



Regional Council functions

Serving the Manawatū community and environment

June 2026

Service centres

Kairanga

Cnr Rongotea and Kairanga
-Bunnythorpe Roads,
Palmerston North

Marton

19 Hammond Street

Taumarunui

34 Maata Street

Regional houses

Palmerston North

11-15 Victoria Avenue

Whanganui

181 Guyton Street

Depots

Taihape

243 Wairanu Road

Woodville

116 Vogel Street

Contact

24 hr freephone 0508 800 800
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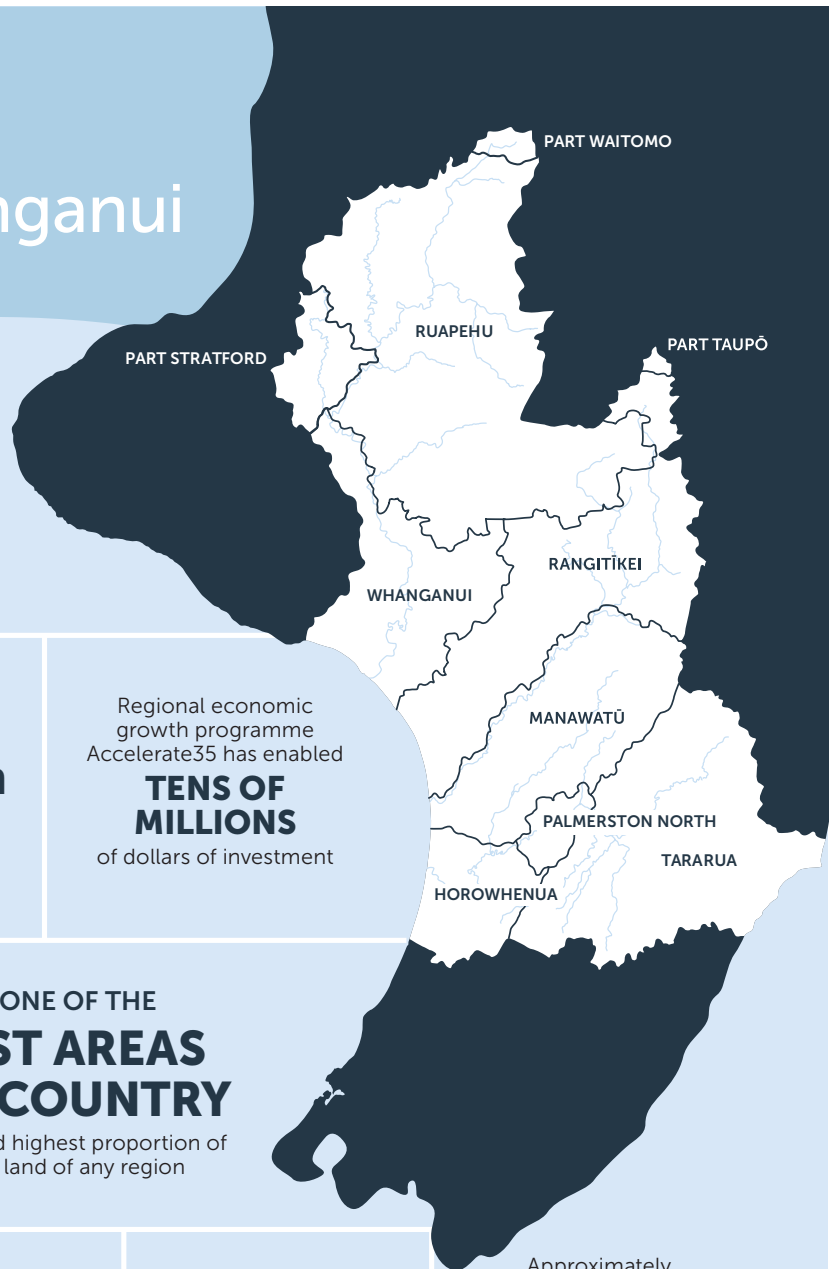
Ngā ihirangi

Contents

Our Region	02
Introduction	03
Mahi on the ground – Catchment Operations Group	05
Land Management Activity	06
Freshwater and Partnerships Activity	11
Biodiversity and Biosecurity Activity	15
River Management and Flood Protection Activity	23
Looking after our future, today – Strategy, Regulation and Science Group	29
Regulatory Management Activity	30
Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience Activity	34
Science and Environmental Reporting Activity	37
Providing connections and information – Transport and Regional Services	42
District Advice Activity	44
Emergency Management Activity	48
Environmental Data Activity	52
Information Management Activity	56
Road Safety Activity	59
Transport Planning Activity	61
Passenger Services Activity	63
Working together – Partnerships, Governance and Leadership	67
Community Wellbeing and Relationships Activity	68
Governance Activity	71
Iwi and Hapū Relationships Activity	73

Our Region

Manawatū-Whanganui



Around
251,000*
PEOPLE
call it home
*2023 Census data

WE HAVE THREE
major river systems,
two coasts and the
Central Plateau

We have
SEVEN
DISTRICTS
and approximately
70%
of our ratepayers
live in urban centres

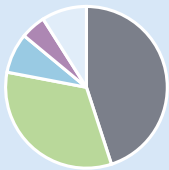
THERE ARE OVER
35,000km
of waterways in the
Horizons Region

Regional economic
growth programme
Accelerate35 has enabled
TENS OF
MILLIONS
of dollars of investment

Mean annual rainfall
in the region ranges
from 900mm
TO OVER
2,000mm

WE HAVE ONE OF THE
LARGEST AREAS
OF HILL COUNTRY
in New Zealand and highest proportion of
highly erodible land of any region

LAND USE IS:



- 45% Sheep and beef
- 33% Native cover
- 8% Dairy
- 5% Forestry
- 9% Other

The Horizons Region
is made up of
2.2 MILLION
HECTARES

of land (8% of New Zealand's
total land area), plus 31,000
hectares of marine area

MW LASS provides
shared services for
SEVEN
COUNCILS
in our region and others
outside of the region

Approximately
117,000
RATEABLE PROPERTIES
contribute to our
work programmes

206,000
HECTARES
or 18% of the nation's versatile
soils are in the region

We also have
two coasts with
jurisdiction extending

12

NAUTICAL
MILES
out to sea

THERE ARE

40

ESTUARIES

in our region, including Manawatū
Estuary, an internationally
recognised Ramsar site

WE HAVE OVER

230
LAKES

This includes 67 dune,
44 riverine, 24 landslide,
7 volcanic lakes and 88
artificial reservoirs

OVER
27%

of our region's
people identify as Māori
There are approximately
30 iwi, 110 hapū
and more than 60 Marae

Regional Council functions – serving the Manawatū community and environment

Ratepayers in the Manawatū District contribute approximately \$10.51 million to deliver regional council functions, which is approximately 15.1% of Horizons' rate take (2024-25 financial year). This document provides an overview of Horizons functions in your district, what your district ratepayers contribute to those activities and work that is undertaken with some key operational examples.

The information presented is a combination of financials from the 2024-25 financial year, data and informed estimates, while also allowing for reasonable assumptions because in many cases due to the catchment management nature of Horizons' business, it doesn't typically report on activity levels at a district level. All tools have been used to condense some information, to assist officers with pulling the document together quickly.

Your place

Covering 2,566.59 km² from Himatangi Beach to Rangiwahia, with Feilding as its town centre, the Manawatū District embraces its rural character. The district is known for highly fertile soils, lending itself to being a major contributor to the country's primary sector. Feilding has won 'New Zealand's Most Beautiful Town' award no less than 16 times, with the welcoming town centre helping it to earn the label of 'Friendly Feilding'. The town's stock saleyards, the largest in Aotearoa New Zealand and among the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere, services farmers from as far afield

as Rangitoto ki te Tonga D'Urville Island and Tokoroa, turning over more than \$2 million each week.

With a population of about 34,800 people, the Manawatū District's population is split about 50/50 between Feilding and other smaller communities such as Kimbolton, Āpiti and Tangimoana. RNZAF Base Ōhakea is one of the country's three air force bases, providing Manawatū and the wider region with a strategic asset in times of emergency and peace. Multiple iwi and hapū are mana whenua or have interests in Manawatū, including Ngāti Kauwhata, Rangitāne, Ngāti Apa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Ngāti Tūwharetoa. The Rangitikei River flows to the north-east of the district, the Manawatū River along the south-east towards the boundary of Horowhenua District, and the Ōroua and Pohangina rivers through the centre.

The Manawatū District is one of the region's growth districts, creating opportunities for economic development, housing and community wellbeing, while increasing pressure on infrastructure, natural resources and resilience planning. Development, infrastructure investment, housing and protection of productive rural land are recurring themes throughout Council's long-term planning and growth management work. Horizons plays an important role in supporting sustainable growth through environmental management, flood protection, transport, science.



Pohangina Valley

District priority/outcome	How Horizons contributes
Growth and development	Regional planning, public transport services, environmental management, catchment planning and infrastructure resilience.
Climate resilience	Flood protection, river management, hazard planning, emergency management and climate science.
Economic development	Supporting productive land use, public transport services, environmental management, and the resilience of communities, businesses and infrastructure.
Environmental protection	Freshwater management, biodiversity programmes, land management and environmental monitoring.
Partnerships and community wellbeing	Working alongside iwi, communities, catchment groups and partner organisations to support local outcomes.

What Horizons does for your communities

Horizons Regional Council is here to serve the 251,000 people who call the Horizons Region home. With 117,000 rateable properties to service, a total budget of \$78 million per annum and accountability for more than 30 pieces of primary legislation and dozens of pieces of secondary legislation, the equivalent of 320 full-time equivalent staff spread across seven territorial authority areas deliver services at a regional scale. Those services are provided through groups of activities: Catchment Operations; Strategy, Regulation and Science; Transport and Regional Services; and Partnerships, Governance and Leadership. Horizons has one field depot/service centres in Manawātū District, located just inside the district at Kairanga, which is mostly utilised by Catchment Operations field staff.

Horizons' priority areas in Manawātū

- Feilding public transport services
- Te Āpiti – Manawātū Gorge
- Tangimoana climate resilience planning
- Makino floodgates management
- Feilding climate resilience (including Reid Line spillway upgrades) and nature-based solutions investigation for Ōroua and Pohangina rivers
- Tōtara Reserve Regional Park
- Pest plant and animal control

Funding regional-scale delivery, locally

Horizons funds activities through a range of sources, including rates, grants and subsidies, fees and charges, investments, and reserves. These funding arrangements ensure ratepayers get value for money through the economy of scale regional service delivery provides. It also ensures Horizons can leverage co-investment from partners such as central government, landowners and territorial authorities. An example of that leverage in the Manawātū District is work undertaken through Accelerate35 (regional economic development) and ongoing bids for flood infrastructure upgrades for Reid's Line.



Planting day at Tōtara Reserve

Mahi on the ground – Catchment Operations Group

This group is made up of the following activities:

- Land Management
- Freshwater and Partnerships
- Biodiversity and Biosecurity
- River Management and Flood Protection

The Catchment Operations Group promotes the health and resilience of the region's land and water ecosystems. It works to ensure an integrated approach to land and river management. This includes biosecurity management for animal and plant pests. With the Manawatū District being in the middle of the large Manawatū River catchment, the district is a significant contributor to and beneficiary of work done across the wider catchment.

Catchment Operations Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

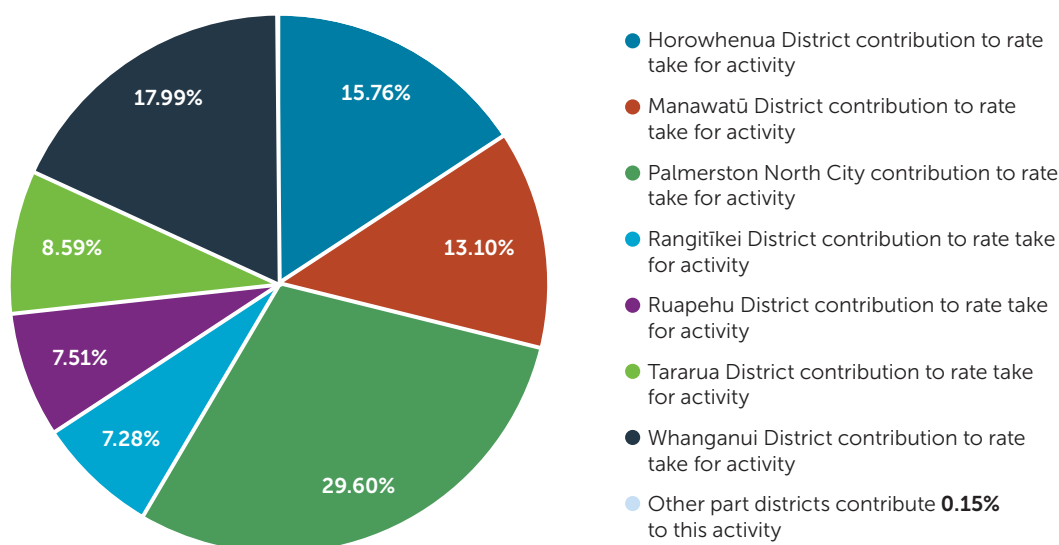
	Land Management	Freshwater and Partnerships	Biodiversity and Biosecurity	River Management and Flood Protection
Regional rates	5,114,164.31	3,672,349.08	10,457,457.77	17,846,633.19
Grants and subsidies	910,000.00	1,920,000.00	-	10,887,326.00
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	144,230.30	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	858,127.94	-	166,630.00	2,013,715.14
Funding surplus/ shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	-107,711.60	45,157.58	-172,523.26	9,859,794.70
Total Operational Expenditure	7,134,234.15	5,547,191.50	10,796,611.03	20,887,879.63
Manawatū District rates	670,077.13	449,568.72	1,453,588.41	3,999,681.46
Manawatū District contribution to rate take for activity	13.10%	12.24%	13.90%	22.41%

Land Management Activity

Land Management at a glance

- Aim of the activity is to reduce hill country **erosion**, and improve **water quality** and **flood capacity** in our region's waterways.
- The work done at the top of catchments ensures benefits all the way to the bottom so is **funded universally** through UAGC, general rates and user charges.
- Regionally **63,000** hectares of erosion control works benefit downstream communities such as Horowhenua.
- Budget for the region: **\$7.13 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: **\$670,077** which is a **13.1%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- Land Management activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$504,000**.
- **32** of the **102** soil quality monitoring sites located in the Manawatū District.
- Current SLUI central government contract runs until **June 2027**.
- **163** whole farm plans have been developed under SLUI.
- **73,776** hectares of land mapped and **4,303** ha of erosion control works completed.
- Modelling suggests erosion work could reduce sediment load in the region's rivers (including the Manawatū River) by about **50%**.
- Maintaining an integrated catchment approach with the Manawatū River catchment crossing **four different territorial authorities** will be a challenge.

Land Management





Sheep on farmland

Understanding soil and keeping it where it belongs

The primary delivery of the Land Management activity is the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI), which uses a variety of tools to treat erosion and address water quality issues. Horizons' land managers provide land use advice and targeted grant assistance to landowners and community groups to support the implementation of works programmes. An additional component of the SLUI programme is the ongoing management of some forestry right arrangements that were established with programme funding. Other Land Management programmes focus on providing land use advice (with limited grant assistance) to landowners, community groups, and others, undertaking soil health monitoring as part of national and regional programmes, partnering with industry and community groups to promote sustainable land use practices, and operate poplar and willow pole nurseries and supply erosion control materials.

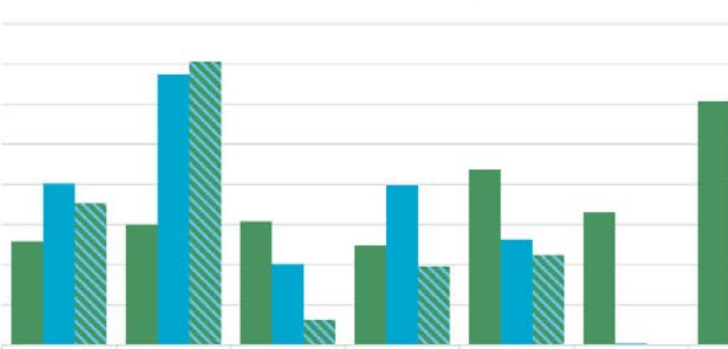
The primary focus of Land Management works is on unstable hill country areas. The majority of the highly erodible land within the Manawatū District is in the upper catchments, especially of the Pohangina and Ōroua rivers, and the watersheds feeding into the mid-Rangitikei River catchment. The activity also

has a regional network to monitor long-term changes in soil health, with 32 of the 102 soil quality monitoring sites located in the Manawatū District. In the Manawatū District, 163 whole farm plans have been developed under SLUI with 73,776 hectares of land mapped and 4,303 ha of erosion control works completed.

The 2025 regional winner for the Ballance Farm Environmental Awards, Hinamoe Farms, came from within the Manawatū District. The Cousins family, who own and operate the farm, have a close relationship with Horizons via SLUI. During the past 35 years they have planted out marginal ground in a range of species. In total, they have retired 137 hectares as part of SLUI, helping to improve water quality and river management outcomes throughout the lower parts of the catchment.

Income and Spend for SLUI by TLA

\$1,600,000
\$1,400,000
\$1,200,000
\$1,000,000
\$800,000
\$600,000
\$400,000
\$200,000
\$-



	Ruapehu	Taranaki	Manawatu	Rangitikei	Whanganui	Horowhenua	Palmerston North	Part Waitomo	Part Stratford	Part Taupo
SLUI Income	\$517,025	\$601,142	\$615,345	\$497,053	\$873,400	\$662,399	\$1,215,592	\$8,153	\$10,488	\$71
SLUI Spend	\$804,223	\$1,348,379	\$405,433	\$797,349	\$526,108	\$9,731	\$1,658	\$13,547	\$12,975	
Farmer Contribution	\$705,915	\$1,410,121	\$127,886	\$392,716	\$448,692			\$4,374	\$1,244	

■ SLUI Income ■ SLUI Spend ■ Farmer Contribution

Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.

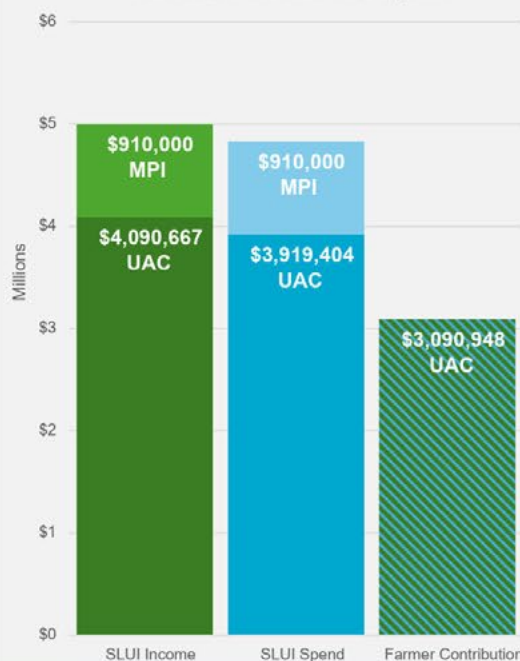
Income sources are from Universal Annual Charge from SLUI and income from MPI - forestry sales, and farmer contribution to works have not been included in these numbers.

Long-term expenditure on joint venture forests is also not included (leases, rates, amortisation etc.)

SLUI grant projects are directly linked to TLA. Management, staff time and associated costs have been appropriately extrapolated based on the distribution of 2024-2025 works as well as the area under SLUI farm plans both this year and life to date.

■ Income
■ Spend
■ Farmer Contribution

Total SLUI Income and Spend



Stats NZ, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR

SLUI Income and Spend by TLA 2024 - 2025

Map prepared by: W McKay
Date: 30/01/2026

horizons
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$7.13 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$670,077

Land Management is funded primarily through a Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI) Universal Annual General Charge. SLUI is also supported by a four-year contract with central government via the Hill Country Erosion Fund. Other land activities are funded through general rates (\$780,000) and user charges through pole nursery sales (\$750,000). The pole nurseries aim to run on a breakeven budget (i.e. no cost to ratepayers).

The current contract with central government via the Hill Country Erosion Fund runs until June 2027, with a new round of funding already applied for. If successful, SLUI would have government co-funding until June 2031.

There is also one Forestry Rights agreement in place in Manawatū District through the SLUI work programme. Horizons have established forests across the region to control erosion in agreement with the individual landowner (an individual Forestry Right). Horizons has rights to harvest the forests and obligations to replant. The harvest revenues are shared between Horizons and the landowner.

People and relationships

About 19 FTEs directly contribute to the Land Management activity across the region. While none are based in the Manawatū District, 1.5FTE service the district from neighbouring Rangitikei and Taranaki districts. Other support for the Land Management activity is provided by corporate staff (e.g. finance, communications, HR).

Key relationships for this activity include landowners across the district's extensive hill country, central government, the NZ Poplar and Willow Research Trust, the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust, and commercial pole growers.

