements relating to resource management planning. This includes consent processing, compliance monitoring and enforcement under the Resource Management Act 1991.

7.2. We also fulfil our functions through methods such as education and advice to resource users. This activity helps to minimise or prevent activities in the region from having inappropriate adverse effects on the environment and promote economic wellbeing. In fulfilling these requirements we seek to ensure the community has confidence in Horizons as an effective regulator.

## 8. CONSENT PROCESSING PROGRAMME SUMMARY

- 8.1. The **Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)**, National Regulations and [Horizons' One Plan](#) contain objectives, policies and rules that manage the use of natural and physical resources within the Horizons Region. These rules outline what activities are allowed without resource consent from Horizons, and what do require resource consent.
- 8.2. Resource consents are tools used to achieve sustainable use of natural and physical resources. They help ensure that the environment we enjoy today will be looked after for future generations.
- 8.3. During the year, 361 applications were lodged and 230 applications were granted, resulting in 409 activities being authorised. Of the consents processed 75% were processed within statutory timeframes (the performance measure as outlined in the LTP is 85%). Fifty-eight (58) administrative discounts were applied as required under the Resource Management (Discount on Administrative Charges) Regulations 2010 (Discount Regulations). The lack of senior staff and the secondment of a team leader to the IRIS Next Gen project for approximately six months have contributed to the consent processing timeframe target not been met this year.
- 8.4. Table 1 summarises the applications received this year that were subject to notification under the RMA (including limited notification).

**Table 1. Notified applications for the 2024-2025 year**

Application Reference	Application Name	Notification Process
APP-2006011974.02	Evans Pasture Irrigation & Stock Water Abstraction (Bore 342060)	Limited Notification
APP-2022203996.00	Ratana WWTP Discharge Works	Publicly Notified
APP-2023204086.00	Otiwhiti Quarry Extraction & Wetland Restoration Proposal	Limited Notification
APP-2009013595.01	Fairmount Farms Pasture Irrigation Water Abstraction Renewal	Limited Notification
APP-2023204165.00	Turners Road Culvert Upgrade Proposal	Limited Notification
APP-2024205011.00	Summerset Retirement Village Garden Irrigation Water Abstraction Proposal	Limited Notification
APP-2024010639.01	Grassland Dairies Pasture Irrigation Renewal	Limited Notification
APP - 2024204967.00	Levin Water Supply Water Harvesting and Resilience Project	Publicly Notified
APP-2006011974.02	Evans Pasture Irrigation and Stock Water Abstraction	Limited Notification

8.5. Figures 1 and 3 provide an overview of consenting activities for the Year compared against the last few years.

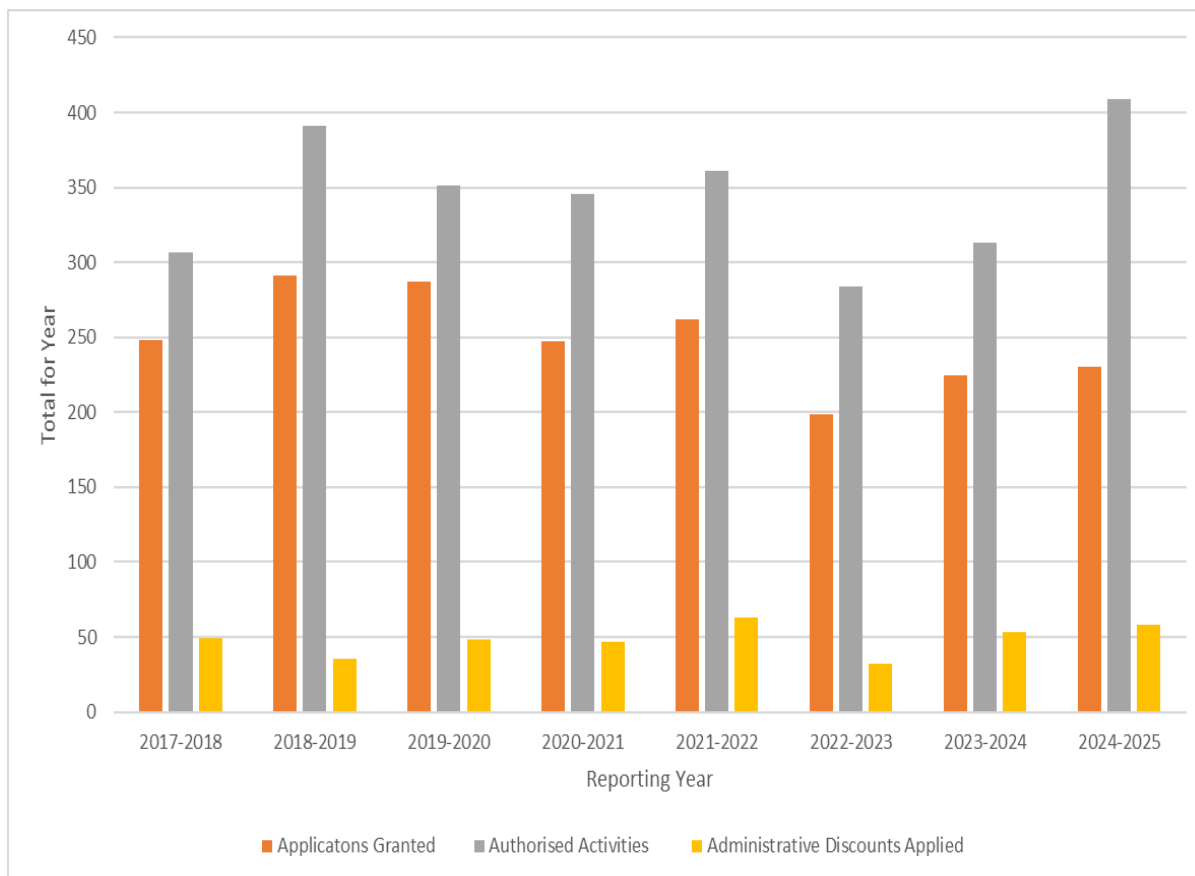


Figure 1. Applications granted, activities authorised and discounts applied by year.

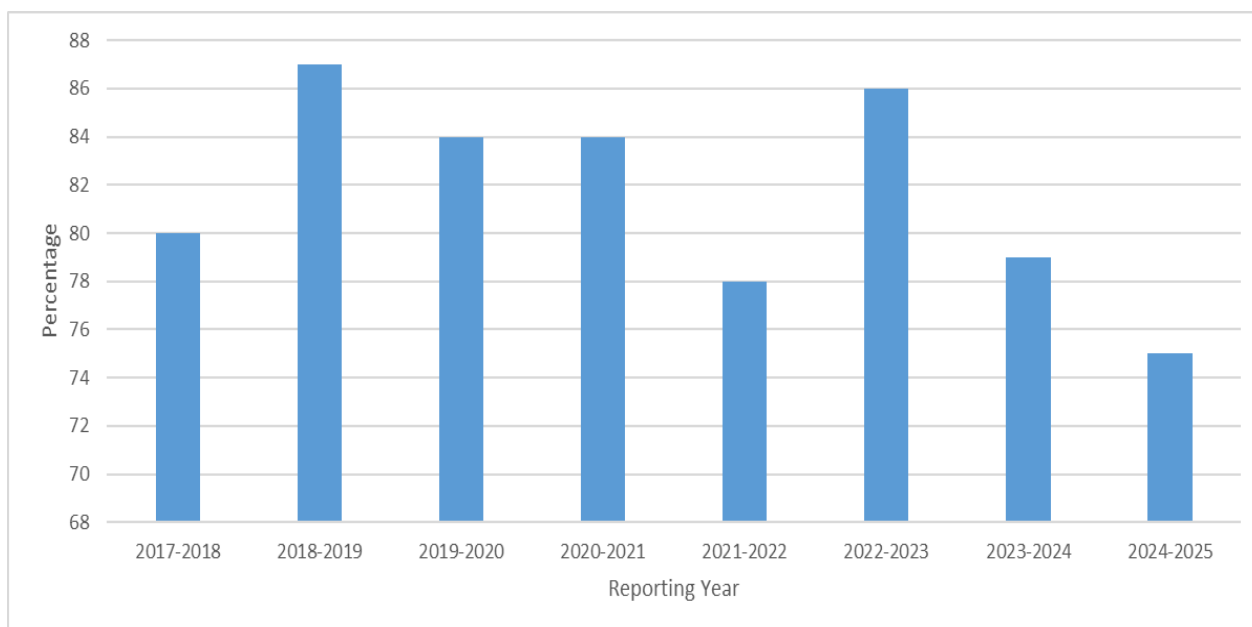
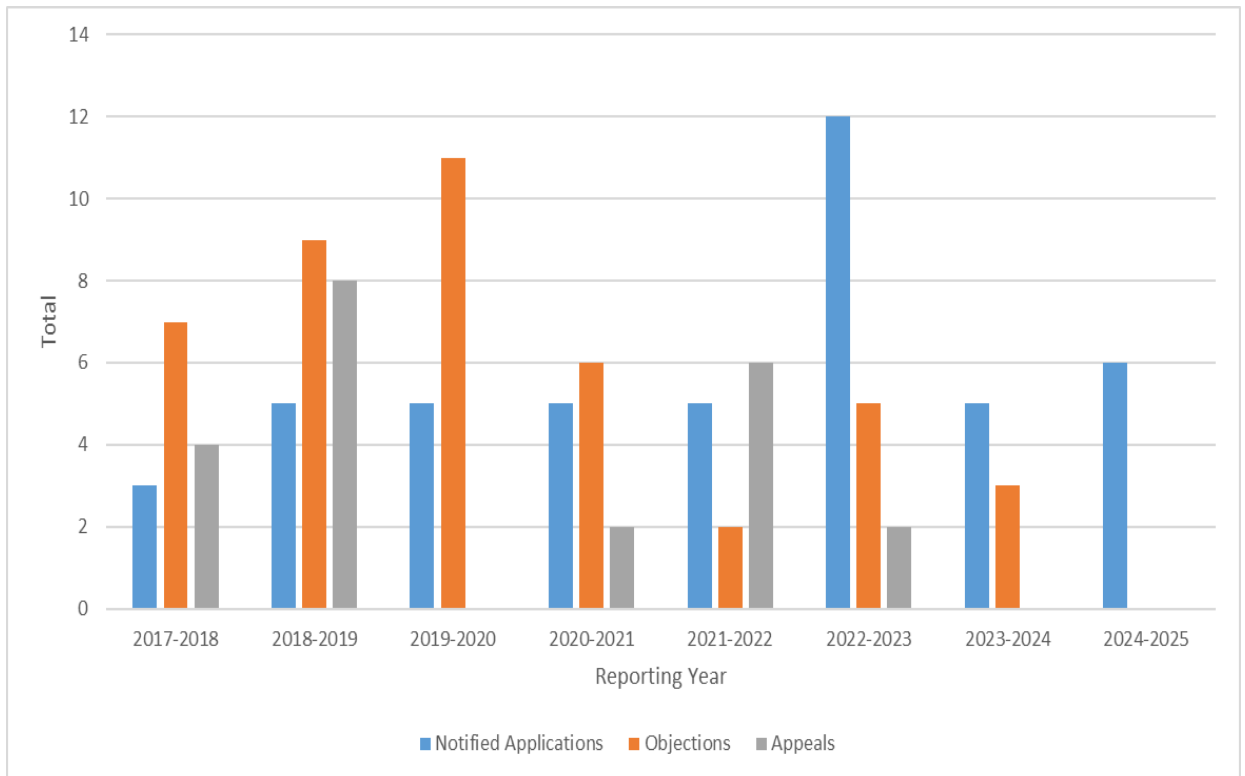
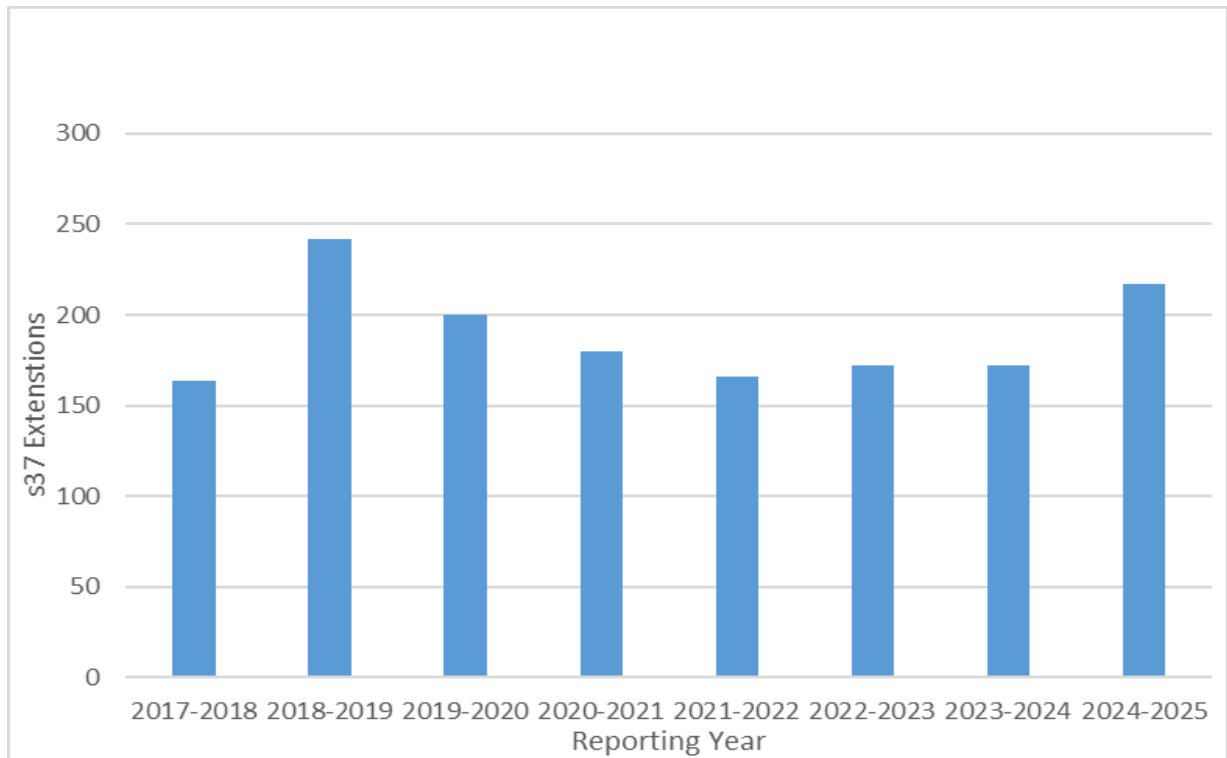