Key considerations for delivery models

The aim of the Land Management activity is to reduce hill country erosion, and improve water quality and flood capacity in our region's waterways. The work done at the top of catchments ensures benefits all the way to the bottom. This is why funding is done on a universal basis, ensuring an integrated approach to catchment management by having people pay for work they benefit from even if that work is done outside of their district. In the case of the Manawatū District, SLUI work done at the top of the Manawatū River catchment (i.e. in Manawatū and Taranaki districts) helps to improve water quality and river capacity throughout. SLUI modelling suggests work being done could reduce sediment load in the region's rivers (including the Manawatū River) by about 50 percent, although this may be impacted in the future by climate change causing more intense storm events. Maintaining this integrated catchment approach in an amalgamation environment, especially with the Manawatū River catchment crossing four different territorial authorities, will be a challenge depending on how territorial authorities see their futures.

2024-25 Activities

\$670,000

Rate contribution from the district to Land Management activities

\$504,000

Worth of Land management activities delivered in the district

2024-25 Key Outputs

7 Farms mapped

2,648 ha mapped area

155 ha erosion mitigation works

Total Outputs 2006-2025

163

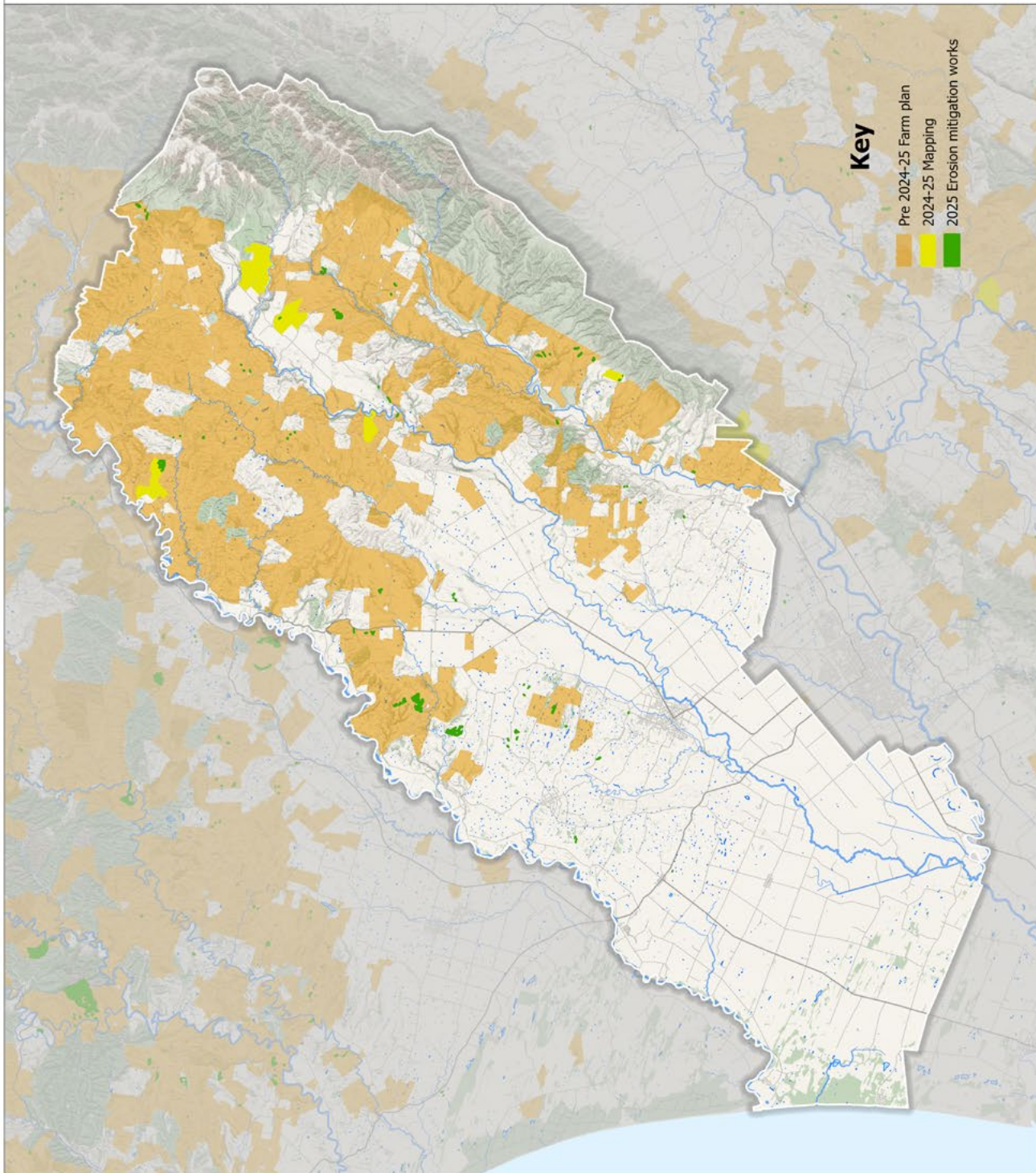
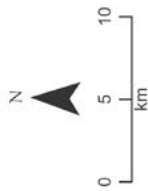
Farms mapped

73,776 ha

Total mapped area

4,692 ha

erosion mitigation works



Land Management Activities In Manawatū District 2025 FY

Prepared by: W. McKay
Date: 3/06/2026
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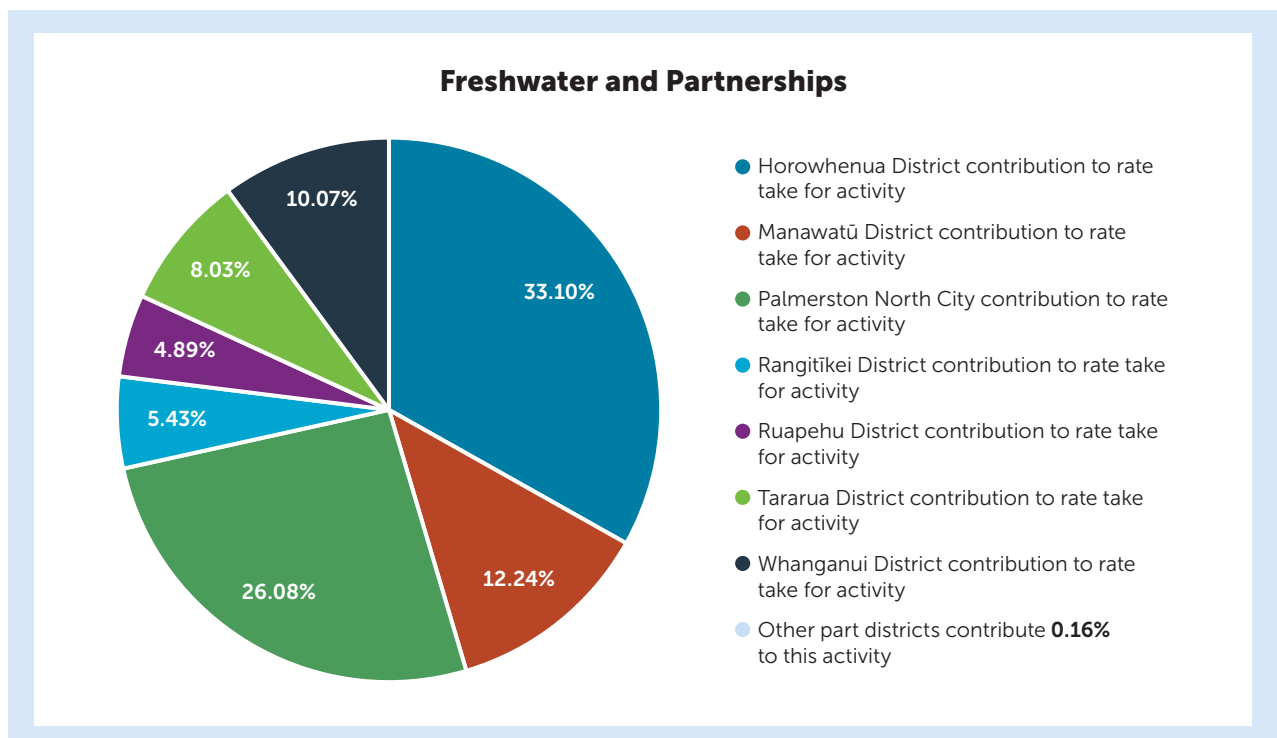


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Freshwater and Partnerships Activity

Freshwater and Partnerships at a glance

- The aim of this activity is to improve **aquatic habitat** and **water quality** by working with external partners.
- The work done has benefits at both a local and regional scale, so is funded via **targeted and general rates**.
- The health of waterways in the Rangitikei District is directly connected to land use and water management decisions made across catchments spanning **multiple territorial authority areas**.
- Budget for the region: **\$5.55 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: **\$449,568**, which is a **12.24%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget.
- Freshwater and Partnerships activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$1.07 million**.
- Freshwater improvement activities are funded through a combination of **targeted rates, general rates, and central government funding**.
- 2024-25 expenditure in the Manawatū District under this activity **exceeded its rates contribution** but benefitted from regional council advocacy for central government funding.
- More than **53,000** plants were planted, **1** fish passage remediation undertaken, and **11.2km** of stream fencing completed in the Manawatū District in 2024-25.
- Freshwater does not adhere to lines drawn on maps, achieving meaningful water quality improvements requires coordinated action **across people-defined boundaries**, and a **shared commitment** to long-term outcomes.
- Rates for **Manawatū River Leaders' Accord** projects, which benefit Manawatū District, is sourced from four districts.



Working with communities to improve freshwater health

The primary functions of the Freshwater and Partnerships Activity are to work with external partners to improve aquatic habitat and water quality. This is primarily done through stream fencing, riparian planting, giving advice on constructed wetlands, and other interventions. The programme also enables community projects through funding and advice and provides guidance and raises awareness of rules and regulations.

The Manawatū River catchment is vast, flowing through four different territorial authority areas and from one side of the North Island to the other. Pressures the catchment faces include water pollution from discharges, reduced flows from abstraction, habitat disruption, invasive species, land-use impacts, and the growing effects of climate change.

In 2020, Horizons bid for more than \$100 million of funding for environmental enhancement projects in response to the Government's call for shovel ready projects to help with New Zealand's economic recovery from COVID-19. Three projects were successful, with the riparian planting and stream fencing programme and fish passage remediation programme being of benefit to the Manawatū District.

The \$11.3 million Jobs for Nature Riparian Management project – funded \$4.6 million from Government, \$2.7 million from Horizons, and \$4 million from landowners – expanded Horizons' existing stream fencing and riparian planting programme over four years, significantly increasing delivery beyond existing targets of 79km of fencing and 63,333 plants per year. The programme aimed to accelerate water quality improvements by scaling up interventions that exclude stock from waterways, reducing E. coli levels and improving river swimmability. It also responded to strong landowner demand, including in the Manawatū District, that had previously been constrained by limited funding and staff, with additional resources enabling expanded delivery across all waterways, including smaller streams that contribute most to nutrient and E. coli loads in the region. As part of this project, more than 53,000 plants were planted and 11.2km of stream fencing completed in the Rangitikei District in 2024-25.

The \$3.2 million Jobs for Nature Fish Passage project – funded \$2.6 million from Government, \$300,000 from Horizons, and \$300,000 from barrier owners – expanded Horizons' programme to identify and remediate barriers to native fish migration, helping address widespread declines in fish diversity and distribution across the region. The project focussed on stream walking, barrier removal, and monitoring to improve fish passage, refine data, and make information publicly available, with at least 25 barriers removed and 1,250km of habitat opened up. It aimed to restore migratory pathways, increase native fish populations and kākahi recruitment, and complement wider habitat improvements such as riparian fencing and planting to lift overall waterway health. As part of this project, 1 fish passage remediation was undertaken in the Manawatū District in 2024-25.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$5.5 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$449,568

Grant funding and external subsidies (e.g., central government co-investment) are sought wherever possible. Where this is not available, freshwater improvement activities are funded through a combination of targeted rates, general rates, and central government funding. The Manawatū River Water Quality Enhancement programme is funded through a targeted rate on properties within the Manawatū River catchment, with costs shared across parts of the Horowhenua, Manawatū, and Tararua districts, as well as all ratepayers within Palmerston North City. In addition, Manawatū ratepayers contribute through general rates to the Regional Freshwater Improvement programme and provided the ratepayer share of the Jobs for Nature Riparian Management and Fish Passage projects. Horowhenua ratepayers also contribute through general rates to the Regional Freshwater Improvement programme. This recognises the regional and inter-generational benefits of this work across catchments.

People and relationships

About 7 FTEs directly contribute to the Freshwater and Partnerships activity across the region. Staff from across the wider organisation also support this activity, including finance, communications, science and policy, and information services.

Key relationships for this activity in the Manawatū District include landowners, Manawatū District Council, iwi and hapū, community groups, the Department of Conservation, and central government agencies involved in freshwater management and biodiversity funding. The Manawatū River Leaders' Accord brings together a wide group of partners across the catchment, including territorial authorities, iwi, community organisations, and industry, to work toward shared water quality outcomes.

Key considerations for delivery models

Freshwater does not adhere to lines drawn on maps. The health of waterways in the Manawatū District is directly connected to land use and water management decisions made across catchments spanning multiple territorial authority areas. The Manawatū River Leaders' Accord exists precisely because achieving meaningful water quality improvements requires coordinated action across people-defined boundaries, and a shared commitment to long-term outcomes no single council could deliver alone.

The rating method for the Manawatū River Water Quality Enhancement programme reflects this reality, and is a strong example of the importance of integrated catchment management. Depending on how amalgamations are done, rating for this work, deciding where the work will be done, and allocating who does the work, must be considered carefully. Maintaining this kind of cross-boundary funding and governance arrangement in a post-amalgamation environment will require careful consideration, particularly if structural changes result in different parts of the catchment sitting under different entities with different priorities and funding mechanisms.

More broadly, freshwater improvement work is inherently long-term. The ecological processes involved – riparian vegetation establishing, sediment loads reducing, fish populations recovering – play out over decades, not annual reporting cycles. This activity requires institutional patience, sustained funding, and consistent relationships with landowners and communities that span many years. These qualities may be challenging to preserve through structural disruption, and difficult to rebuild once lost.

2024-25 Activities

\$450,000

Rate contribution from the district to Freshwater activities

\$1,070,000

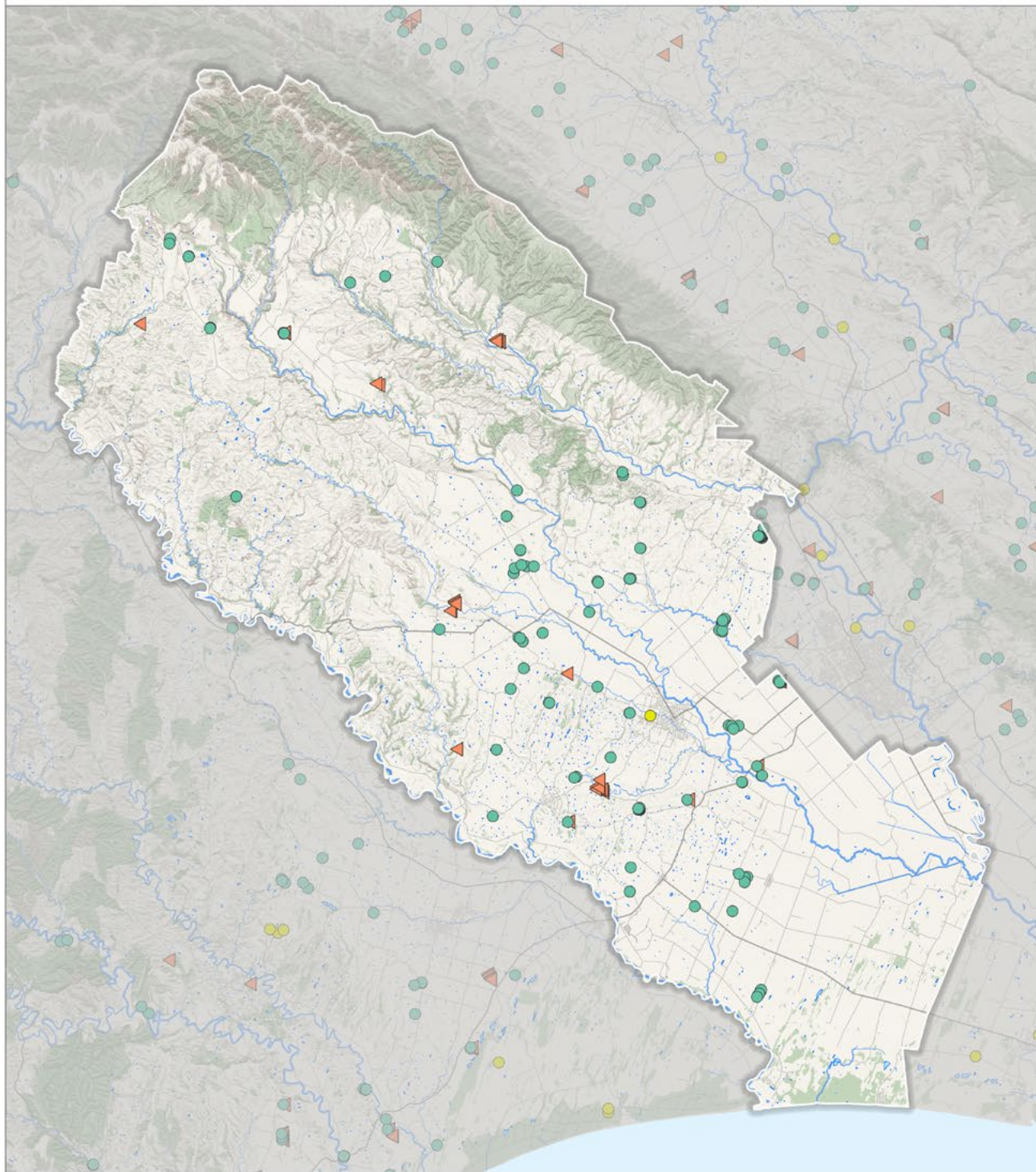
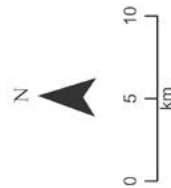
Worth of Freshwater activities delivered in the district

2024-25 Key Outputs

1 Fish passage remediation
11.2 km of stream fencing
53,100 plants planted

Key

- Fish passage remediation
- Planting project
- Fencing project



Freshwater Activities In Manawatū District 2025 FY

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Biodiversity and Biosecurity Activity

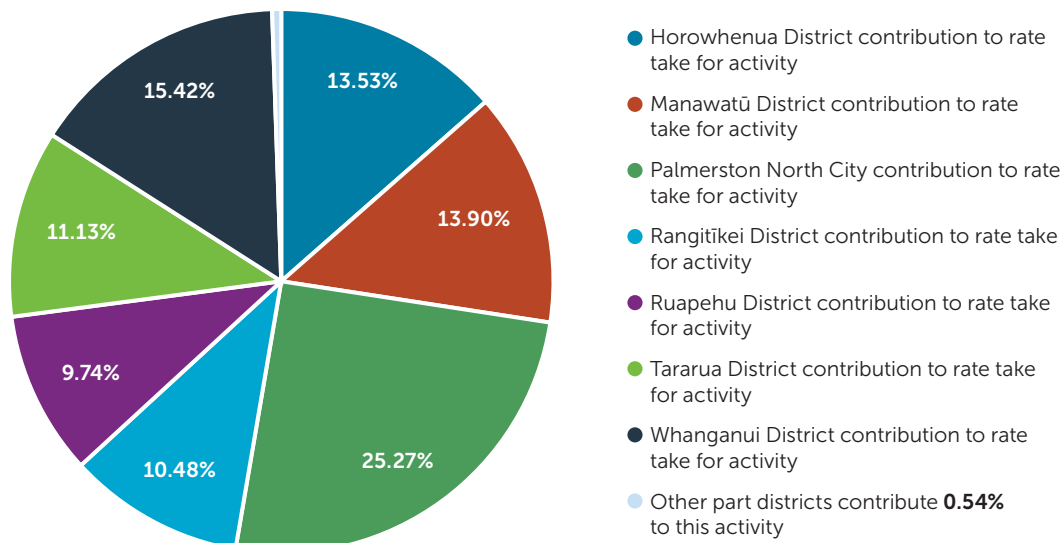
Biodiversity and Biosecurity at a glance

- The aim of the activity is to protect and restore **indigenous biodiversity** and prevent or manage the spread of harmful **pest plants and animals**.
- Budget for the region: **\$10.8 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: **\$1.45 million**, which is a **13.9%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget.
- Total activity expenditure in the district in 2024-25: **\$1.63 million**.
- Biodiversity activity undertaken in the district in 2024-25: **\$720,950** operating expenditure, **\$104,211** capital expenditure.
- Animal pest control activity undertaken in the district in 2024-25: **\$671,000**.
- Pest plant control activity undertaken in the district in 2024-25: **\$136,000**.
- Current expenditure in the Manawātū District under this activity **exceeds its rates contribution**. If funded under a smaller model, there would be a significant impact on local rates, assuming the existing funding model was used.
- **85%** of biodiversity and biosecurity work is mostly from general rates and UAC to recognise the regional benefit.
- **15%** is funded via targeted rate to recognise economic benefits of biosecurity protection for rural properties over **4** hectares.
- **379** pest plant control sites covering **5,392** hectares managed in the district.
- **5,867** possum bait stations across **27** possum control operations in the district.
- Rook control programme has reduced active rookeries from **47** to **9** in the district.
- **19** priority habitat sites receiving ongoing funding and protection in the district.
- **Tōtara Reserve Regional Park** is managed as part of this activity, recently confirmed as habitat for native bats and rare powelliphanta snails.
- Te Āpiti — Manawātū Gorge Icon Project spans **3** districts.
- Pest plants and animals **do not respect territorial boundaries** — effective biosecurity work depends heavily on coordinated action across land tenures and administrative boundaries.
- The Regional Pest Management Plan exists to ensure a **regional-scale** response to issues.
- **5** Kanorau Koiora Taketake – Indigenous Biodiversity Community Grant projects in the Manawātū District .