Figure 2. Percentage of time consent processing timeframes have been met by year. The 2021 – 2024 LTP target was 85%.



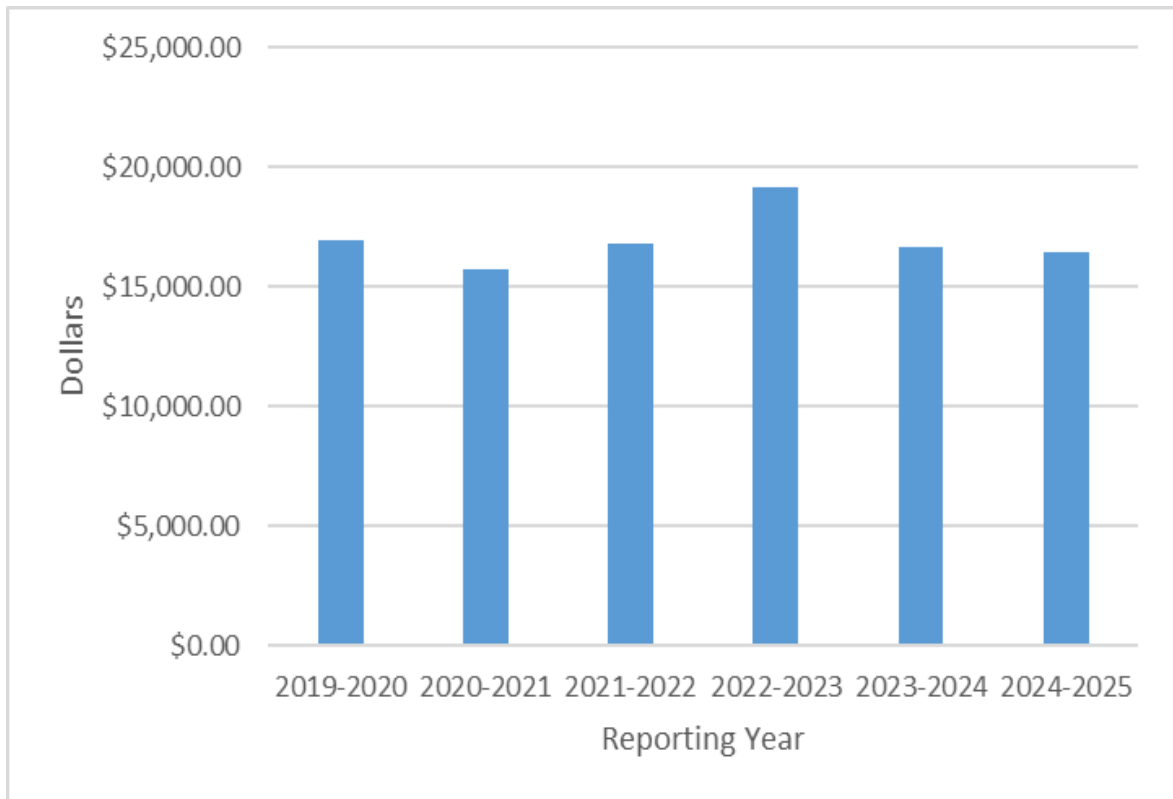
**Figure 3. Notified resource consent applications, objections and appeals by year.**

- 8.6. Section 37 (Power of waiver and extension of time limits) of the **RMA** enables Council to extend a time period set out in the Act or regulations, whether or not that timeframe has already expired, or to waive a failure to comply with a requirement of the Act, regulations or a plan for the time or method of service of documents.
- 8.7. When exercising powers under section 37, Council must also consider the provisions of section 37A. Under section 37A, a timeframe may be extended if the extension does not more than double the original period. If the extension would result in the timeframe being more than doubled, this can only occur with the applicant’s agreement, and after Council has considered: the interests of any person who, in Council’s opinion, may be affected by the extension; the community’s interest in achieving an adequate assessment of environmental effects; and Council’s duty to avoid unreasonable delay.
- 8.8. During the year, 217 timeframe extensions occurred, all being agreed to by the applicant. The reasons for seeking time extensions vary, but generally include the time required to review draft conditions of consent, applicants wishing to have more time to collect information prior to Council exercising its rights under section 92, or applicants wanting to have more time to undertake consultation with affected parties. Figure 4 summarises the number of extensions granted per year.



**Figure 4. Number of section 37 extensions by year**

- 8.9. Under the **Discount Regulations** Council is required to provide discounts on processing costs associated with applications, where those applications are not processed within statutory timeframes. The **Discount Regulations** capture notified and non-notified applications, applications lodged under section 124 (exercise of a resource consent while applying for a new consent) and section 127 (change or cancellation of conditions), and applications that are referred or called in. However, the **Discount Regulations** do not apply to other matters including Council initiated reviews under section 128 and processing certificates of compliance and objections to council decisions.
- 8.10. The **Discount Regulations** stipulate the discount is 1% of the total for every working day on which the application remains unprocessed beyond the time limit, up to a maximum of 50 working days. In effect, the regulations provide for a maximum of 50% of Council costs to be discounted. As noted above 58 discounts occurred during the year, resulting in \$16,456 being discounted. Figure 6 shows the financial costs of discounts for the year compared to previous years.



**Figure 5. Financial costs of discounts by year**

- 8.11. Below is a summary of major applications and projects currently being considered by Council officers under delegated authority:
- Whilst the Environment has granted resource consents for the Ōtaki to North Levin (O2NL) project, officers are now assessing further resource consent applications due to design changes in the project;
  - There are six listed Fast Track projects in our region. One of these is currently being considered by the Environmental Protection Agency, while several others remain in the pre-application phase. In addition, a number of projects are seeking referral to the Fast Track process;
  - A range of resource consent applications are being considered as part of the Te Puwaha project; and
  - Officers are processing an additional consent application in relation to the Te Rere Hau windfarm project.

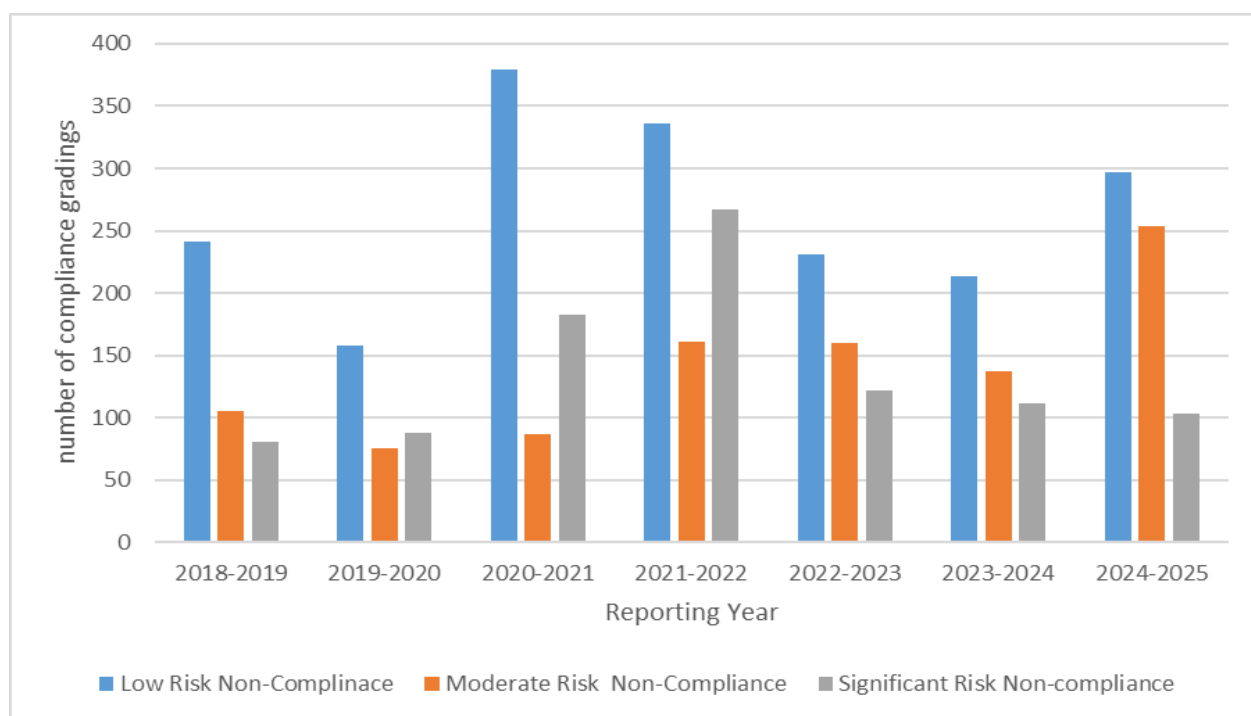
**9. COMPLIANCE PROGRAMME SUMMARY**

- 9.1. The compliance monitoring programme assesses compliance of various activities, including large industrial discharges, rural activities, large civil construction works, municipal and rural water takes and hydro-electric power schemes. Given the breadth of work, the programme is structured around risk that results in those activities that pose a higher risk being subjected to more intensive monitoring than lower risk activities. This risk based approach ensures Horizons’ finite resources are directed to those activities that pose a higher risk to the environment.
- 9.2. During the year, a total of 1,896 consents were identified to be monitored with a total of 2,573 (compared to 2,143 for the previous year) resource consents been monitored. Of the consents monitored, these can include multiple assessments of the same resource consents.