Hihi (Stitchbird)

Biodiversity and Biosecurity



Protecting the environment today for tomorrow

The primary delivery of the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity spans two closely related but distinct functions: protecting and restoring indigenous biodiversity across the region and preventing or managing the spread of harmful pest plants and animals. Horizons' biodiversity and biosecurity staff work with landowners, community groups, iwi, district and city councils, and other agencies to deliver pest management programmes, provide advice and support, and implement biodiversity restoration projects.

Horizons operates under a Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP), which sets out the rules and programmes for managing listed pest species across the region. The RPMP establishes different management programmes depending on the threat level and distribution of each pest. Horizons works alongside the Department of Conservation, regional and district councils, and community-led groups to deliver coordinated pest control across land tenures. The RPMP is currently under review, with a formal consultative process expected in 2027.

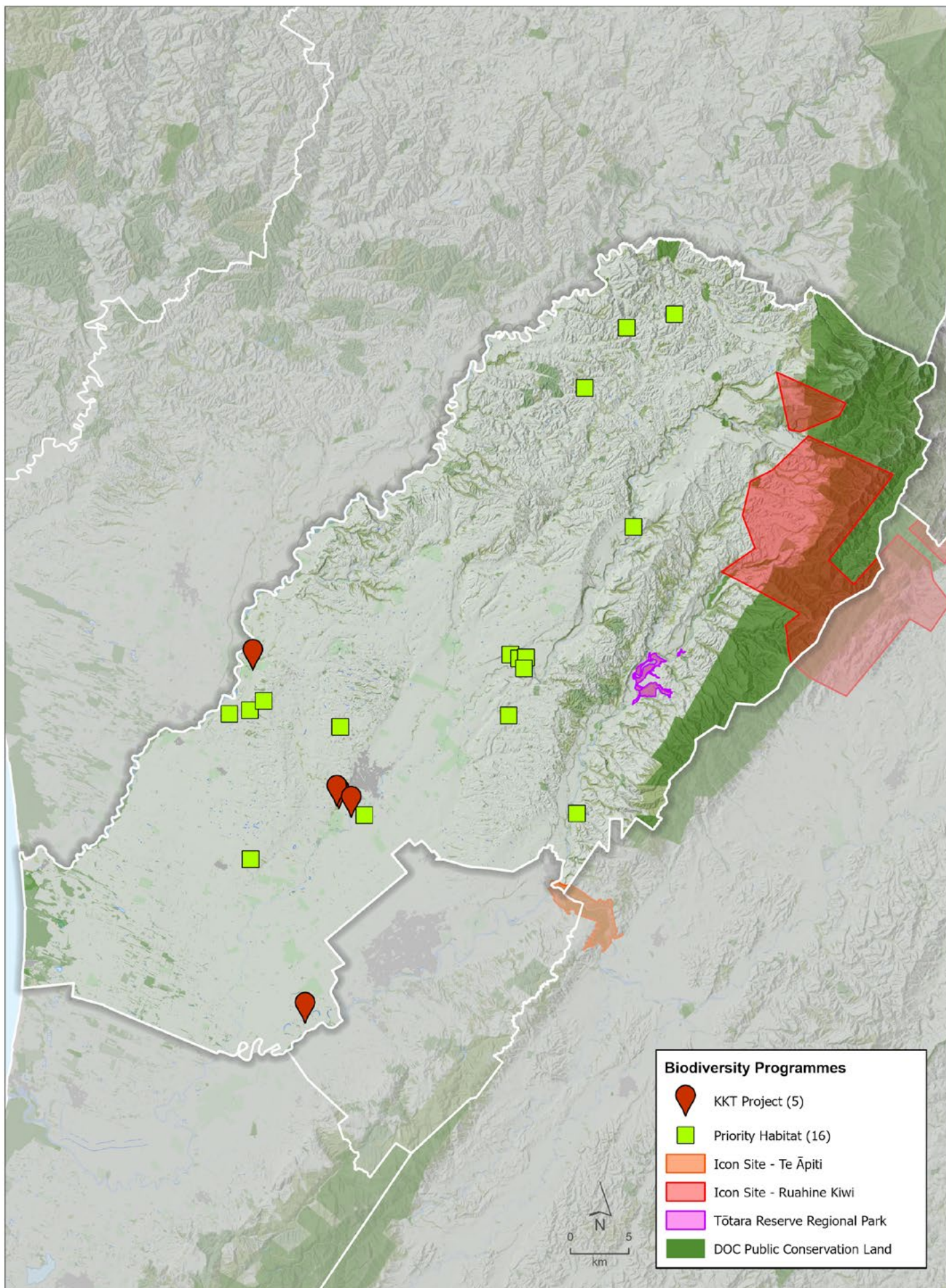
The biodiversity function focuses on supporting landowners and communities in protecting and enhancing areas of indigenous vegetation and habitat, including through advice, funding assistance, and partnerships with restoration groups.

The Manawatū District contains significant biodiversity values alongside considerable pest pressure, with a mix of hill country, river valleys, gorge environments, and productive farmland supporting a range of rare and threatened ecosystems.

The possum control programme is the largest animal pest programme in the district, currently servicing 25,867 bait stations across 228,841 hectares, mapped across 27 possum control operations. Rook control is also a focus, with nine rookeries now actively managed — down from 47 when the programme began. The animal pest advisory service responded to 129 enquiries in the Manawatū District in the most recent year, out of a regional total of 587.

The pest plant team manages 379 sites with an operational area of 5,392 hectares in the district. High priority pest plants controlled in the Manawatū District include African feather grass, banana passionfruit, blue passion flower, boneseed, cathedral bells, Chilean rhubarb, climbing alstroemeria, climbing spindleberry, Darwin's barberry, moth plant, Mexican feather grass, old man's beard, purple loosestrife, and woolly nightshade.

The biodiversity team manages 16 priority habitat sites covering 137 hectares in the district, as well as five contestable fund projects worth \$72,000. The district is also home to two Icon Projects. Te Āpiti – Manawatū



Biodiversity Programme Activities

Manawātū District

Prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 3/06/2025



Gorge project, budgeted at \$128,000, spans three districts, with costs and staff time split accordingly. The Ruahine Kiwi project, shared between the Manawatū and Tararua districts, contributes a further \$25,000.

A distinctive feature of the Manawatū District is Tōtara Reserve Regional Park, managed as part of the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity at a cost of \$448,644. The reserve has recently been confirmed as habitat for native bats and rare powelliphanta snails – the snail presence a direct payoff for the extensive rat trapping programme established to encourage bird breeding and protect rare and threatened fauna. The reserve requires significant multi-disciplinary support from Horizons' regional office. The campground at Tōtara Reserve is funded separately through user fees (more than 30% of costs) and a targeted rate on nearby Palmerston North City and Manawatū District ratepayers (90% of the remaining balance), with a small general rate contribution.

In total, there are 19 sites in the Manawatū District receiving ongoing funding and protection as priority habitat areas recognised for rare and threatened ecosystem types.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$10.8 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$1.45 million

Total operating budget for this activity in the Manawatū District: approximately \$1,632,161, comprising biodiversity (\$720,950 operating, \$104,211 capital), biosecurity animals (\$671,000), and biosecurity plants (\$136,000).

Biodiversity and Biosecurity work across the region is funded from a general rate (55% share) and Universal Annual Charge (30%), recognising the regional benefit of these activities. To recognise the additional economic benefits of biosecurity protection for rural landowners, a portion of this work is funded via a targeted rate (15% share) on properties larger than four hectares. Capital expenditure may be funded through borrowing.

The regional possum control operation programme uses contractors at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million per year. Pest plant contractors and fencers are also well used across eradication and priority habitat sites in the district. Contractual obligations at Tōtara Reserve include camping and ablution block service contracts and pest plant control contracts.

People and relationships

There are 38 FTEs in the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity across the region. In the Manawatū District, 6.25 FTEs deliver biodiversity and biosecurity work programmes – 1.4 FTE in biodiversity, 3.62 FTE in biosecurity animals, and 1.2 FTE in biosecurity pest plants.

Key relationships in the Manawatū District include landowners (including some iwi trust owners), QEII National Trust, Ngā Whenua Rāhui, pest control contractors, plant nurseries, trap suppliers, and fencers. The Tōtara Reserve Advisory Group, the Pohangina Valley community, and Awahau School camping community are important relationships for the reserve specifically. Broader relationships include Rangitāne o Manawatū, Ngāti Kauwhata, the Te Āpiti Governance Group, Department of Conservation, Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA), and territorial authorities including Palmerston North City Council, Horowhenua District Council, Manawatū District Council, and Tararua District Council.

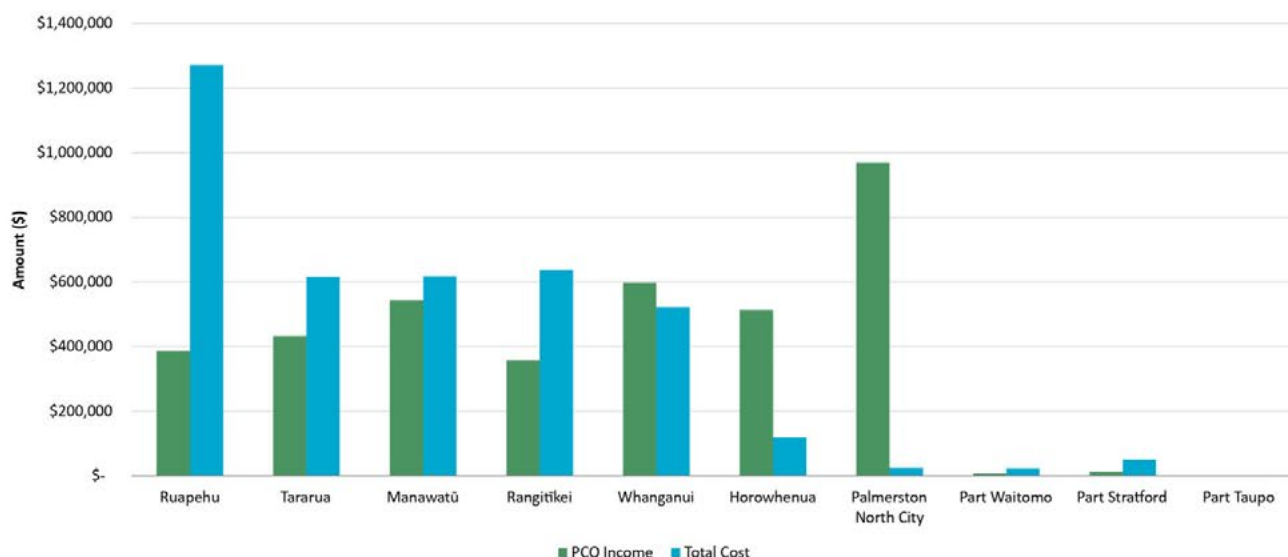
Key considerations for delivery models

Pest plants and animals do not respect territorial boundaries. The effectiveness of biosecurity work depends heavily on coordinated action across land tenures and administrative boundaries – a gap in control on one property or in one district can undermine investment made across a much wider area. Most biosecurity programmes operating in the Manawatū District are cross-boundary by design, with pests best managed at landscape scale with tenure-neutral coverage. Te Āpiti – Manawatū Gorge project, spanning three districts, is a direct illustration of this.

The regional funding model is particularly significant for the Manawatū District. Current expenditure in the district exceeds the rate contribution collected from Manawatū ratepayers. This means the district receives more in biosecurity and biodiversity investment than it contributes to the regional pool. If this activity were funded by the district alone using the current funding model, it would have a significant impact on local rates.

Tōtara Reserve adds a further dimension unique to the Manawatū District. As a regional park, it requires multi-disciplinary support from across Horizons and serves communities well beyond the district's boundaries. Its funding model – combining user fees, a targeted rate on nearby ratepayers across two territorial authority areas, and a general rate contribution – reflects the shared regional benefit of the reserve and would require careful consideration in any post-amalgamation environment.

Income and Spend for PCO by TLA



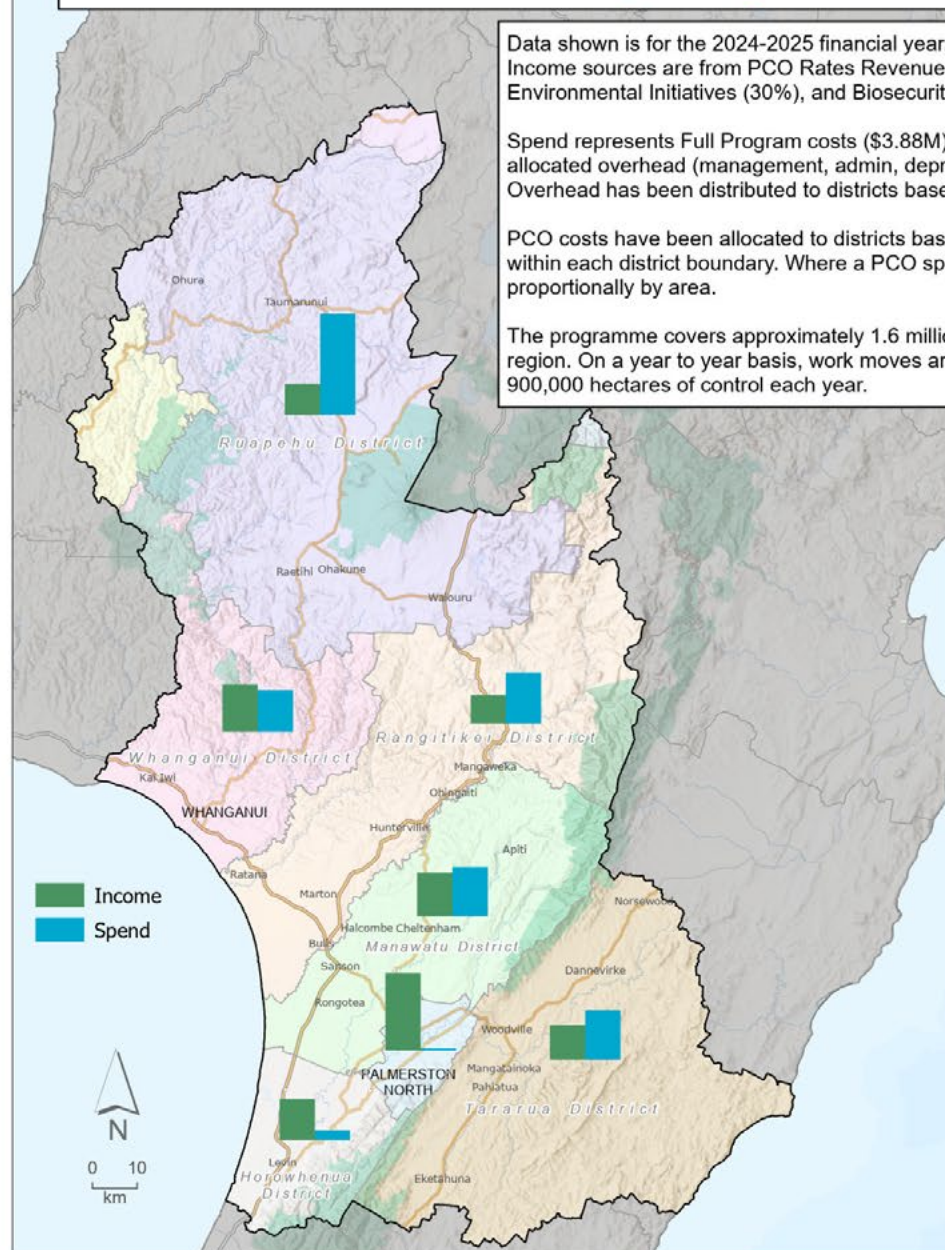
Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.

Income sources are from PCO Rates Revenue, comprising General Rate (55%), Environmental Initiatives (30%), and Biosecurity & Biodiversity >4ha rate (15%).

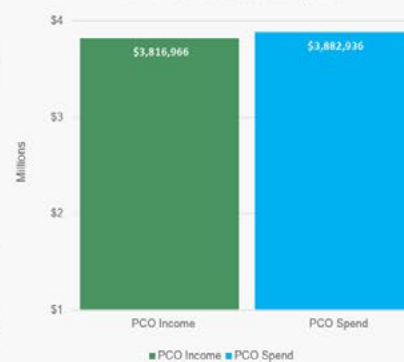
Spend represents Full Program costs (\$3.88M), including direct operational costs and allocated overhead (management, admin, depreciation, and program consumables). Overhead has been distributed to districts based on their proportion of total PCO hectares.

PCO costs have been allocated to districts based on the proportion of PCO area (hectares) within each district boundary. Where a PCO spans multiple districts, costs are split proportionally by area.

The programme covers approximately 1.6 million hectares of the 2.2 million hectares in the region. On a year to year basis, work moves around the region generally in the order of 900,000 hectares of control each year.