9.3. Table 2 provides a description of the various non-compliance gradings. Overall, the programme had a 75 percent compliance rate for the Year. Figures 6 and 7 show the non-compliance gradings and compliance percentage over the last several years, whilst figures 8 to 10 illustrate some of the activities that were monitored during the year.

**Table 2. Description of Non-Compliance Gradings**

Compliance Grading	Description
Low Risk Non-Compliance	Compliance with most the relevant consent conditions. Non-Compliance carries a low risk of adverse environmental effects or is technical in nature (e.g. failure to submit a monitoring report)
Moderate Risk Non-Compliance	Non-compliance with one or more of the relevant consent conditions, where there are some environmental consequences and/or there is a moderate risk to adverse effects on the environment.
Significant Risk Non-Compliance	Non-compliance with one or more of the relevant consent conditions, where there are significant environmental consequences and/or a high risk of adverse environmental effects.



**Figure 6. Non-Compliance Gradings by Year**

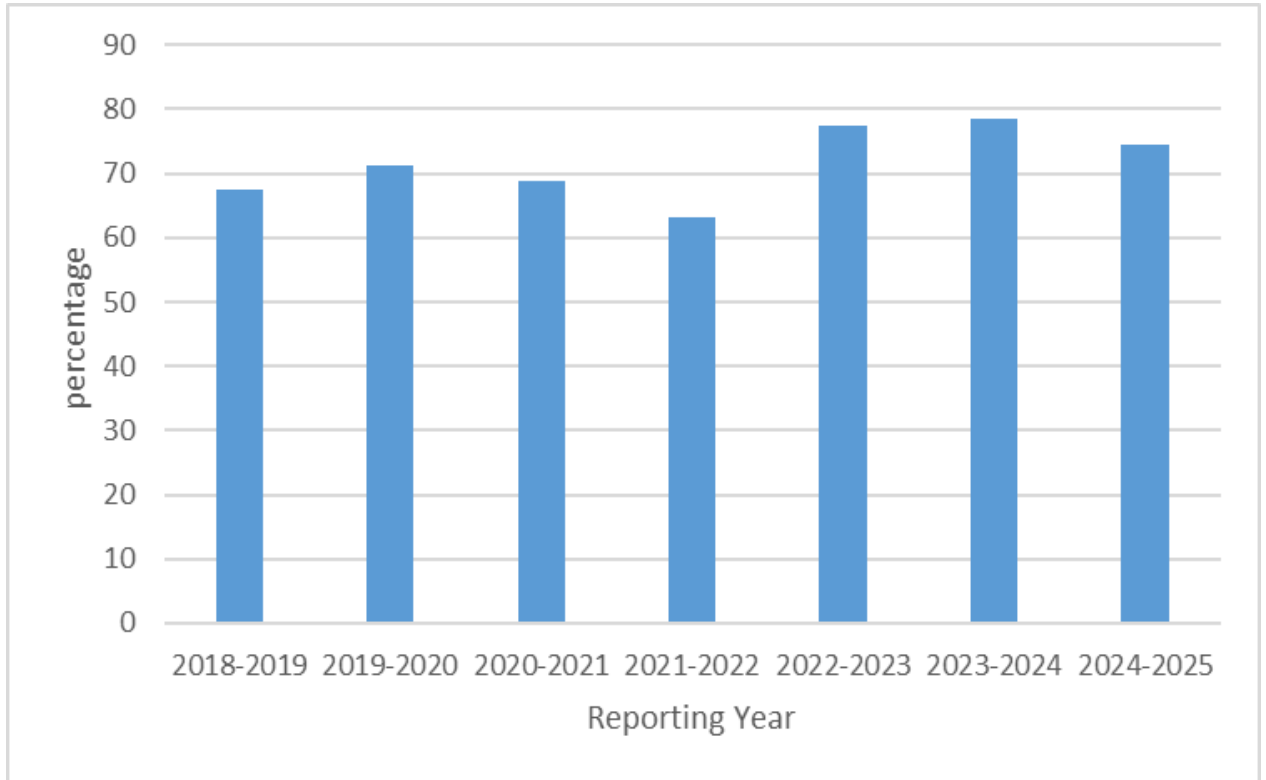


Figure 7. Percentage compliance by year



Figure 8. Hydroseeding on a forestry operation



**Figure 9. Maowhango Dam Disperser Valve.**



**Figure 10. Hunterville WWTP wetland.**

## 10. INCIDENTS AND HAIL PROGRAMME SUMMARY

- 10.1. Horizons operate a 24 hour Pollution Hotline. All Incidents are recorded in our system and categorised from Category 1 (urgent) to Category 5 (non-urgent). When necessary one of our consent monitoring officers will investigate the environmental incident and determine what course of action is required.
- 10.2. Incidents are categorised according to their risk to the environment and responded to accordingly. A response can include an immediate or planned inspection, a phone call, or being referred to another agency such as a Territorial Authority or Civil Aviation.
- 10.3. The range of incidents reported to the pollution hotline include traffic or industrial accidents where spills or discharges to the environment have or may occur, vegetation clearance, earth works and hazardous chemical disposal or spills, fires causing odour and smoke problems, the burning of prohibited materials, contaminants in water ways, odour complaints, dead stock in water ways and much more.
- 10.4. Over the year, the team responded to 903 complaints, of which 436 were physically attended. Figure 11 shows the number of complaints received and physically attended since 2005.

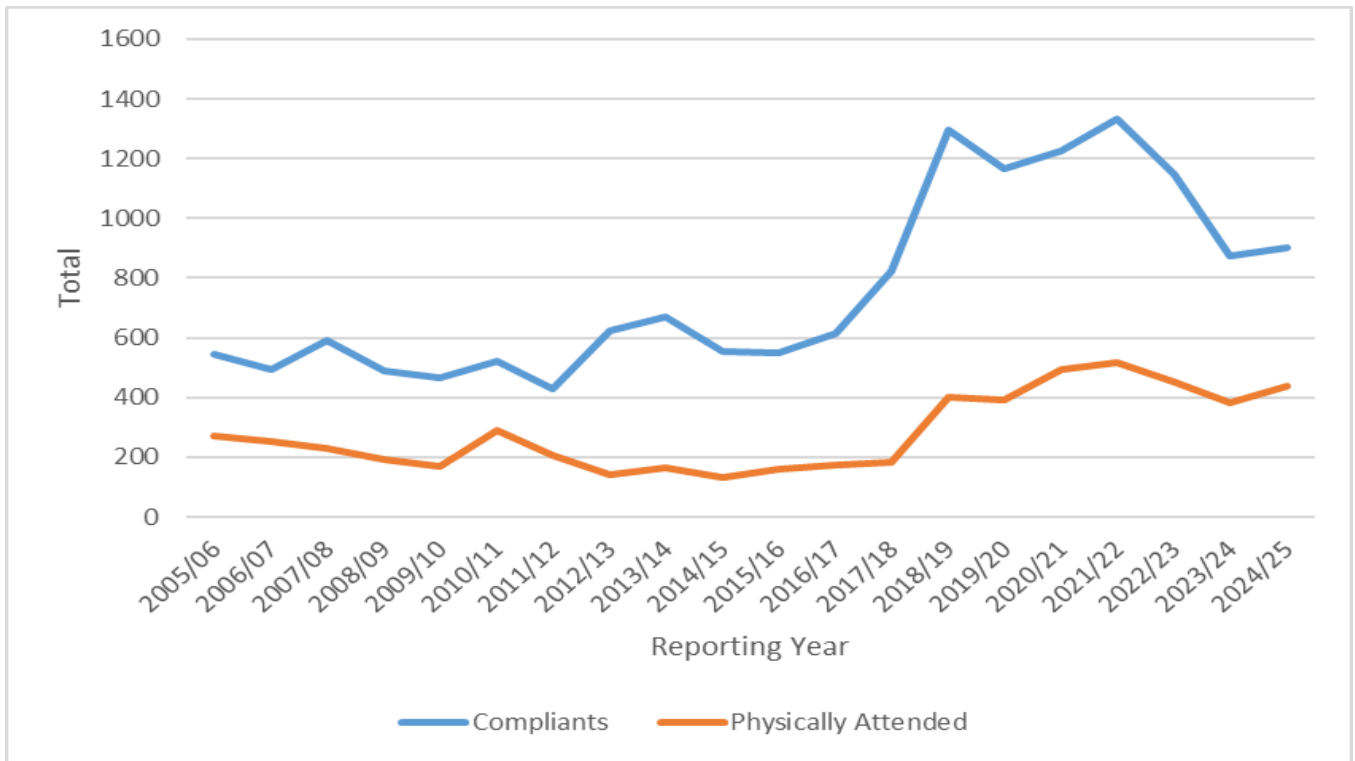


Figure 11. Incidents received and physically attended by year.

10.5. Of the complaints received during the year, the majority relate to discharges to air, with the remaining relating to land and water resources (see Figure 12).

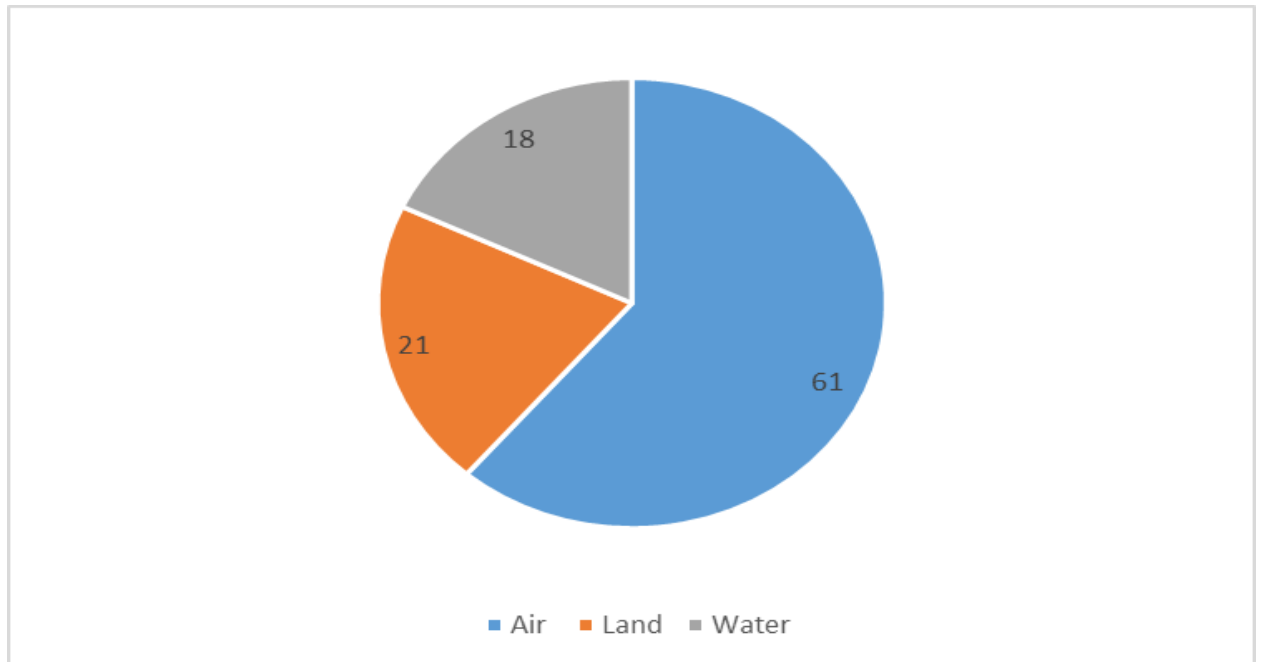


Figure 12. Percentage of resource affected for 2024-2025

10.6. This programme also oversees and manages Council's Hazardous Activity Industrial List (HAIL) database. This database contains information on land that is either contaminated or potentially contaminated. Information from this database is regularly sought by people undertaking due diligence as part of purchase and sale processes. During the year 291 HAIL requests were responded to.