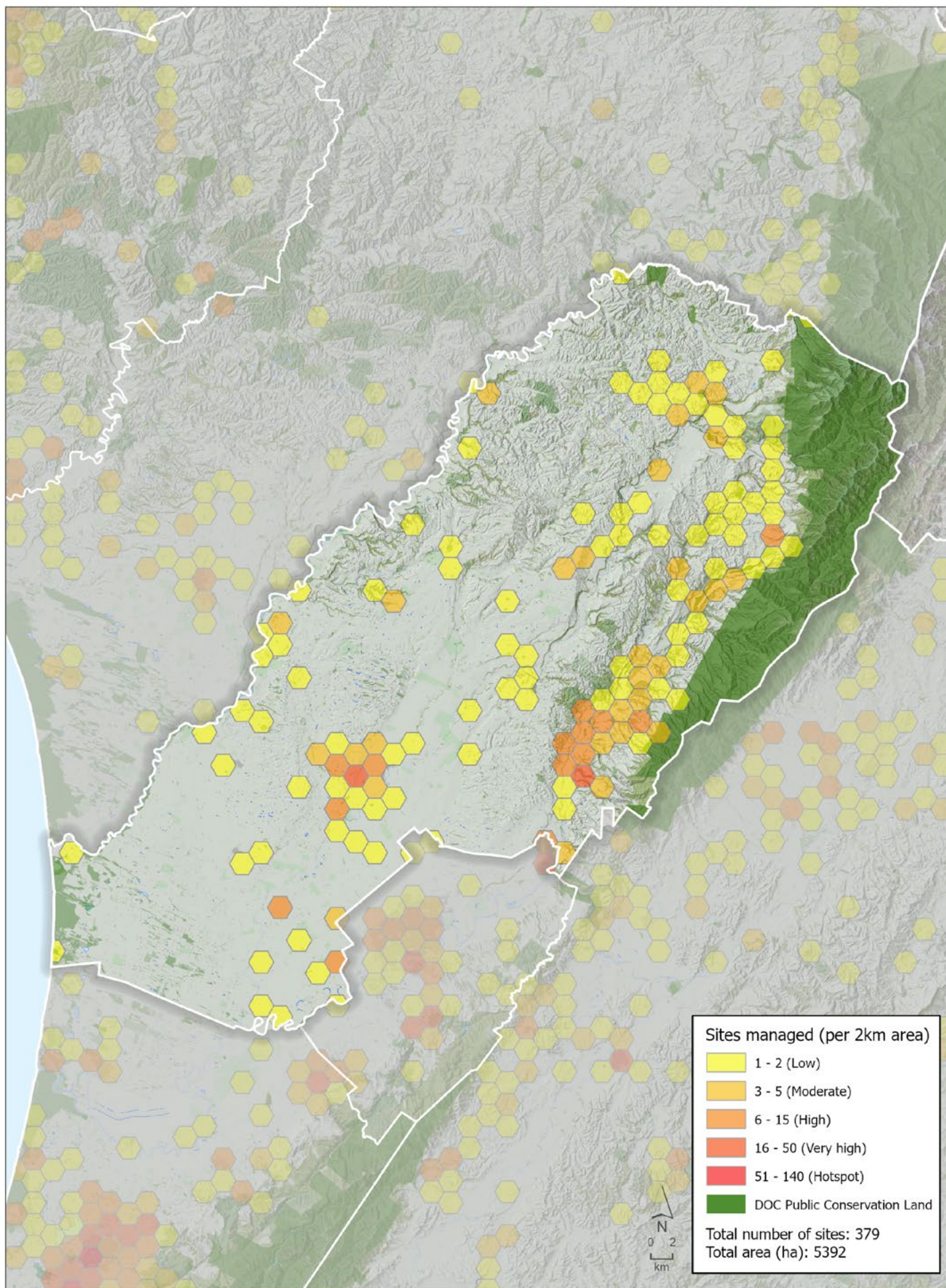
Total PCO Income and Spend



Possum Control Income and Spend by TLA

Map prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 30/01/2026

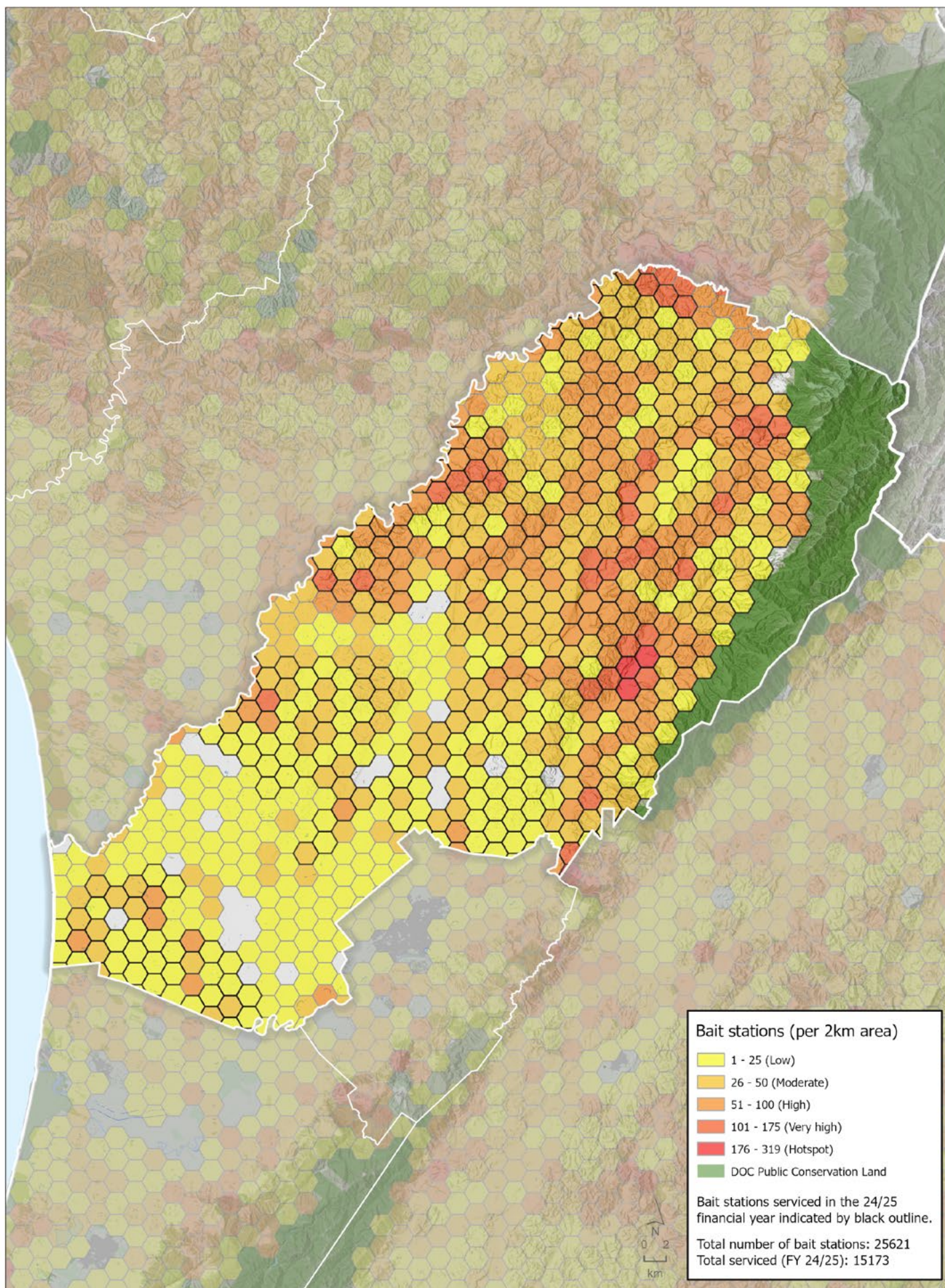
horizons
REGIONAL COUNCIL



Biosecurity Pest Plants - Managed Sites

Manawātū District

Prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 3/05/2026



Possum Control Programme - Bait Station Coverage

Manawātū District

Prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 4/06/2026

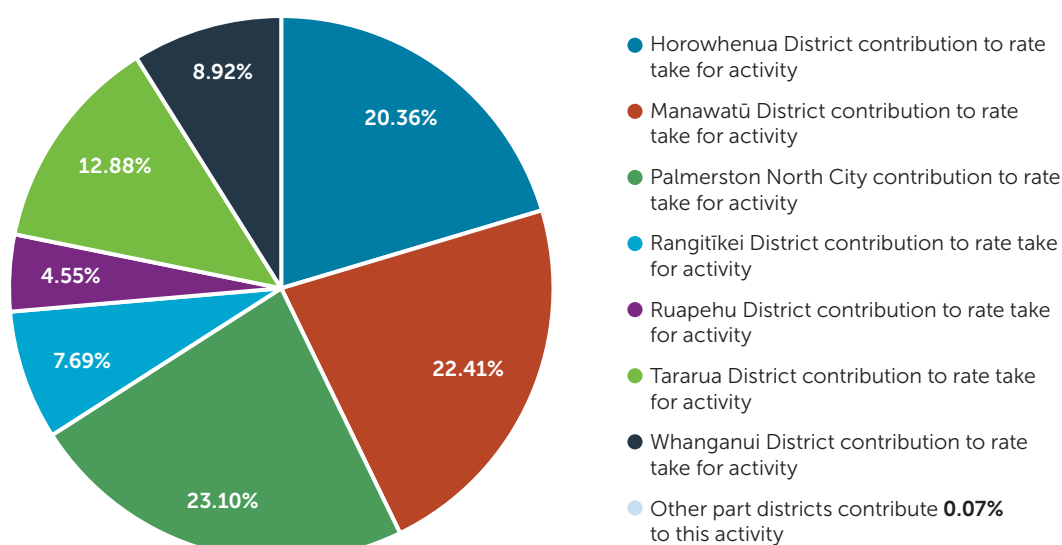


River Management and Flood Protection Activity

River Management and Flood Protection at a glance

- The aim of this activity is to protect people and property from **weather events**, enabling the regional economy to continue.
- Flood risk in Manawatū District is shaped by what happens across the **entire catchment** as it is the recipient of water that has travelled through multiple territorial authority areas.
- **34** river and drainage schemes across the region, including **5** in the Manawatū District which are a mix of channel maintenance, flood protection and drainage.
- **3,844** assets across all schemes are valued about **\$1.2 billion**, with **4 of the 5** schemes in Manawatū District having **545** assets with a replacement value of about **\$39 million** (**3%** of the regional total, as of June 2025).
- The Manawatū District shares coverage of the Lower Manawatū scheme (LMS) with two neighbouring Districts, the LMS has 856 assets with a replacement value of **\$714 million** (managed by **5** schemes). The additional costs for the dam safety regulations are impacting scheme budgets.
- Budget for the region: **\$20.89 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: **\$4 million**, which is a **22%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget.
- River Management and Flood Protection activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: approx. **\$5 million**.
- River and drainage schemes are generally funded on an 80/20 split, with **80%** of funding via targeted rates and **20%** via a general rate contribution to recognise the regional benefit of supported economy.
- Research shows every **\$1** of investment in flood protection provides **\$5 to \$8** of benefit in avoided costs (Source: Before the Deluge 2.0 report).
- An **integrated catchment approach** to river management and flood protection is critical to consistent decisions about infrastructure investment, gravel management, and flood response.
- Horizons' **30-year Infrastructure Strategy** guides the long-term programme for this activity.

River Management and Flood Protection



Protecting people, property and the regional economy

Horizons' River Management and Flood Protection activity provides a range of services to protect people and property from weather events and to support the regional economy. The activity is primarily delivered through the 34 River and Drainage Schemes, which have developed over time since the 1940's. The levels of service and activities vary between and within the schemes. The main work types include flood protection for cities, towns, houses, infrastructure, and rural land; erosion control, channel maintenance, and gravel management; vegetation planting and management; drainage activities; and amenity and environmental enhancement works. Across the schemes, there were 3,844 assets with a total estimated value of approximately \$1.2 billion in June 2025. These assets include approximately 500 km of stop banks, more than 509 floodgates, more than 800 km of river channel and more than 1,070 km of drains. A large component of the work programme focuses on maintaining and repairing these assets. The programme also includes a capital upgrade programme to increase levels of service and activity to respond to and recover from storm events. The investigation and design aspect of the activity provides technical design and advice, produces gravel resources studies, and supports works outside of schemes via environmental grants.

River Management is one of Horizons' statutory functions, with relevant legislation including the Soil Conservation and River Control Act 1941, the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002, and Orders in Council relating to the performance of Catchment Board and Drainage functions.

Horizons' 30-year Infrastructure Strategy (2024 to 2054), which forms part of Horizons' Long-term Plan (LTP) 2024-2034, provides the strategy for Horizons' River Management Activity. The Infrastructure Strategy overviews Horizons' river management schemes, asset management, the key issues for infrastructure management, and includes the capital works programme for the 30 years. The Strategy is supported by [Horizons River Flood and Drainage Asset Management Plan 2025](#).

The Manawatū District is served by five river and drainage schemes, with four of the five schemes in Manawatū having 545 assets with a replacement value of about \$39 million (3% of the regional total, as of June 2025). In addition, the Manawatū District shares coverage of the Lower Manawatū scheme (LMS) with two neighbouring districts. The LMS has 856 assets, with a replacement value of \$714 million. One of the district's most significant assets is the Reid Line Spillway, which diverts flood waters from the Makino Stream away from Fielding (done by the closure of the Makino floodgates)

Spend and Income for River Management Operational Flood Protection and Drainage by District (capital projects excluded)



Type	Ruapehu	Taranaki	Manawatu	Rangitikei	Whanganui	Horowhenua	Palmerston North	Part Waitomo	Part Stratford	Part Taupo
Total Spend	\$ 625,206	\$ 2,284,881	\$ 5,032,433	\$ 1,460,402	\$ 1,169,786	\$ 4,001,553	\$ 4,628,637	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,134
RM General rates	\$ 77,791	\$ 99,263	\$ 157,676	\$ 83,274	\$ 161,003	\$ 152,262	\$ 309,396	\$ 812	\$ 1,724	\$ 22
Scheme General rates	\$ 275,058	\$ 350,982	\$ 557,522	\$ 294,445	\$ 569,286	\$ 538,381	\$ 1,093,984	\$ 2,873	\$ 6,096	\$ 77
Scheme Targeted rates	\$ 450,681	\$ 1,839,170	\$ 3,216,688	\$ 943,342	\$ 855,821	\$ 2,875,938	\$ 2,716,070	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 829
Other Income	\$ 9,189	\$ 11,321	\$ 568,979	\$ 171,020	\$ -	\$ 19,323	\$ 793,734	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 812,718	\$ 2,300,737	\$ 4,500,865	\$ 1,492,080	\$ 1,586,111	\$ 3,585,903	\$ 4,913,184	\$ 3,685	\$ 7,820	\$ 928

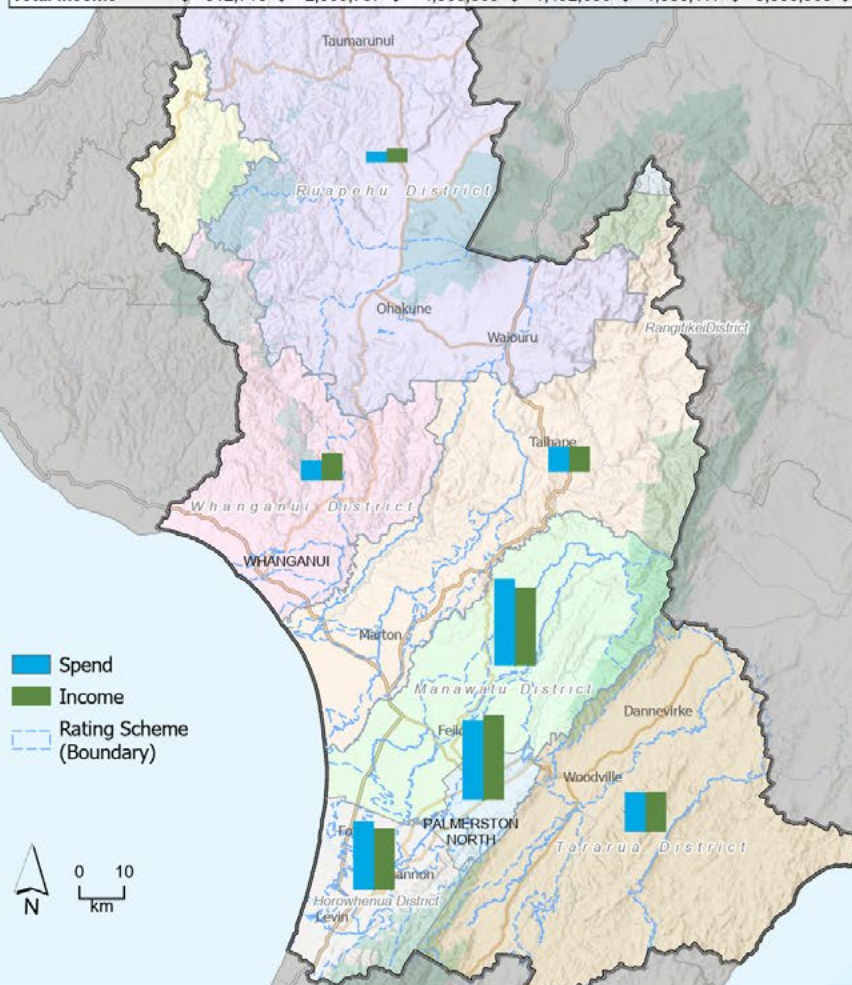
The river management and flood protection operational programme data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year. (GST exclusive)

This information uses assumptions to distribute income and expenses across the districts as some schemes are across more than one district.

Some activities within river management, such as design and planning not associated with a scheme, are funded 100% from general rates (RM General). Then schemes receive a mix of general and targeted rates based on funding policies, typically 80:20.

Some years schemes receive more income than is required for expenditure, and this surplus goes into scheme reserves to be used to address damage following weather events. In contrast some years more expenditure occurs in schemes than income received, which is funded by reserves.

This information assumes expenditure of the RM General component is distributed the same way as the schemes. Other income is shown, typically this is from lease income.



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Stats NZ, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS

River Management, Flood Protection and Drainage Spend and Income 2024 - 2025 Financial Year

Map prepared by:
P Hodge,
Inf Mgt team
Date:
4/02/2026



Note: Minor differences with rate take figures in map compared to 2024-25 financials relate to assumptions used to distribute income across schemes that cross more than one district.

and towards the Kiwitea Stream. These schemes protect a large area known to contain state highways, Crown assets, productive land, lifelines utilities, population centres and wildlife habitats.

Flood risk in Manawatū is shaped by what happens across the entire Manawatū River catchment, as the river flows through Tararua District before reaching Manawatū. However, the district is also the source of significant river systems such as the Ōroua and Pohangina which flow into the the Manawatū River.

The [Horizons Regional Flood Vulnerability Assessment](#) which ranked town/settlements by comparative flood vulnerability, reported Feilding, Kairanga and Tangimoana as having very high/high flood vulnerability. Research done by Te Uru Kahika, the collective of regional and unitary councils, presented in the Beyond the Deluge 2.0 report shows every \$1 invested into this activity saves \$5 to \$8 in avoided damage.

Feilding flood resilience is a key focus for this activity. The town has a complex flood profile, with limited capacity in the Makino Stream, as well as water being input from the upper catchment and town stormwater runoff.

Horizons has collaborated with Manawatū District Council, landowners, and iwi and hapū to create the Feilding Flood Resilience Governance Group with the goal of taking a holistic approach to flood management in Feilding. Horizons is currently investigating improvements to the Red Line Spillway, as well as upgrades to the Kiwitea and Ōroua stopbanks.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$20.89 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$4 million

River and drainage schemes are generally funded on an 80/20 split, with 80% funded through targeted rates and 20% through a general rate contribution. Targeted rate contributions for all river and drainage schemes are recovered through 361 different rates across the 34 schemes. The Pohangina-Ōroua schemes has a landowner co-funding agreement. Schemes may also have loans, emergency reserves and renewal reserves. Non-scheme activities, such as grants and subsidies, and funded 100% by general rates.

People and relationships

The Manawatū District schemes sit within Horizons' Central operational area, which also covers schemes in neighbouring districts. Within these teams, there are six river management operations engineering staff responsible for managing and maintaining assets across these areas. Support is provided on an as-needed basis through regionally organised support services: a River Management Asset Management Information Team (6 FTE), Investigations and Design team (5 FTE), Projects team (3 FTE), Environmental and Regulatory team (3 FTE), administrative support (1 FTE), and management support (3 FTE). Staff from across the wider organisation also support this activity, including, but not limited to, corporate functions (e.g., finance, communications, HR), science and policy, and information services.

Some schemes have scheme committees that provide governance input on the scheme's activities and funding arrangements. These committees meet at least annually. Key relationships for this activity include landowners and rural communities within scheme areas, scheme committee members, territorial authorities, iwi and hapū, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, KiwiRail, and central government agencies involved in infrastructure funding and emergency management. This includes politicians from across the aisle, who have made decisions in previous terms to specifically dedicate funding to Flood Protection and River Management projects. A prime example of this was the Budget 2020 decision to invest \$26.9m into Horizons' Infrastructure Climate Resilience Projects. This resulted in significant work being undertaken to benefit the Manawatū District via management of the lower Manawatū River area. This project received 75 per cent of the total funding needed from central government to go toward making that reach of the river more resilient to climate change, enhancing the river's biodiversity values and improving recreational access. The activity also has strong internal relationships with Horizons' Environmental Data and Emergency Management teams, both of which are essential to the effective delivery of flood protection work and coordination during flood responses. The Feilding Flood Resilience Governance Group is a key facilitator of relationships with landowners, iwi and hapū, and Manawatū District Council.

Key considerations for delivery models

Flood protection infrastructure is long-lived, capital-intensive, and critical to the safety and economic productivity of the communities it serves. Managing an asset base valued at approximately \$1.2 billion across the region requires sustained investment, specialist engineering expertise, and a long-term planning horizon. Horizons' 30-year Infrastructure Strategy reflects this reality, but delivering on it depends on organisational continuity, stable funding, and prioritising spending across a region to ensure the best results along river catchments.

The Manawātū District's position is unique, as it is home to the headwaters of some rivers (e.g. Ōroua and Pohangina), and has the Manawātū River flow through it via Tararua District and Palmerston North City. River and drainage schemes extend into adjoining districts. Action taken across the region helps to mitigate flood risk within the Manawātū District, while action taken in Manawātū must be done with the rest of the catchment in mind. This reinforces the positive aspects of a regionally coordinated approach to river management and flood

protection to make consistent decisions about infrastructure investment, gravel management, and flood response across catchment boundaries regardless of how many territorial authorities those boundaries cross. Having an integrated approach to catchment management could become complex in a post-amalgamation environment. Scheme boundaries should consider river flood and drainage fluvial dynamics, for example including the source of the water for addressing flooding or drainage needs within the area being treated by the scheme.

The growing complexity of regulatory requirements adds further pressure to this activity. Any structural change arising from the amalgamation process will need to carefully consider how specialist river engineering capacity and long-term infrastructure planning responsibilities would be maintained and funded in a reorganised environment. Furthermore, changes would be required to consenting arrangements for this activity due to the regulatory permissions required.



Newly built stopbank to provide flood protection

CASE STUDY: MOUTOA SLUICE GATES UPGRADE

Overview

- Project was in response to asset inspection information.
- Established in 1962, some components required renewal as there was risk of the gates failing to operate.
- Government co-funding was redirected to this work post Cyclone Gabrielle. Project budget approx. \$3.5M.
- The work is part of the Lower Manawātū Climate resilience project with co-funding via Kānoa.