## 11. REGULATORY ACTION

11.1. Where non-compliance is identified, Horizons will take appropriate action after considering a number of matters including the environmental effects, the nature of the receiving environment, compliance history and the conduct and attitude of the alleged offender(s). The enforcement tools available to Horizons can be broadly categorised as either directive or punitive. Table 3 below summarises these tools.

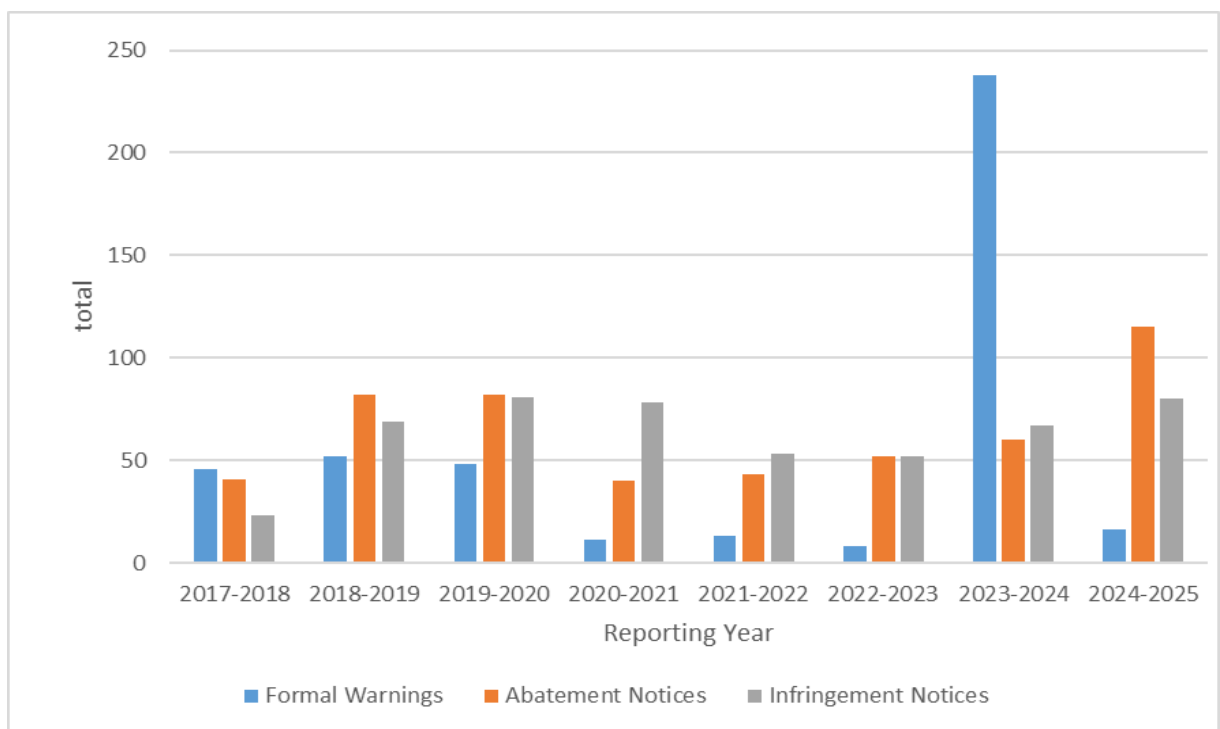
**Table 3. Summary of the enforcement tools available to Horizons broadly categorised as either directive or punitive.**

<b>Directive</b>
<p><b>Compliance monitoring reports and advisory letters</b></p> <p><i>Compliance monitoring reports and/or advisory letters provide detailed feedback on compliance with the terms of a resource consent and rules in the regional plan.</i></p> <p><i>Compliance monitoring reports and advisory letters can be viewed as a written notice requiring certain actions to be taken to achieve compliance with the <b>RMA</b> or to protect the environment. Failure to act in accordance with a compliance monitoring report may result in an escalation of the enforcement response.</i></p>
<p><b>Abatement Notice</b></p> <p><i>An abatement notice is a formal written notice that the <b>RMA</b> specifies can be issued only by a warranted enforcement officer, requiring certain actions to be taken or to cease within a specified time where there is or is likely to be a contravention of the <b>RMA</b> and/or a breach of a plan or resource consent.</i></p>
<p><b>Enforcement Order</b></p> <p><i>An enforcement order is an order made by the Environment Court that may require certain actions to be taken or ceased, or money to be paid, within a specified time.</i></p> <p><i>An enforcement order is similar to an injunction, and does not result in a conviction or a criminal record.</i></p>
<b>Punitive</b>
<p><b>Formal Warning</b></p> <p><i>A formal written warning is a notice to an alleged offender stating an offence has been committed, and to impress on the person their behaviour and offending amounts to criminal conduct that could be prosecuted but Horizons has chosen not to prosecute in a particular instance and that if future offending occurs the warning may be referred to.</i></p> <p><i>Such a warning may be given when a: minor or technical breach has occurred; the environmental damage or impacts are minimal; the matter is one which can quickly and simply be put right; there is no statutory defence and there appears to be no risk of on-going or repeat non-compliance.</i></p>
<p><b>Infringement Notice</b></p> <p><i>Where a resource consent or a rule in a regional plan, or a national environmental standard or other regulations has been breached, Horizons can issue an infringement notice.</i></p> <p><i>An infringement notice is a written notice of an alleged offence under the <b>RMA</b>. An infringement notice requires the payment of a fee amount fixed by regulations, or a request to have the matter heard in Court. Payment of the fine does not lead to the recording of a criminal conviction.</i></p>

**Prosecution**

*Horizons has the power to lay a charge (a charging document) before the District Court for offences under the RMA and to prosecute such charges thereafter. Offences under the RMA are considered criminal matters, which may result in persons having criminal convictions.*

- 11.2. Figure 13 shows the number of warnings, abatement notices and infringement notices issued for last several years, whilst Table 3 details the number of notices issued in relation to contraventions of relevant sections of the RMA. Regarding Table 4, whilst the total number of notices issued is based on each individual notice issued, it is important to note an abatement notice can address more than one contravention of the RMA.
- 11.3. Infringement notices are fines for contravening certain sections of the RMA, with the level of fine being set by the Resource Management (Infringement Offences) Regulations 1999. The fines range from \$200 to \$4000 depending on the nature of the offence.



**Figure 13. Warnings and Notices issued by Year.**

**Table 4. Abatement, Infringement notices and Formal warnings issued by section of RMA.**

Section	Formal Warnings Issued	Abatement notices issued	Infringement notices issued
Section 9 Use of Land	3	36	17
Section 12 Coastal Marine	0	0	0
Section 13 Beds of Lakes and Rivers	0	12	1
Section 14 Water	2	4	5
Section 15 Discharge of Contaminants	10	62	45
Section 17 Duty to Avoid Remedy & Mitigate	0	0	0
Other Breach e.g. Section 22	1	1	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>80</b>

11.4. Over the year there have been a total of four prosecutions put before the court. Table 5 provides a summary of the matters that have been and are still before the courts for the Year.

**Table 5. Prosecution Summary**

Defendant	Charges Filed	Summary
AFFCO New Zealand Limited	21 February 2023	Charges filed and matter before the Court. Court date yet to be determined
Bryan Phillips	3 May 2024	Sentenced and fined \$63,000, plus an enforcement order made by the Court on 22/11/2024.
Edwin Kight	6 March 2024	Charges filed and matter before the Court.
Forest Management NZ Limited and Mt Heslington Limited	27 November 2023	Sentenced and fined on 22/11/24. Forest Management Limited fined \$84,000 and Mt Heslington fined \$42,000.
GN Smith and SKRC Farms	15 March 2024	Reserved decision on sentencing
Midwest Disposals Limited – Bonny Glen	8 March 2024	Sentenced and fined \$202,500, plus enforcement order made by the Court on 21/11/24.

Mr Joshua Green, Radiata Harvesting Limited	2017	19 August 2021	Charges withdrawn by Crown
Tenco Limited. Harvesting Solutions, Robert Calder, Bradley Collett.	Robert NZFW,	9 July 2024	Harvesting Solution Guilty reserved decision on sentencing. Other defendants are still before the courts.
Cashmore contracting & Robert Cashmore		01/04/25	Charges filed and matter before the Court..
Horizons Catchment Ops		11/06/25	Charges filed and matter before the Court.
John McEarlean		15/05/25	Charges filed and matter before the Court.

## 12. REGULATORY PROGRAMME FOR 2024-2025

- 12.1. The Regulatory programme for 2025-2026 will have the continued challenges of balancing demand against available resource. This is due to continued focus on delivering its required business as usual, whilst also providing input into significant projects, implementing both existing and future national regulations, implementing RMA reform and Plan Changes, continuing to provide assistance into delivering Council system projects such as IRIS Classic, IRIS Next Gen and ECM, and assisting in the implementation of Horizons Oranga Wai programme.
- 12.2. As noted above the compliance programme is structured around risk. When this risk based approach is applied to the programme for the 2025-2026 year the following proactive monitoring is planned to occur;
- Monitoring of the major infrastructure projects including O2NL and the Te Rere Hau windfarm;
  - Monitoring of Category 1 and 2 resource consents associated with large industrial and municipal wastewater treatment plant discharges. Other Category 3 and 4 resource consents (including Wastewater Treatment Plant discharges) will be monitored as part of Horizons reactive programme;
  - Monitoring telemetered water supplies and municipal water treatment plants.
  - Monitoring of those Farm Dairy Effluent consents that have either been assessed as non-compliant in the 2024-2025 year and those consents that have not been assessed for 3 years. Additionally, some consents that were assessed as Comply-At Risk or compliant two years ago will also be monitored. We anticipate this will result in approximately 300 consents being assessed this year.
  - Monitoring of intensive land use consents as part of the farm dairy effluent programme to check that mitigations committed in the resource consents are being followed.
  - Monitoring other agricultural activities, including all piggery, poultry and dairy goat operations;
  - Monitoring all consented forestry operations that are actively harvesting. In addition to this a number permitted activity operations will be assessed using a risk based approach.
  - Undertaking compliance monitoring of selected Catchment Operations activities that are either authorised by resource consent or as a permitted activity under the Regional Plan.

12.3. In addition, where non-compliances are identified Horizons will continue to take appropriate action. This action can range from issuing advisory notices, requiring actions as part of compliance reports, to taking formal enforcement action.

### 13. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Greg Bevin  
**REGULATORY MANAGER**

Lizzie Daly  
**GROUP MANAGER STRATEGY REGULATION AND SCIENCE**

### ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.



## Public Excluded Section

### RECOMMENDATION

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the Council meeting as the general subject matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under section 48 (1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution follows.

This resolution is made in reliance on section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by section 6 or section 7 of that Act which would be prejudiced by the holding of the whole or relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public, as follows:

General subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution	Ground(s) under section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution
PX1 Marine and Coastal Area   Takutai Moana update	s7(2)(g) - the withholding of the information is necessary to maintain legal professional privilege.  As part of this item Council will receive legal advice. The withholding of information is necessary to maintain legal privilege.	s48(1)(a)  The public conduct of the part of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists under section 7.
PX2 Council / Committee to consider whether any item in the Public Excluded minutes can be moved into the public domain and define the extent of the release		