Electrical and mechanical upgrades included

- Electrical cable rewiring. New gate control drives.
- Relocating power lines.
- New mechanical hoist systems.

Project completion and next steps

- Electrical upgrades are complete.
- New hoist systems have been installed & commissioned.
- Siltation at the gates will be measured and some removal may be undertaken this year.



One of the 9 old hoist systems, and 1 of the 9 new hoist systems



One of two new H-Structure poles for Overhead Lines



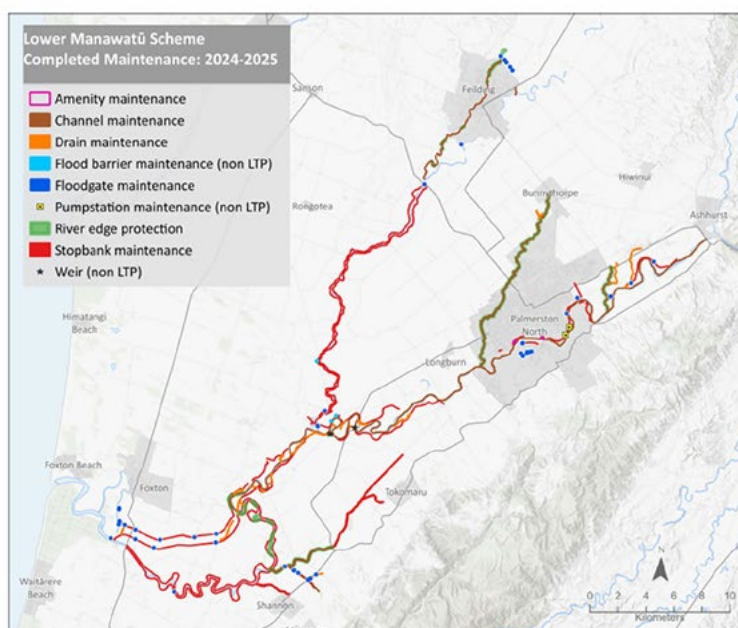
Newly installed variable speed drives for gate motor control

LOWER MANAWATŪ SCHEME WORKS 2024-25

Budget expenditure:

- Maintenance approx. 121%;
- Repairs approx. 32%; and
- Some repair budget reallocated to further maintenance.

Regional summary	Asset quantity	Works / checks	Percent
Drains (km)	33.0	48.3	146%
Floodgates (#)	253	170	67%
Stopbanks (km)	314.3	870.2	277
River Channel (km)		103.2	
River edge protection (km)	110.7	35.5	32%
Dams (#)			
Pump stations (#)	4	4	100%
Weirs (#)	4	2	50%
Amenity (#)	5	2	40%
Flood barrier	5	4	80%



Looking after our future, today – Strategy, Regulation and Science Group

This group is made up of the following activities:

- Regulatory Management
- Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience
- Science and Environmental Reporting

The Strategy, Regulation and Science Group delivers our statutory resource management planning, compliance, monitoring and reporting functions, as well as corporate plans (e.g. Long-term Plan, Climate Action Strategy). In addition, this group provides sound science, policy and regulatory advice, support and information to

our communities and the wider organisation. This group monitors changes in the region's resources and environment, develops and informs regulatory and non-regulatory responses to environmental issues, and measures the effectiveness of these responses. The Manawātū District's position in the middle of the Manawātū River catchment makes it an important location for understanding cumulative effects across the catchment, as well as being a beneficiary of activities undertaken up the catchment and contributor to impacts felt downstream.

The Strategy, Regulation and Science Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

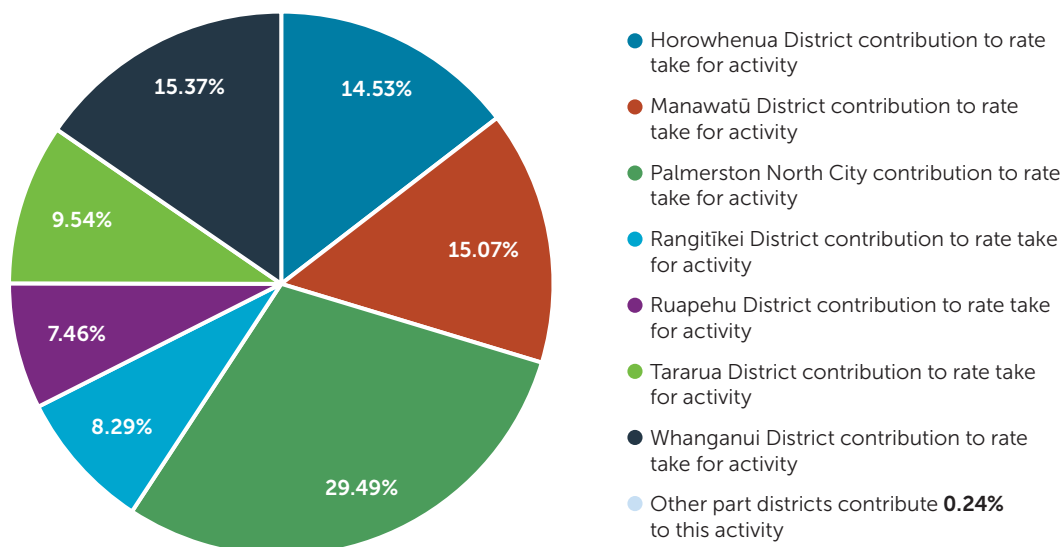
	Regulatory Management	Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience	Science and Environmental Reporting
Regional rates	3,605,571.97	4,669,015.16	4,992,501.62
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	4,142,295.55	-	1,947,405.18
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	389,980.00	752,101.13	-
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	6,425.36	-1,152,723.73	8,950.52
Total Operational Expenditure	8,131,422.16	6,573,840.02	6,930,956.27
Manawātū District rates	543,502.07	703,804.95	751,400.40
Manawātū District contribution of rate take to activity	15.07%	15.07%	15.05%

Regulatory Management Activity

Regulatory Management at a glance

- Aim of the activity is to ensure activities affecting the region's **land, air, and water resources** are managed in a way that is consistent with Horizons' One Plan and national environmental regulations.
- Funded by **user fees and charges**, and **general rates** which recognise the regional benefit of the public receiving general permitted activities/consents advice.
- Budget for the region: **\$8.13 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: **\$543,502** which is an **15.07%** rate contribution to the operational budget.
- **5,609** consents administered across the region.
- **2,573** resource consents were monitored for compliance (including repeat assessments) across the region in 2024-25.
- **904** environmental incidents reported and responded to across the region in 2024-25.
- **16** formal warnings, **115** abatement notices, **80** infringement notices, **1** enforcement order, **4** prosecutions completed and **7** prosecutions before the courts across the region in 2024-25.
- **2,691** authorised consents and permitted activities administered by Horizons in the district, which is **18.5%** of the region's 2024-25 year total.
- **361** applications lodged, **229** applications granted which in turn have enabled **413** activities to occur, across the region in 2024-25.
- Key projects for the district include development of the **RNZAF Base Ōhakea** and the **Awa Park subdivision**.
- Many of the consented activities Horizons regulates are connected to **wider catchment dynamics** that extend well beyond the district's boundaries.

Regulatory Management



Keeping development and the environment in balance

The Regulatory Management activity is Horizons' consenting and compliance function under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). It covers processing resource consent applications, monitoring consent holders to ensure they comply with consent conditions and taking enforcement action when rules are not being followed. This work ensures that activities affecting the region's land, air, and water resources are managed in a way consistent with Horizons' One Plan and national environmental regulations. Horizons also has a role in providing technical input to district plan processes and nationally directed planning instruments, and in responding to resource consent applications lodged with other agencies in which Horizons has an interest. This activity is responsible for Horizons' Pollution Hotline service, with a duty officer on call every day of the year to respond to reports of environmental pollution. Staff also provide RMA advice as and where appropriate.

Consents managed by Horizons in the Manawātū District are varied, reflecting the diverse mix of activities, which include , agriculture, industrial processing, water takes for towns and villages, wastewater discharges, and activities affecting the district's unique natural and coastal environments. Compliance monitoring is conducted on a risk-based programme, as doing in-person monitoring every consent annually would require significantly more resources.

In the Manawātū District some key projects for the Regulatory activity include processing consents to enable the development of Ohakea Airforce base and various stages of Awa Park sub-division project, and processing the consent variation associated with the Makino Spill way; and compliance monitoring of those activities associated with the operation of the Fielding WWTP, large irrigation takes and key industrial activities.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$8.13 million

Rates collected for this activity from Manawātū District: \$543,502

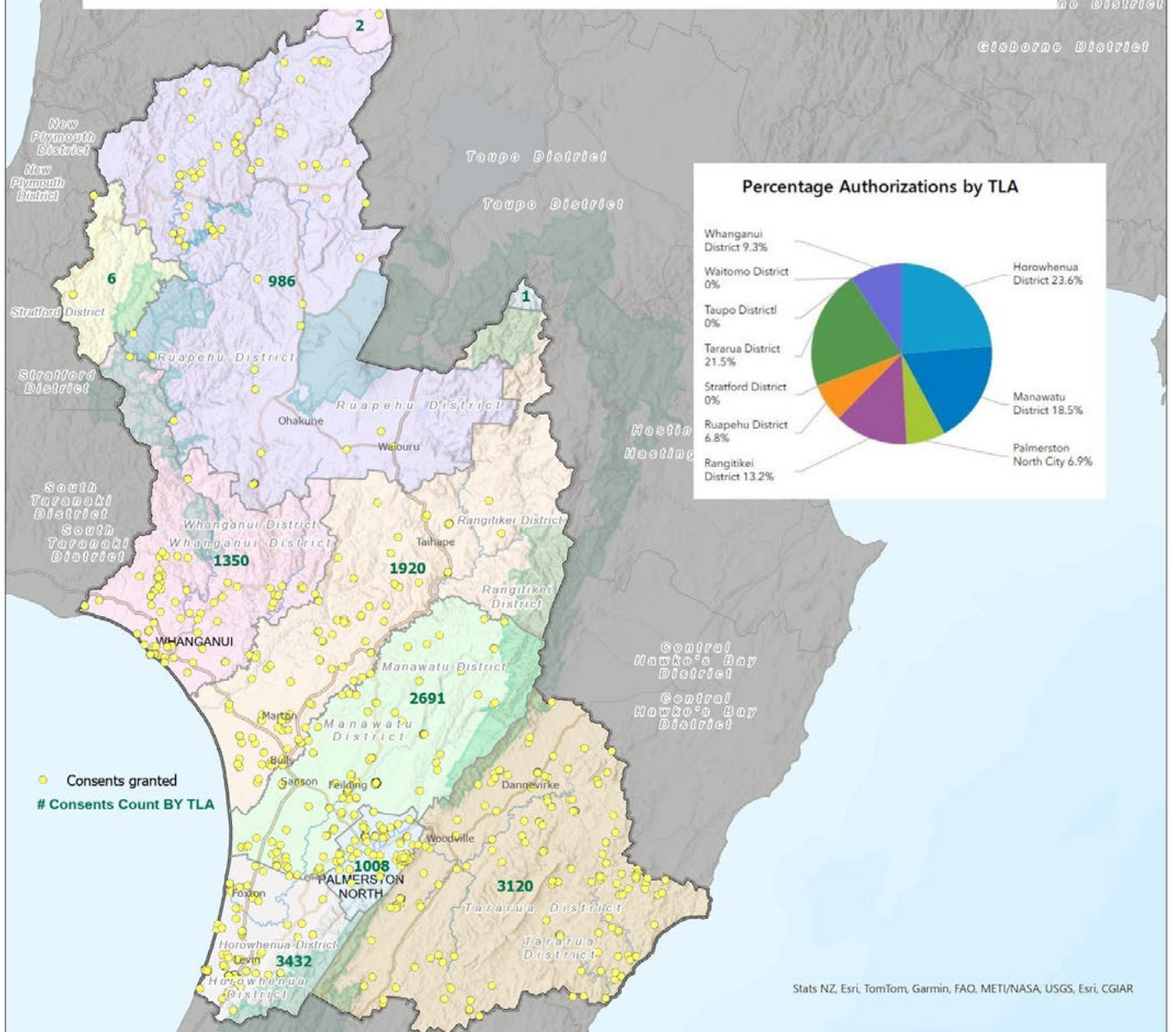
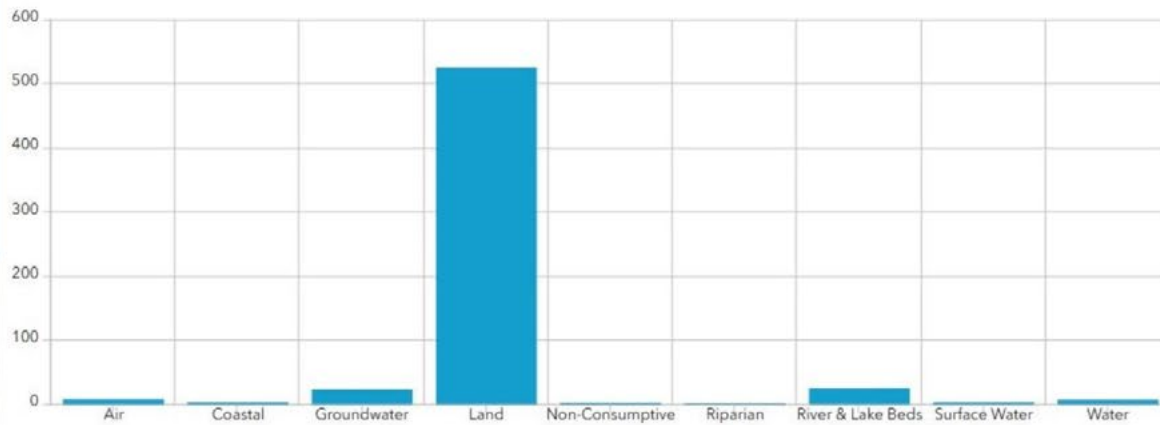
This activity's funding is divided into two sub-activities: RMA advice and regulatory management. RMA advice is entirely funded by general rates, as the public's need for general advice around permitted activities and consents has ongoing regional benefits. Regulatory management is funded by fees and charges on an actual and reasonable basis, with general rates covering the remainder of the costs. This is based on the rationale that users of resources create the need for regulatory management and derive private benefit from using natural resources. However, there is, at times, a wider public good that comes from issuing and monitoring consents.

People and relationships

About 45 FTEs directly contribute to the Regulatory Management activity across the region. This activity does not allocate FTE roles to specific districts. Rather, staff work across activities to ensure their specialist knowledge on different areas (e.g. dairy sheds, industry, earthworks) is maximised. Other support for the Regulatory Management activity is provided by corporate staff (e.g. finance, communications, HR).

Regulatory Management staff work closely with a range of external parties. This includes consent applicants and holders, Manawātū District Council (particularly where activities touch on both regional and district planning matters), iwi and hapū, the Ministry for the Environment, and other agencies. Enforcement work may also involve coordination with the New Zealand Police and other regulatory bodies. Iwi relationships are especially important in this activity, given the cultural and spiritual significance of water, land, and coastal environments to mana whenua.

Consent Authorizations by Type



Authorized Consents and Permitted Activity

RESOURCE CONSENTS 30/6/24 - 1/7/25

Prepared by:
Information Mgt
team,
Date:
26/01/2026.





Regulatory staff inspecting a site

Key considerations for delivery models

Many of the consented activities Horizons regulates are connected to wider catchment dynamics that extend well beyond the district's boundaries. Regulatory decisions made about activities can have downstream consequences. Maintaining a coherent, regionally consistent approach to consenting and compliance will be a critical consideration in any structural change arising from the simplification process.

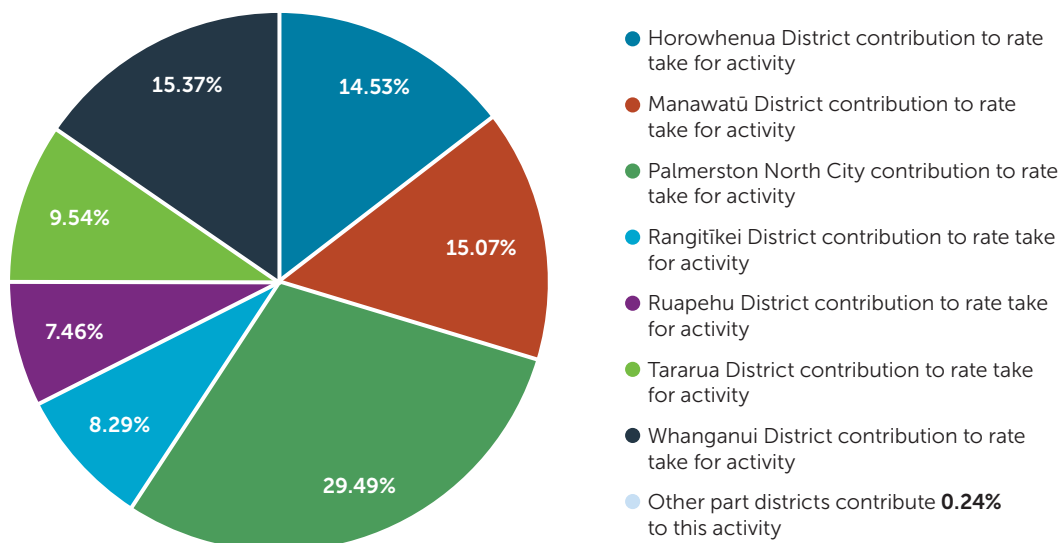
As part of wider resource management system reforms, central government has signalled it was considering whether regulatory functions should be taken from councils and put into a national body. No decision has yet been made on this by central government, but a decision either way would impact resourcing requirements for post-amalgamation entities. If regional council Regulatory Management functions are moved to post-amalgamation entities, this will create larger workloads for consents monitoring and enforcement teams due to the greater number and variety of consents. Ensuring these teams are correctly resourced and structured, if this scenario eventuates, will be key to properly managing natural resources for current and future generations.

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience Activity

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience at a glance

- Aim is to provide regional **policy direction**, statutory **resource management** planning, **climate change** coordination, and **rural advice** to benefit the region now and into the future.
- Budget for the region: **\$6.57 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District is **\$703,805**, which is a **15.07%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **32** rural advice engagements occurred in the district in 2024-25, including industry meetings, farm visits and central government meetings, on freshwater regulation.
- This activity is funded through **general rates** and the **Universal Annual General Charge** given it benefits the entire region equally both now and into the future.
- **60** submissions on central government policies and bills in the past five years.
- Involved in **13** plan changes across the region, including **3** in the Manawatū District.
- **1** Pūtea Hapori Urupare Āhuarangi – Community Climate Response Fund project in Manawatū.
- Policy, strategy, and planning functions are foundational to the proper management of **natural resources**.
- Catchment scale delivery of policy and plan development for natural resources is key as they typically occur across **multiple territorial boundaries**.

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience



Planning for our region's future

The Manawātū District sits within a complex planning environment, with significant natural hazard, urban, freshwater, and rural land use pressures that are directly guided by Horizons' policy and planning framework. This framework is itself shaped by central government policy and legislation. Horizons' Policy, Strategy, and Climate Resilience Activity is responsible for regional policy direction, statutory resource management planning, coordination of climate change work, and provision of rural advice across the region. There is also broader policy and planning work that guides many of the regulatory systems Horizons' is responsible for. This includes developing, reviewing and maintaining Horizons One Plan, responding to national direction and legislative changes, supporting regional planning processes, and system reform developments that may affect Horizons' functions and responsibilities. The activity also coordinates climate mitigation and adaptation work across the organisation and region.

A rural advice function, providing technical advice and practical solutions to all farmers in our region, is embedded in this activity. Rural advice staff specialise in helping farmers improve effluent and nutrient efficiency, including effluent discharge consenting and compliance requirements, as well as advice on waterway management and nutrient management planning. This function also provides significant support to the rural professional and industry groups by preparing documents and advice that support the understanding and advice given on Horizons' regulatory framework for all agricultural practices. Although the team have traditionally worked largely in the dairy sector, they also work closely with other agricultural or horticultural sectors to help improve efficiency, productivity and profitability in our region. This includes the development of best practice guidelines and assistance at various field and training days.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$6.6 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: \$703,805

The policy, rural advice and climate resilience functions are funded through the general rate, while meeting Te Tiriti o Waitangi settlement legislation and RMA obligations to iwi and hapū is funded through the Universal Annual General Charge. This funding model is appropriate given the activity benefits the entire region equally both now and into the future. Central government grants and subsidies are utilised when available.

People and relationships

There are 19 FTEs across this activity – 14 across policy, rural advice and climate resilience; four across iwi and hapū relationships and planning support, and one manager. The number of staff allocated to this activity is small by comparison to other regions. Therefore, these staff typically operate across the region rather than by district.

Relationships for this activity are broad. Farmers, primary industries companies (e.g. Fonterra), agricultural organisations such as DairyNZ, iwi and hapū, community groups interested in climate adaptation, territorial authorities, other regional councils and central government organisations such as ministries are included in the long list. There are also strong internal relationships, with policy aiding other teams in their work – a good example being advice and support given to the Biosecurity and Biodiversity activity as part of the Regional Pest Management Plan review process – and climate resilience providing Horizons with advice on how to reduce carbon emissions.

Key considerations for delivery models

Policy, strategy, and planning functions are foundational to almost everything else a regional council does, and to the proper management of the region's resources. Policy and plan development for matters such as water quality and quantity, coastal land use and quality, natural hazard management, air quality and soil management typically occurs across multiple territorial boundaries to account for geographic diversity and the way catchments flow across boundaries. The matters managed through regional council functions are also more rural in nature, which is different to the more urban focus of district/city councils. Horizons' policy team is also instrumental in the development of Council's Long-term Plan, which is a significant task for this small team. As well as being legislatively driven, the policy, rural advice and climate coordination functions provide significant support to the region's rural sector, community groups and industry in the form of advice, funding opportunities, and information development.

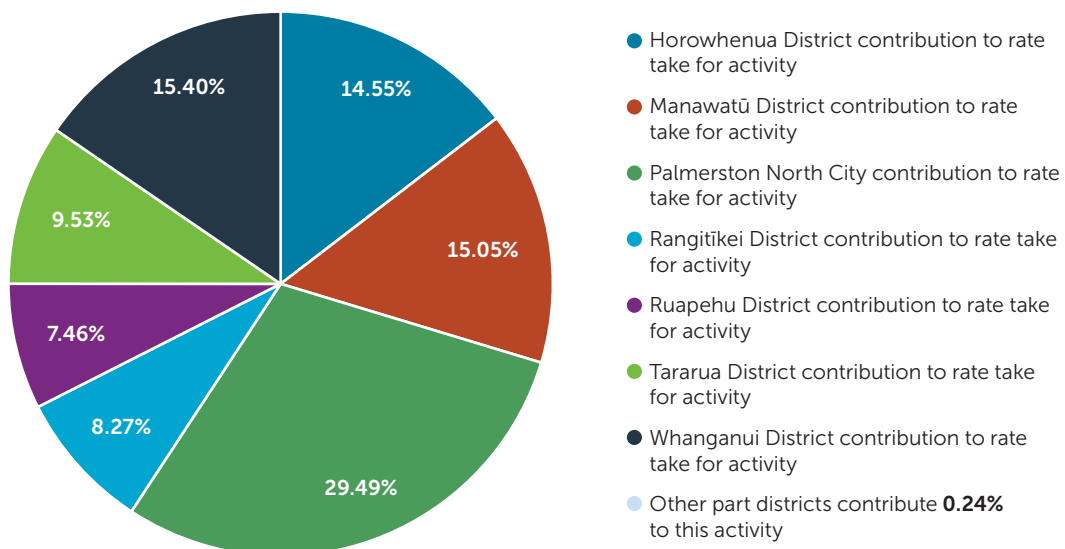
To deliver this activity at a district scale, the Manawātū District would need to either resource their planning and climate resilience teams with in-house expertise able to prepare rural and environmental policy, and engage in the rural sector space, or they would need to contract this resource. Sub-regional delivery of the planning, climate resilience and rural advice activities would mean reduced specialist support, increased contractor and consultant spending, and less service delivery for the same rates take.

Science and Environmental Reporting Activity

Science and Environmental Reporting at a glance

- Aim is to provide robust **scientific support** to direct monitoring of **natural resources**; support **development of policy** to sustain those natural resources; and **assess those policies** to ensure they are working as intended.
- Budget for the region: **\$6.93 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: **\$751,400** which is a **15.05%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through a **general rates** due to regional benefit of the information, as well as **targeted charges applied under section 36** of the Resource Management Act for consent holders.
- Funding from resource consent holders in the Manawatū District approximately **\$327,000**.
- Monitoring activities in the Manawatū District costs about **\$385,000**.
- **15** swim spot sites in the district are tested weekly from November to April for water quality.
- The district's position in the middle of the Manawatū River catchment makes it an important location for understanding **cumulative effects** across the catchment.
- Data collected in Manawatū feeds into **regional-scale analysis** that informs resource management decisions benefiting not only Manawatū, but the whole region.
- This activity generates **strong economies of scale**: by delivering science and monitoring collectively across the region, the cost to any one district is substantially lower than it would be if each district were to fund its own equivalent capability.
- Horizons employs **single specialists** in key roles such as land science, groundwater and water allocation.
- Sub-regional delivery would likely increase costs through **duplication** of software, databases, equipment and processes.

Science and Environmental Reporting



Understanding our environment today to protect it for tomorrow

The Science and Environmental Reporting activity provides the scientific foundation that underpins almost everything Horizons does. It is responsible for monitoring the state and trend of natural resources, supporting the development of policy to sustain those resources, and assessing whether policies are working as intended. This can include diverse work such as monitoring the effects of water abstraction, modelling the impact of land use controls on nutrient concentrations, or assessing the effectiveness of erosion mitigations on instream sediment levels. The activity also plays a key role in reporting on the state of natural resources over time.

Horizons maintains a core monitoring network, primarily focused on water quantity such as rainfall, river level and groundwater levels; as well as continuous monitoring of a range of environmental variables such as temperature, soil moisture and atmospheric pressure. These programmes have direct benefit to the monitoring of state and trend of natural resources, which this activity delivers. These programmes also have significant benefit to other activities such as Emergency Management and Catchment Operations. The core monitoring network is therefore funded in part by multiple activities to ensure cost effectiveness. Across the region, the total Science and Environmental Reporting funding contribution for the core monitoring network is approximately \$1.98 million. Further information on the breakdown of this network is addressed in the Environmental Data activity.

Additional monitoring is undertaken beyond the core network, covering water quality in rivers and streams, lakes, groundwater, coastal environments and estuaries, contact recreation swim spots, fluvial systems, and air quality. These various forms of monitoring in the Manawātū District cost approximately \$385,000. An example of a Science and Environmental Reporting monitoring programme is shown in the map below. This is the surface water (rivers and streams) water quality monitoring network which is funded through both general rates, and targeted Section 36 charges to consent holders. The network is used to inform policy decisions at a regional scale. The information within any one district would likely be insufficient to inform

robust scientific analysis on its own. Therefore, whilst more money is spent in some districts than others, all districts benefit from the information.

The district's position at the lower and middle sections of the Manawātū River catchment also makes it an important location for understanding cumulative effects across an entire catchment. Data collected in Manawātū feeds into regional-scale analysis that informs resource management decisions benefiting the whole region, not just the district itself.

This activity is responsible for the contact recreation programme, more commonly known as the swim spot monitoring programme. In Manawātū, 15 sites are tested weekly by staff during the warmer months for bacterial contamination (freshwater sites are also tested for potentially toxic algae). Those tests are then taken to an independent lab, with results categorised on a traffic light system and published online on the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website to help people to make informed decisions about where to swim.

Finally, the Science and Environmental Reporting activity undertakes policy development, policy effectiveness monitoring, data analysis, resource management research and reporting functions across the region. During this period, this included significant work on the development of science and policy for the Oranga Wai plan change process. These costs are broadly spread across the region, with information from the entire region being drawn upon equally. In all cases, these benefit from economies of scale. The cost to the district was approximately \$328,000 for these functions.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$6.9 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$751,400

Funding from resource consent holders in the Manawatū District: approximately \$327,000

This activity is funded through a general rates, as well as targeted charges applied under Section 36 of the Resource Management Act. The Section 36 charges relate to consented activities such as water abstraction and nutrient discharge. These charges allows for the targeted monitoring, policy development, and policy assessment related to those activities. This reflects the principle that those who use natural resources, and hold consents to do so, should contribute to the cost of understanding and managing those resources.

Many of the costs associated with this activity, including data management systems, databases, analytical tools, and monitoring infrastructure, are largely fixed. The upfront cost of establishing these systems is significant, but adding additional monitoring sites or datasets adds relatively little marginal cost. This means the activity generates strong economies of scale: by delivering science and monitoring collectively across the region, the cost to any one district is substantially lower than it would be if each district were to fund its own equivalent capability.



Science team collecting water samples

People and relationships

There are 19 FTEs across this activity during 2024-25, though the activity draws on specialist staff from multiple teams across the organisation as appropriate, including Environmental Data, Freshwater and Partnerships, and Biodiversity and Biosecurity. This reflects the interdisciplinary nature of environmental science and the value of integrating specialist knowledge from across Horizons rather than siloing it within a single team. This activity's science communicator shares a strong relationship with Horizons' general communications employees, ensuring the science Horizons collects is communicated well to communities.

Horizons operates with a lean science team. In several key specialist roles – such as land science, groundwater science, and water allocation science – there is one Horizons-employed specialist for the entire region. This means relationships with those specialists are shared across the organisation and across the region. Externally, key relationships include central government agencies such as the Ministry for the Environment and Earth Sciences New Zealand, other regional councils, iwi and hapū, territorial authorities, industry and consent holders, and community groups with an interest in environmental reporting and natural resource management.

Key considerations for delivery models

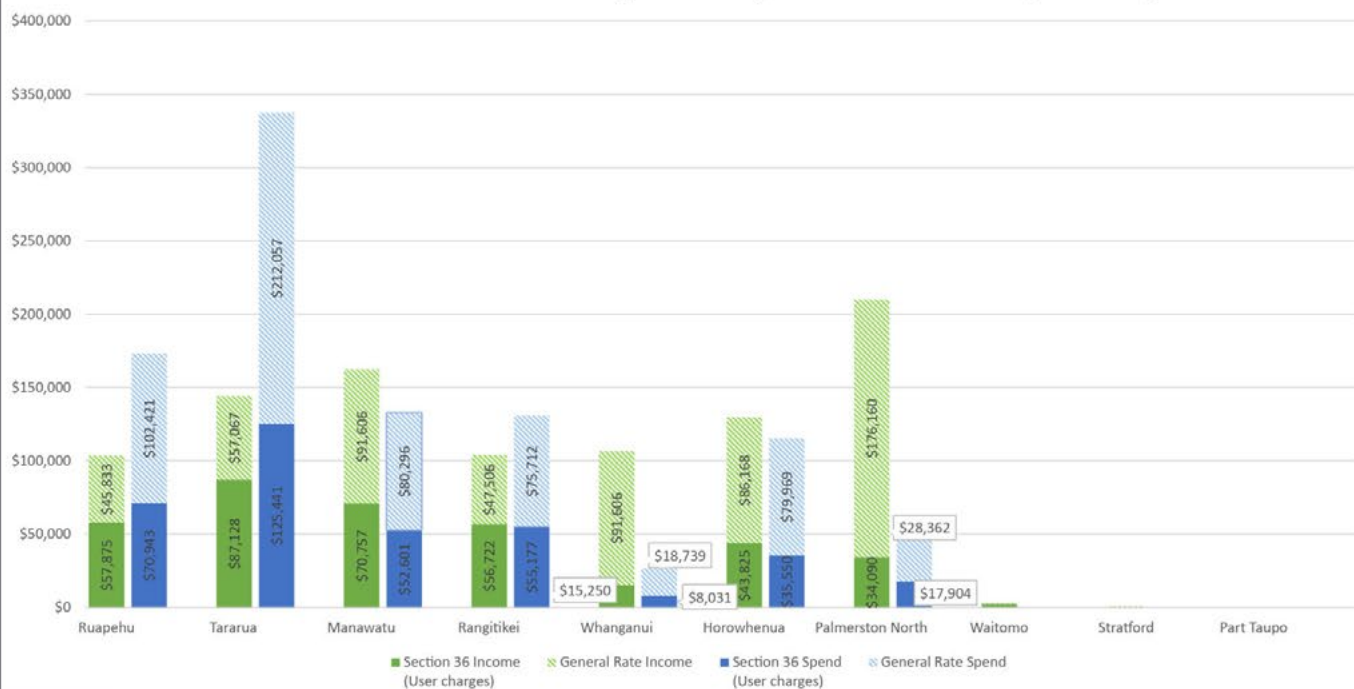
Science and environmental monitoring are the bedrock of good resource management. Without robust, long-term data on the state of natural resources, it is not possible to develop defensible policy, make sound regulatory decisions, or demonstrate whether management interventions are working. This activity underpins the credibility and effectiveness of almost every other activity Horizons delivers.

Many elements of this activity are structured at a land type or river catchment scale to ensure the robustness of datasets and maximise cost efficiencies. Monitoring programmes regularly cross territorial authority boundaries. The surface water quality monitoring network, for example, is designed to inform policy decisions at a regional scale. The data from any single district would likely be insufficient to support robust scientific analysis on its own. All districts benefit from the full regional network, even when more monitoring expenditure occurs in some districts than others.

The lean nature of Horizons' science team is both a strength and a vulnerability in the context of structural change. Delivering this activity at a sub-regional scale could reduce the ability to maintain these specialists in-house. The result would be far greater reliance on contractors and consultants, who are generally more expensive for equivalent output, or an inability to provide the specific scientific advice needed to make robust and defensible resource management decisions.

The economics of data management, analysis, and reporting reinforce this point. The significant upfront costs of purchasing databases, developing analytical processes, procuring monitoring equipment and infrastructure are largely fixed. Fragmenting delivery across multiple post-amalgamation entities would require duplication of these systems, substantially increasing the overall cost to ratepayers across the region for no gain in service quality. Sub-regional delivery would mean reduced specialist support, increased contractor and consultant spending, and less service for the same rates take.

Surface Water State of Environment Monitoring and Discharge Network - Income and Expenditure by District



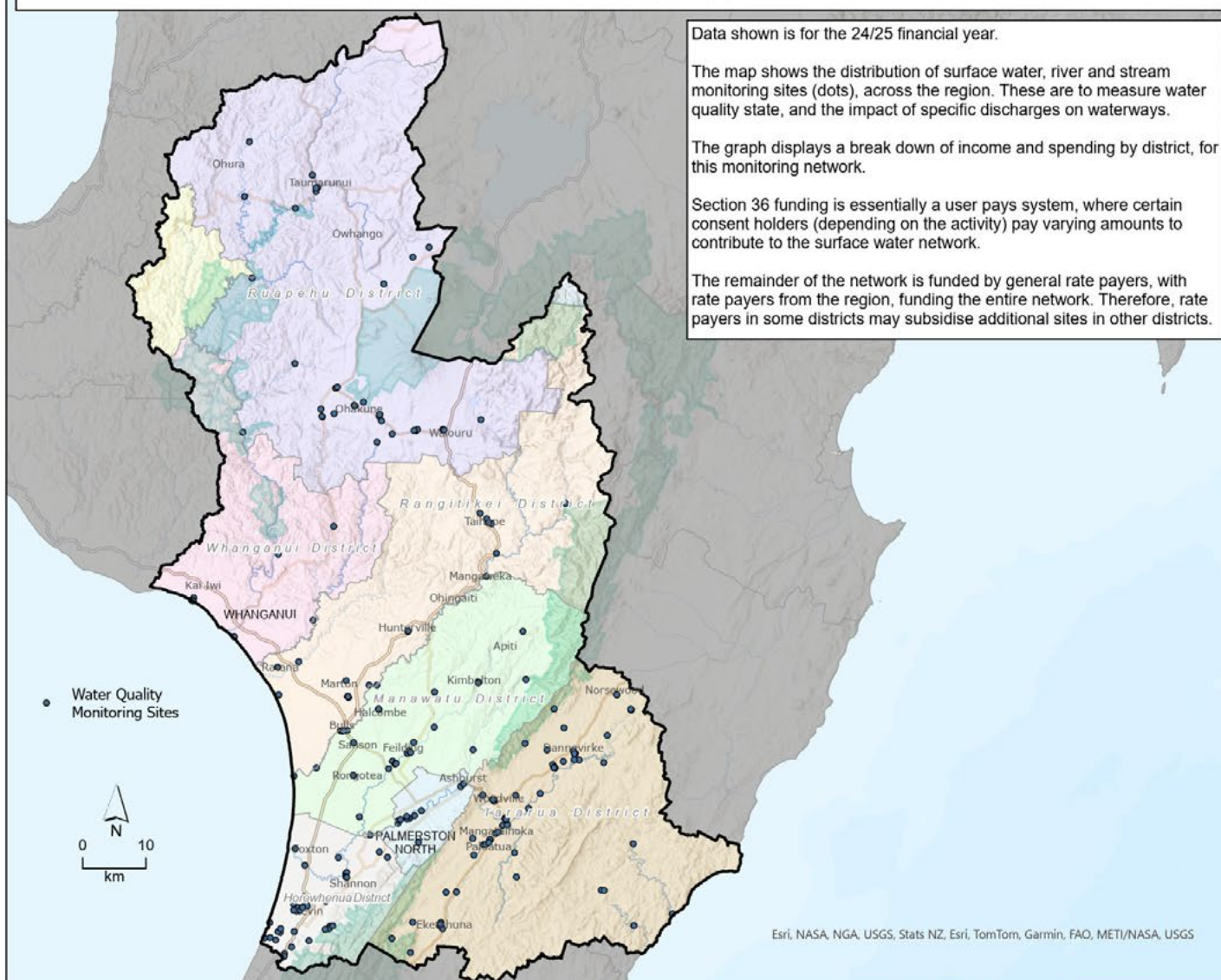
Data shown is for the 24/25 financial year.

The map shows the distribution of surface water, river and stream monitoring sites (dots), across the region. These are to measure water quality state, and the impact of specific discharges on waterways.

The graph displays a break down of income and spending by district, for this monitoring network.

Section 36 funding is essentially a user pays system, where certain consent holders (depending on the activity) pay varying amounts to contribute to the surface water network.

The remainder of the network is funded by general rate payers, with rate payers from the region, funding the entire network. Therefore, rate payers in some districts may subsidise additional sites in other districts.



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Stats NZ, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS

Surface Water Quality Monitoring

Income and Expenditure by TLA

Prepared by:
S Chawla, Science
PHodge, Information Mgt,
WQMonitoringCost.aprx,
Date: 30/01/2026



Providing connections and information – Transport and Regional Services

This group is made up of the following activities:

- District Advice
- Emergency Management
- Environmental Data
- Information Management
- Road Safety
- Transport Planning
- Passenger Services

This group is a combination of distinct activities, but all have a common thread: gathering and providing information and/or services across the region to ensure alignment beyond territorial authority boundaries. The Manawātū District benefits from regional scale delivery of the district advice, emergency management and environmental data services in particular.



Installing environmental data monitoring equipment

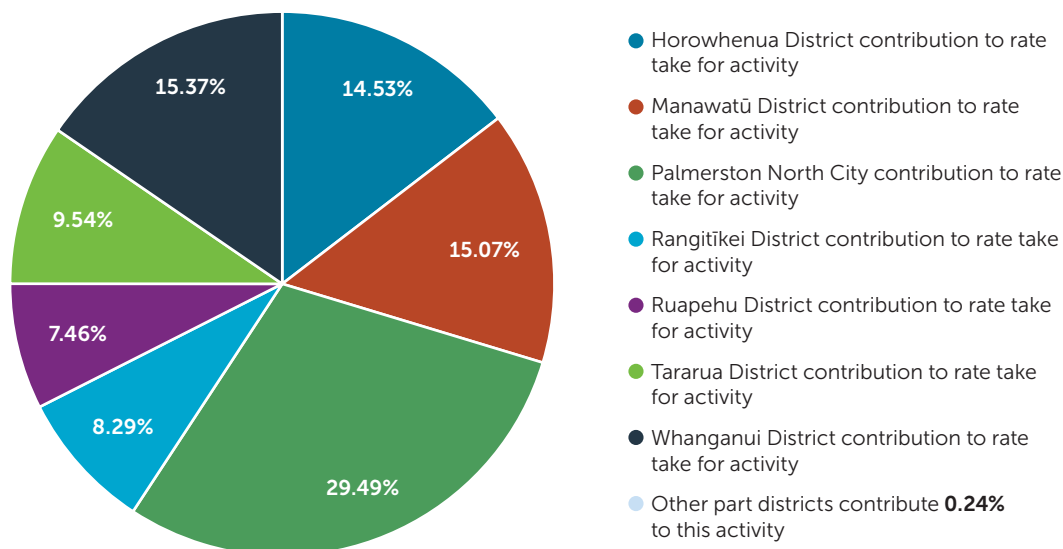
Transport and Regional Services Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year							
	District Advice	Emergency Management	Environmental Data	Information Management	Road Safety	Transport Planning	Passenger Services
Regional rates	425,179.58	2,304,614.26	-	1,797,786.28	220,959.77	172,360.90	8,234,416.17
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-	-	576,178.93	160,341.61	10,513,999.61
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	-	-	420,435.05	-	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	-	54,330.95	405,196.29	-	163,333.00	-	1,774,666.00
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	757.68	4,106.98	-3,012,882.03	-510,981.60	173.43	307.16	-174,337.38
Total Operational Expenditure	424,421.90	2,354,838.22	3,838,513.37	2,308,767.88	960,298.27	332,395.34	20,697,419.17
Manawatū District rates	64,091.35	347,396.37	-	270,997.38	33,307.36	25,981.59	423,428.12
Manawatū District contribution of rate take to activity	15.07%	15.07%	0.00%	15.07%	15.07%	15.07%	5.14%

District Advice Activity

District Advice at a glance

- Aim is to provide **property information**, **natural hazard guidance** and **land development advice** to support informed decision-making by landowners and territorial authorities.
- Budget for the region: **\$425,179**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: **\$64,091**, which is a **15.07%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded mostly through **general rates**, with a small amount of revenue collected from dam owners for **dam safety regulation requirements**.
- There are **3.25 FTEs** supporting this activity across the region, with **0.49 FTE** allocated to the Manawatū District.
- **1** classifiable dams in the Manawatū District are subject to the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.
- **1,076** requests for land development or property information and advice across the Horizons Region in 2024-25, with **379** property requests in the Manawatū District.
- **1** classifiable dam in the Manawatū District is subject to the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.
- Horizons coordinates natural hazard information for inclusion in **LIMs** issued by Manawatū District Council.
- Activity worked collaboratively with **Manawatū District Council** on flood hazard understanding in Halcombe township and surrounding area.
- Dam safety regulation presents a **specific structural consideration** in any post-amalgamation environment as any entity would need to become a Building Consent Authority for dams.

District Advice



Helping communities make informed decisions about land and properties

The District Advice activity provides property information and guidance on natural hazards, land development, and initial considerations in relation to Horizons' One Plan and national direction. The activity assists the public, landowners, consultants, and developers with property-related enquiries, and supports territorial authorities in assessing land use and building consents. It is also responsible for dam safety regulation across the region under the Building Act 2004 and the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.

Across the region, the District Advice team responded to 1,076 requests for land development or property information and advice in 2024-25, including 379 from the Manawatū District. The activity coordinates Horizons' initial feedback on potential growth areas, draft proposed plan changes, private plan changes, and fast-track applications, working closely with territorial authorities and developers. In the Manawatū District, this has included supporting Manawatū District Council staff, consultants, and relevant Horizons staff on various draft plan changes, including Draft Plan Change A: Rural and Flood Channel Review, coordinating information from across teams at Horizons. District Advice also coordinated and submitted Horizons' feedback on the Draft Manawatū District Growth Strategy.

A notable example of cross-council collaboration is the work undertaken to facilitate comprehensive understanding of flood events in Halcombe Township and the surrounding area. Both Horizons and Manawatū District Council commissioned complementary flood and runoff modelling, and MDC staff joined Horizons' Hazard Mapping Working Group in September 2024 to learn about new flood modelling covering the Rangitawa Stream (Halcombe) and Ōroua River (from Almadale to Feilding). District Advice also worked with Manawatū District Council to provide flood hazard and other relevant information for 12 freedom camping sites across the district.

The activity also ensures accurate and publicly accessible information is available online, including through the Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer and the District Advice Public Viewer Property Enquiry map. The success of the Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer has meant the public and Manawatū District Council are better able to gather information for themselves, reducing the volume of enquiries that need to be handled directly by staff.

The activity is responsible for meeting Horizons' obligations under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA), providing natural hazard information to Manawatū District Council for inclusion in Land Information Memoranda (LIMs). District Advice coordinates and facilitates the Regional LIM Work Group, which includes relevant Manawatū District Council staff, to ensure all parties are meeting their LGOIMA requirements. This includes preparing plain language summaries for inclusion in LIM reports as well as spatial and technical natural hazard information.

On the dam safety side, there is one classifiable dam in the Manawatū District subject to the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022. District Advice maintains the regional dam register, manages safety requirements, monitors compliance, and implements Horizons' policy on dangerous, earthquake-prone, and flood-prone dams.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$425,179

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$64,091

This activity is funded mostly through general rates, with a small amount of revenue collected from dam owners for dam safety regulation requirements. There are no significant contractual obligations, with the exception of a collective agreement with other North Island regional authorities for Waikato Regional Council to act as the building consent authority for assessing building consents for large dams.

People and relationships

There are 3.25 FTEs supporting this activity across the region, with 0.49 FTE allocated to the Manawatū District. Other support is provided by corporate staff (e.g. finance, communications, HR).

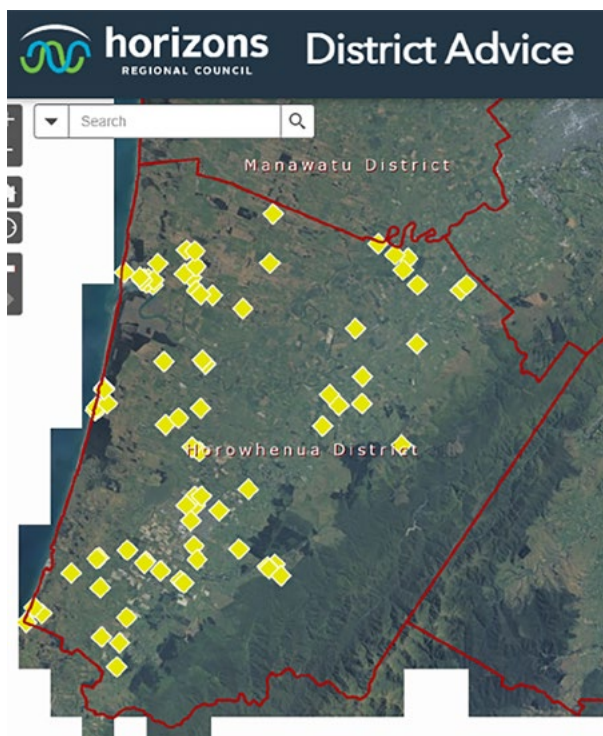
Key relationships in the Manawatū District include Manawatū District Council staff working in planning, policy, building, infrastructure, GIS, and LIM teams; members of the public, landowners, consultants, and developers; and dam owners and their consultants.

Key considerations for delivery models

Although District Advice is one of Horizons' smaller activities by budget, it plays an important connecting role between regional council functions and the day-to-day decisions that communities and territorial authorities make about land and property. The collaborative work on flood hazard mapping in Halcombe is a good example of the value this activity delivers — combining Horizons' regional modelling capability with Manawatū District Council's local knowledge to produce a more comprehensive picture of flood risk than either organisation could achieve independently.

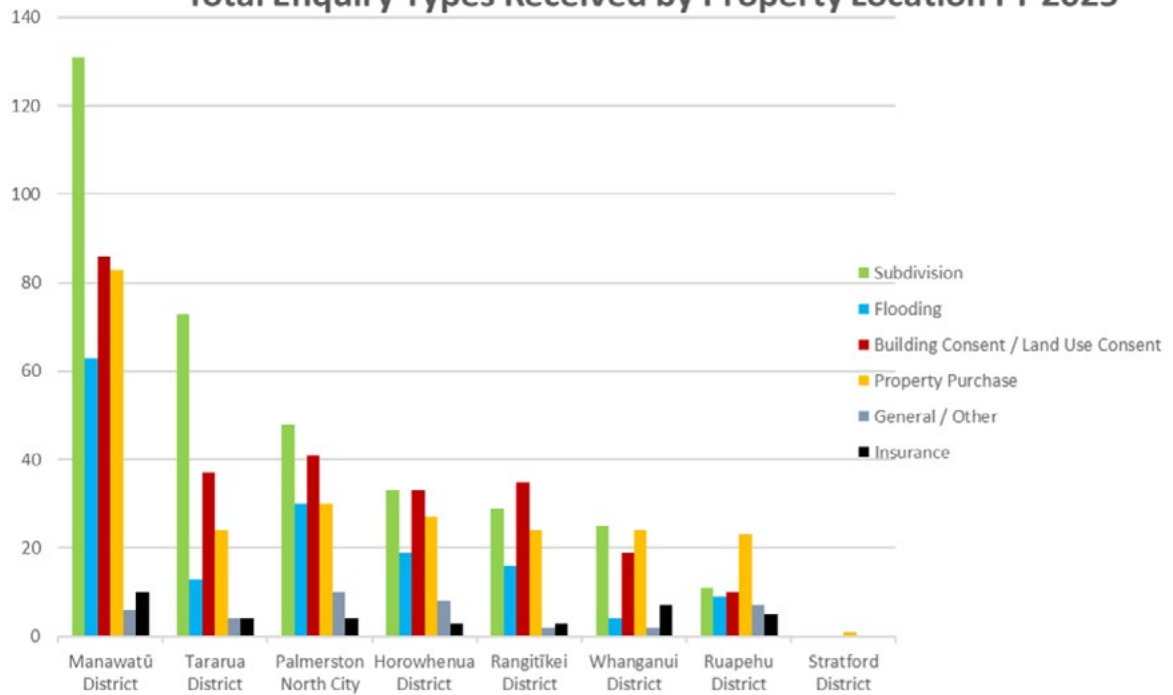
Dam safety regulation presents a specific structural consideration in any post-amalgamation environment. If these responsibilities were to transfer to a district-level entity, Manawatū District Council would need to become a Building Consent Authority for dams — requiring accreditation by International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ) and formal registration with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). Achieving and maintaining that accreditation would carry significant cost, particularly given there is only one classifiable dam in the district.

More broadly, the natural hazard and land development advice functions of this activity benefit from being delivered at a regional scale, where data, expertise, and systems — including the Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer — can be shared efficiently across all districts. Replicating equivalent capability at a district scale would cost significantly more for the same or lesser result.



District Advice Land Development Enquiries within Manawatū District

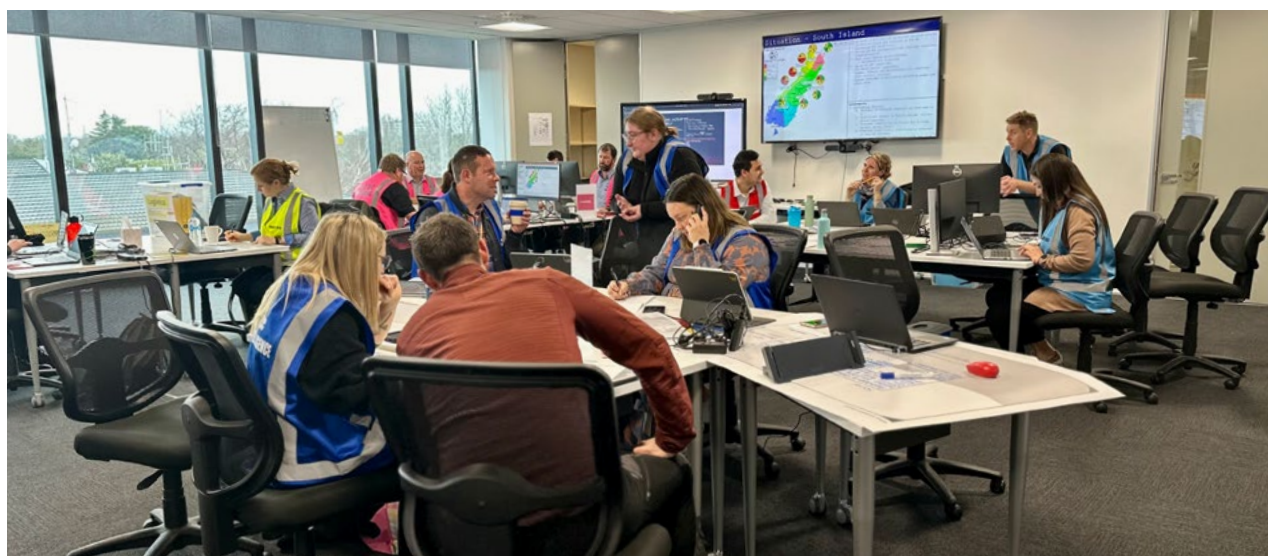
Total Enquiry Types Received by Property Location FY 2025



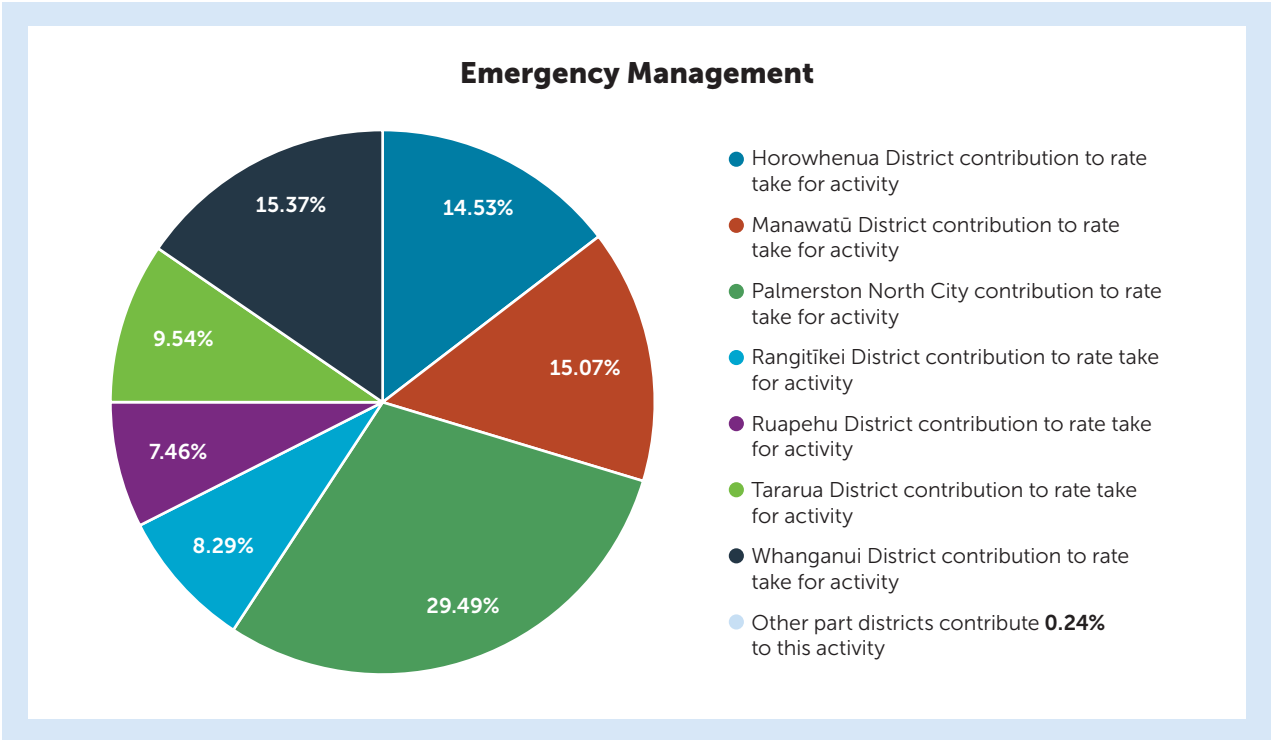
Emergency Management Activity

Emergency Management at a glance

- Aim is to take a regional approach to **reducing the risk of emergencies** and disasters, and **preparing for, responding to, and recovering** from those that do occur.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.35 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: **\$347,396**, which is a **15.07%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- Emergency Management is funded primarily through **general rates** to recognise the regional benefit of protecting people, homes and livelihoods before, during and after an emergency.
- Upstream rainfall in the Manawātū River catchment creates downstream flooding risk in Manawātū, requiring **coordinated response across multiple councils** simultaneously.
- Manawātū District Council is a member of the **Manawātū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group**.
- The Group office has **fulltime Emergency Management staff** and draws on Horizons staff before, during and after emergencies, including to deploy to support other Councils.
- Also covers **maritime safety and harbourmaster functions** on the on the Manawātū River, as well as oil spill response capability.
- **Oil spills** are low-frequency but high-consequence events requiring specialist capability.
- **River flooding**, our most likely and most frequent form of emergency, often crosses multiple district boundaries, often combined with other weather impacts such as high winds and thunderstorms.
- Emergency Management is **deeply dependent** on other Horizons activities which must be carefully considered in any structural change.
- It relies on **integrated functions** across Environmental Data, Catchment Operations, River Management, and Science to operate effectively, and separating these in a post amalgamation structure risks undermining this coordination.
- Any amalgamation process would need to carefully consider how the Emergency Management Group model would be maintained in a restructured environment, and what the **implications would be for community safety** if regional coordination capability was fragmented.



Staff in the Group Emergency Coordination Centre



Ready for whatever comes

Horizons' Emergency Management activity works to reduce the risk of emergencies and disasters, and to prepare for, respond to, and recover from those that do occur. It is delivered under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002, which establishes a group-based model of emergency management across Aotearoa New Zealand. Horizons is the administering authority for the Manawatū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group, which brings the region's eight councils together to create a coordinated regional system.

The activity provides a Group Emergency Coordination Centre (GECC) capability housed in Te Ao Nui, an IL4-rated building. It ensures staff across the region — especially council staff — can support response and recovery functions, delivers community preparedness and resilience engagement across rural communities, undertakes hazard-specific planning, and coordinates response and local coordination during local and regional events.

While some of this work is visible locally, much of its value lies in the regional coordination capability. Access to a shared regional workforce, common operating picture systems, intelligence functions, and specialist planning support means ratepayers get far

more capability than could be maintained at a district level alone without significant investment.

The Manawatū District faces flood risk at multiple scales. The district is affected by large catchments whose flood behaviour is shaped by rainfall across multiple territorial authority areas upstream. It is also affected by fast-responding local waterways, most notably the Makino Stream, which flows through Feilding and presents a high-impact, localised flood risk with limited warning time. The Makino catchment responds rapidly to rainfall, and its urban setting increases exposure to property and infrastructure damage. A spillway and mitigation works help manage flows, but flooding can still occur quickly and locally — sometimes ahead of responses to larger river systems — resulting in property flooding, road closures, and disruption to urban services. While the Makino risk is highly localised, it typically occurs during wider weather events, meaning response is supported through the regional Emergency Management system.

In addition to civil defence functions, another key role Horizons' Emergency Management activity covers is maritime safety and oil spill response. The harbourmaster function provides navigation safety oversight across the Manawatū River and coastal areas, especially around the river mouth and bar crossing

environment due to the significant volume of recreational and commercial water use. Oil spill response capability covers preparedness planning for marine spills, trained responders, coordinated response arrangements, and equipment deployment at regional scale, integrated with Maritime New Zealand at a national level. Oil spills are low-frequency but high-consequence risks which require specialist capability and equipment.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.35 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: 347,396

Emergency Management is funded primarily through general rates to recognise the regional benefit of protecting people, homes, and livelihoods before, during, and after an emergency. Minor additional funding sources include event-based central government funding and cost recovery following emergencies. Some dedicated ongoing national funding supports local readiness capability for oil spill response.

Contractual obligations for this activity include IT systems and platforms (e.g. the D4H common operating platform), training and exercise providers, specialist planning support, and communications and coordination systems. Maritime functions include harbourmaster contractor support arrangements and oil spill response capability aligned to national frameworks, including equipment, training, and response readiness obligations.

People and relationships

There are 6.5 FTEs directly employed to support this activity at Horizons through the Group Office. During peacetime, this is supplemented by the expertise of a range of Horizons staff, including those in Environmental Data, River Management and Flood Protection, and the Communications team. When a response is taking place, a range of Horizons staff fill the roles required under the Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) framework. There are also strong inter-council and inter-agency relationships with this function, with all councils and dozens of agencies inside and beyond the Horizons Region working together. In recent times, this has extended to Horizons deploying either

Emergency Management staff or general Horizons staff with significant emergency management experience to district council Emergency Coordination Centres as liaison officers, ensuring issues and needs are quickly escalated to the Group level.

The harbourmaster function is delivered through a shared resource with regional navigational safety, while the oil spill response function is supported by Emergency Management staff and regional trained responders.

Key relationships for this activity in the Manawātū District include Fire and Emergency New Zealand, New Zealand Police and ambulance services, lifeline utilities across transport, power, communications, and water, Manawātū District Council's EOC team, iwi and Māori partners, health and welfare organisations, neighbouring councils, other Emergency Management groups, and the National Emergency Management Agency. For maritime (including harbourmaster and navigation) and oil spill functions, key relationships include Maritime New Zealand, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, local contractors and response providers, and iwi and hapū with interests in coastal and waterway environments.

Key considerations for delivery models

Emergencies do not respect territorial boundaries. The Manawātū District sits at the confluence of influences from multiple large catchment systems. The Rangitīkei and Manawātū rivers both carry water from well beyond the district's boundaries, and upstream rainfall can rapidly translate into flooding risk for Manawātū communities. At the same time, localised systems such as the Makino Stream can generate rapid-onset emergencies requiring immediate local response, potentially escalating to require regional surge support if conditions worsen. Managing both scales of risk simultaneously requires a system with the flexibility, staffing depth, and coordination infrastructure that only regional delivery can provide.

Rural isolation and access challenges add a further dimension. Road and bridge outages during storm events can isolate communities across the district's dispersed rural areas, requiring prioritised, coordinated response effort that draws on regional resources.

Infrastructure and lifelines disruptions cascade across district boundaries, requiring shared prioritisation and coordination a standalone district model would struggle to deliver.

Emergency Management is deeply dependent on other Horizons activities in ways that must be carefully considered in any structural change. River flow and rainfall data from the Environmental Data activity feeds directly into flood monitoring and early warning systems. Catchment Operations staff play an active role during flood responses. River Management assets are the physical first line of defence which Emergency Management plans around. Science and Environmental Reporting provides the hazard modelling required for emergency planning. Separating these functions across different post-amalgamation entities could risk breaking the operational integration that makes the current system effective.

Maritime safety and oil spill response are another example of issues where a regional response could be seen as more efficient. Oil spills and navigation safety incidents can spread rapidly across district boundaries and into sensitive estuarine and ecological

environments. Maintaining a regional response capability, with equipment able to be quickly deployed to and operated by trained staff from a central location, would likely be more cost-effective than duplicating this across districts or sub-unitary councils.

Many elements of the current system, including GECC capability housed in an IL4-rated facility, trained surge personnel, common operating picture systems, and specialist planning functions are only cost-effective at a regional scale. Replicating these independently would require duplication of both capability and cost. Any amalgamation process would need to carefully consider how the Emergency Management Group model would be maintained in a restructured environment, and what the implications would be for community safety if regional coordination capability was fragmented. Fragmentation also risks undermining the outcomes national civil defence reform is seeking to achieve, including improved coordination, stronger capability, and better support for communities during emergencies.



Staff training for oil spill response

Environmental Data Activity

Environmental Data at a glance

- Aim is to deliver and maintain the **hydrological and environmental monitoring networks** and data systems that underpin Horizons' core functions — from flood protection and emergency management to water allocation, regulatory compliance, and state of the environment reporting.
- Budget for the region: **\$3.8 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatu District: approximately **\$477,000** from general and targeted rates.
- The estimated cost to deliver this activity at a Manawātū District-only scale is **\$406,000** but does not include establishment, specialist systems, equipment, and technical input costs.
- Environmental Data is internally funded through **general rates** recovered from the activities it supports, reflecting its role as an enabling function for service delivery.
- Manawatu District is a significant component of Horizons' **Environmental Monitoring Network**. Spatially has one of the larger populations at risk from flooding.
- More than **900** monitoring points from the Manawatu District are in Horizons' environmental archives.
- Rainfall gradient ranges from **900mm** on the coastal plain to **6,500mm** within the Ruahine Range.
- The following stations are some of the oldest continuous monitoring sites in New Zealand and are benchmark sites for national / regional / catchment hydrological understanding:
 - Oroua at Almadale
 - Pohangina at Mais Reach
- Flood forecasting models draws on data from more than **70** sites across the entire Manawātū River, including data from neighbouring regional councils.
- The systems, infrastructure, and specialist capability that make this activity function at a **regional scale** to allow for the cross-boundary nature of data cannot be easily replicated at a smaller one.
- The costs of establishing and maintaining the systems required are **largely fixed** and must be incurred whether the system serves one district or eight.
- Fragmenting delivery across post-amalgamation entities would require **duplication of these systems and costs**, likely increasing the overall expense to ratepayers for equivalent or lesser capability.
- Any structural change would need to carefully consider how **capability would be maintained**, who would hold responsibility for **cross-boundary data sharing**, and what the **implications would be for flood forecasting** and emergency response if that capability were fragmented.

The data behind the decisions

The Environmental Data activity delivers and maintains the hydrological and environmental monitoring networks and data systems underpinning almost everything Horizons does. It operates as an internal, service-driven function, funded by internal stakeholders including Science, Emergency Management, Freshwater, and Catchment Operations. This arrangement reflects the fact this activity's outputs are essential inputs for all of those other activities. Without reliable, real-time environmental data, flood warnings cannot be issued, water allocation decisions cannot be made, consent compliance cannot be assessed, and state of the environment reporting cannot be produced.

The activity manages the full lifecycle of hydrological data systems, from the design, installation, and calibration of monitoring stations through to data capture, telemetry, verification, quality assurance, analysis, and delivery to end users. This includes river, rainfall, groundwater, and climate monitoring stations across the region; real-time telemetry and communications networks; flood forecasting and river modelling systems; spatial data services supporting catchment analysis and floodplain mapping; and regional hydrological data platforms enabling access and reporting across the organisation. Horizons' Environmental Data staff are also active leads in the development of New Zealand's National Environmental Monitoring Standards (NEMS) and contribute to ISO and OGC global standards. This activity's work shapes practice well beyond the Horizons Region.

The Manawatū District has 17 primary and six secondary rainfall stations, 19 continuous flow stations, more than 30 webcams, and camp ground alarms in Tōtara Reserve. The Manawatū District has the largest groundwater monitoring network in the region, including a focus on coastal saltwater intrusion.

The Manawatū District has no coverage from weather radar. Horizons' next-generation flood forecasting system is expected to incorporate future infrastructure investment, but for now has to rely on the monitoring network to provide the detailed information needed for accurate forecasting. The rainfall gradient across the district is extreme, ranging from 900mm on the coastal plain

to 6,500mm within the Ruahine Range. This makes accurate monitoring and forecasting particularly challenging, but also particularly important. All the catchments require real-time data from neighbouring councils including Greater Wellington, Kāpiti, and Wairarapa. The Pohangina and Ōroua catchments are complex, requiring data from more than 70 sites across the Manawatū and Rangitikei catchments, including data from Horizons, and Hawke's Bay regional councils, to provide an accurate flood forecast.

Finances and contracts

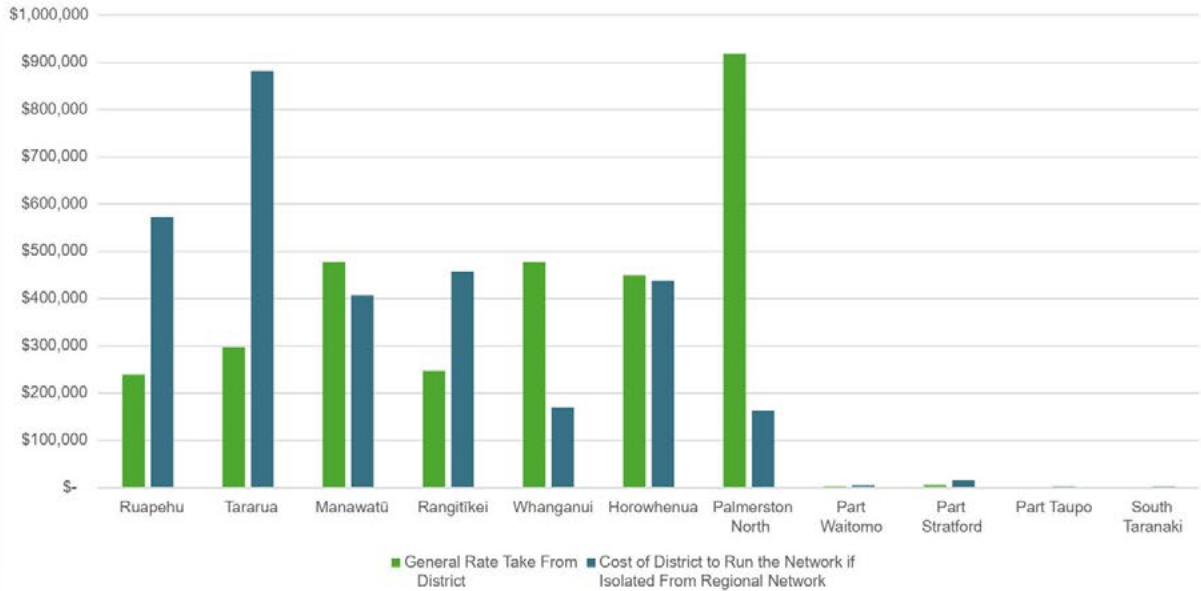
Budget for the region: \$3.8 million

Rates collected from his activity from the Manawatū District: approximately \$298,000 from general and targeted rates.

The Environmental Data activity is funded internally, with costs recovered from the activities it services (e.g. Science, Emergency Management, and Catchment Operations) via general rates. This internal funding model reflects the fact Environmental Data is an enabling function whose outputs directly support the delivery of other activities, rather than a standalone service delivered directly to the public.

Contractual obligations include data supply agreements with the Ministry for the Environment and MetService, as well as obligations related to telemetry and SCADA system integration, specialist hydrological and environmental software licences, flood forecasting systems, and shared field equipment including acoustic Doppler current profilers (ADCPs), drones, profilers, and Maritime New Zealand-certified boats and skippers.

Network Total Cost By TLA

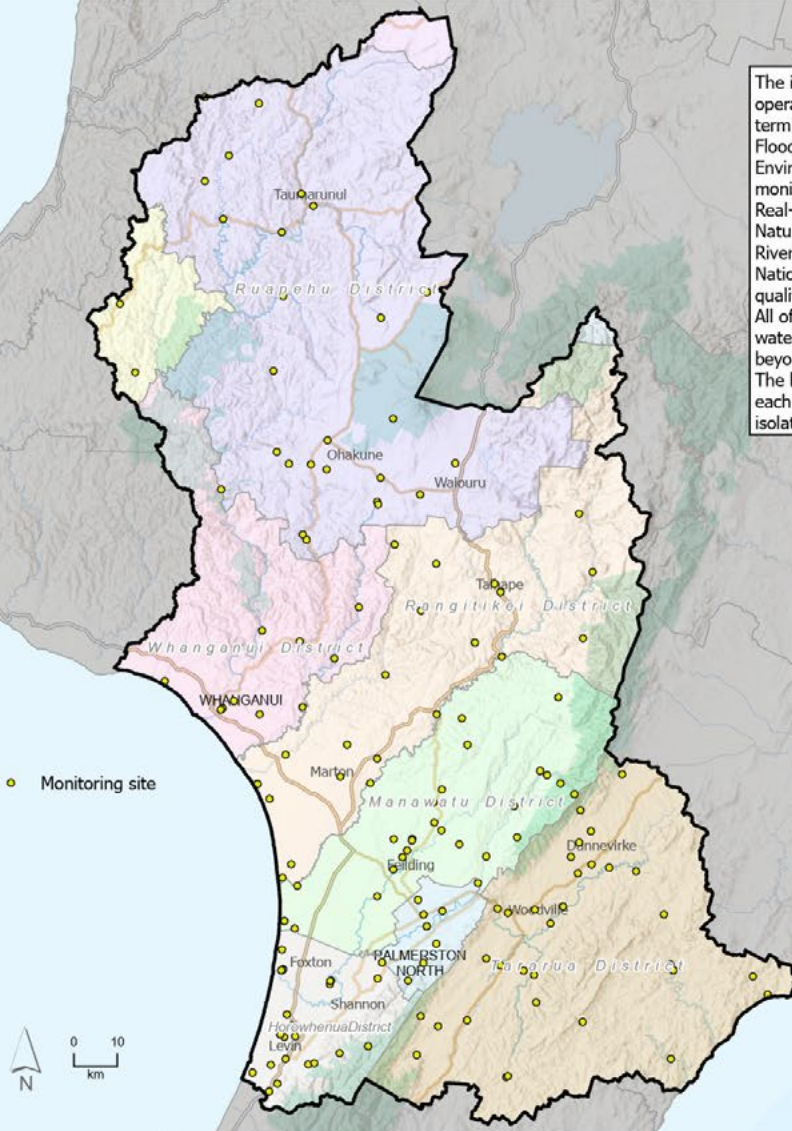


The information displayed is based on current financial year 2025-2026 operational budget for the Environmental Data Activity, relating to the long-term monitoring network (including web-cameras) which is the foundation for: Flood Modelling, Prediction, Alarming, Engineering and Design. Environmental Science supported policy development and effectiveness monitoring.

Real-time information for:
Natural Resource Management.
River users.
National and International environmental science based on long-term high quality data.

All of the above the entire region benefits from, due to factors such as waterways crossing district boundaries and environmental impacts occurring beyond the immediate testing location.

The bar chart displays the Horizons RC core monitoring network costs totals by each TLA, as well as what it would cost the district to operate the network in isolation.



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Stats NZ, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS

Horizons Environmental Data Long-term Monitoring Network 2025-2026

Prepared by: Phil H,
Information Mngt
team,
Date: 30/01/2026.
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People and relationships

There are 28 FTEs supporting this activity, including two contract roles, covering a wide range of technical capabilities from construction and engineering to environmental science and postgraduate research. Staff experience ranges from five to 35 years, with an average of 17 years. Each staff member carries a core set of general operational skills alongside single specialist capabilities, enabling them to service regional requirements while maintaining depth in their area of expertise.

The Environmental Data activity is the largest user of IT infrastructure within Horizons, operating 10 dedicated servers and more than 50 unique specialist software systems, with custom data verification processes ensuring real-time data is delivered to Horizons' website, Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website, the Ministry for the Environment, MetService, and Environment Southland.

Broader relationships include the Ministry for the Environment, MetService, neighbouring regional councils whose data is essential to cross-boundary flood forecasting, and national and international standards bodies.

Key considerations for delivery models

The Environmental Data activity benefits from regional-scale implementation and deep integration across Horizons. Downscaling is not a straightforward exercise, as it is not simply a matter of pro-rating FTEs to a district's population. The systems, infrastructure, and specialist capability that make this activity function at a regional scale cannot be easily replicated at a smaller one.

The costs of establishing and maintaining the systems required – telemetry and SCADA integration, specialist hydrological and environmental software licences, flood forecasting platforms, MetService data access, automatic flood alerting systems, shared field equipment, and Maritime New Zealand-certified vessels – are largely fixed. They must be incurred whether the system serves one district or eight. Fragmenting delivery across post-amalgamation entities would require duplication of these systems and costs, likely increasing the overall expense to ratepayers for equivalent or lesser capability.

The cross-boundary nature of the data itself reinforces this point. Flood forecasting for the lower Manawatū, its major sub-catchments and the town of Feilding requires real-time data from more than 70 sites spanning multiple regional, district and city council jurisdictions. This activity does not operate in an isolated environment. It requires sustained, formalised data-sharing relationships with neighbouring councils and a credible entity to maintain them.

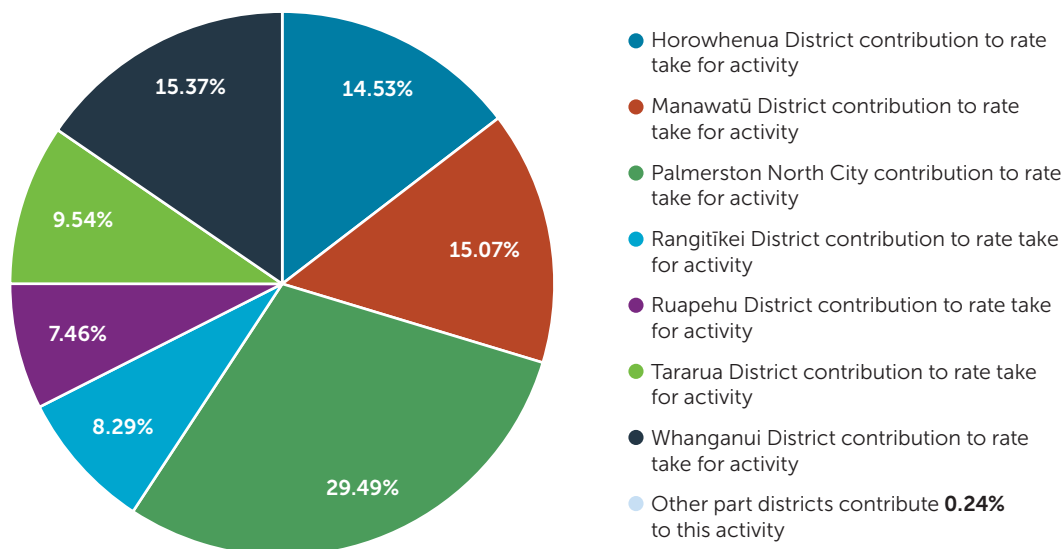
The estimated cost to deliver this activity at a Manawatū-only scale is \$406,000. That figure does not include the additional costs for specialist systems, equipment, and technical input (these costs have not been quantified at the time of writing). With Manawatū ratepayers currently contributing approximately \$477,000 to the regional system, it is clear there is a financial benefit from the economy of scale currently offered. Any structural change arising from amalgamations would need to carefully consider how this capability would be maintained, who would hold responsibility for cross-boundary data sharing, and what the implications would be for flood forecasting and emergency response if that capability were fragmented.

Information Management Activity

Information Management at a glance

- Aim is to provide the **digital systems, data, GIS, cybersecurity, information management, and digital infrastructure** needed to deliver Horizons' services across the district and wider region.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.31 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: **\$270,997**, which is a **15.07%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through **general rates** to recognise the support it provides for other functions that benefit the region as a whole.
- **River height alerts** are available to the public through a system maintained by Information Services and the Environmental Data team.
- **Regional geospatial products** — including aerial imagery, and digital terrain and surface models — support flood modelling, hazard mapping, and emergency management across the district boundaries.
- Collaborating with regional councils across the motu to stand up **IRIS NextGen**, a modern cloud-based regional regulatory platform, delivered with other councils through Regional Software Holdings Ltd.
- Manawātū District Council will already have **digital infrastructure and capability** to meet their own statutory and operational obligations, the question is how the regional council-specific layer would be maintained, separated, integrated, or transitioned under any future model.
- The regional council-specific layer of information includes systems and services that simply **do not map neatly onto district boundaries**.

Information Management



The technology keeping regional services ticking

Information Management activity (also known as Information Services) supports the digital systems, data, GIS, cybersecurity, information management, digital infrastructure, and transformation capability needed to deliver Horizons' services across the Manawātū District and the wider region. Some aspects of this activity will be familiar to territorial authorities, including core infrastructure, cloud platforms, cybersecurity, telephony, websites, GIS software, records systems, and end-user support. The distinctive part of Horizons' Information Services activity, however, is the way it enables regional council-specific services that operate across district boundaries.

A key example is IRIS and IRIS NextGen. IRIS is the digital system Horizons uses to support regional council activities including consenting, compliance monitoring, contacts management, enforcement, state of the environment monitoring, land management, biosecurity, and biodiversity. IRIS NextGen is a significant regional council sector programme to move to a modern cloud-based regional regulatory platform, delivered with other councils through Regional Software Holdings Ltd. It includes an online customer portal, mobile field application, consistent good-practice processes, and integrated change management – and will shape how regional council services are delivered digitally for years to come. Despite the uncertainty in if Regulatory Management will continue to be delivered by councils or a national body, central government wants regional and unitary councils to continue working on the IRIS NextGen project.

Information Services also supports the digital infrastructure, systems, integrations, data flows, and security controls that underpin telemetry, river monitoring, survey data, and related environmental information services. Working alongside the Environmental Data team, it ensures environmental data captured in the field can be transmitted, stored, accessed, integrated with mapping or reporting tools, and used for operational decision-making, public information, emergency management, and longer-term environmental reporting.

Information Services maintains the technology layer enabling the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and river height alerting processes, giving the public access to river height alerts and enabling Horizons to manage alert triggers when river height thresholds are met. The activity also supports regional remote sensing and geospatial products including aerial imagery, point clouds, Digital Terrain Models, Digital Surface Models, and related spatial datasets, which support flood modelling, hazard mapping, catchment management, environmental monitoring, planning, emergency management, and collaboration with territorial authorities.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.31 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: \$270,997

This activity is funded through general rates to recognise the support it provides for other functions that benefit the region as a whole.

Information Services manages or supports a range of contracts, supplier arrangements, shared-service commitments, and sector partnerships. Some are similar to those held by territorial authorities, including Microsoft 365, cybersecurity tools, cloud services, websites, telephony, and GIS software. The arrangements more distinctive to Horizons are those supporting regional council functions, regional-scale data, sector collaboration, and operational services across district boundaries – most significantly, the IRIS and IRIS NextGen programmes, delivered through Regional Software Holdings Ltd with other regional councils.

People and relationships

There are approximately 20.5 FTEs supporting this activity, spanning operational delivery and transformation, IT operations and digital infrastructure, data and GIS, enterprise architecture, and cybersecurity and risk. This includes 9.5 FTE in digital delivery and transformation, 5 FTE in IT operations and digital infrastructure (including cybersecurity and risk), 5 FTE in data and GIS, and 2 FTE in enterprise and solution architecture.

It is important to note that data, GIS, and analytical capability also exists in other parts of Horizons, including data scientists and GIS specialists who directly support specific business activities. Information Services does not replace that business-specific expertise. Instead, it provides the enterprise-wide platforms, governance, systems, integration, cybersecurity, architecture, and specialist support to enable those teams to use data and spatial information effectively.

Key sector relationships include Regional Software Holdings Ltd, the Association of Local Government Information Management (ALGIM), Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), the Manawatū-Whanganui Local Authority Shared Services (MWLASS), special interest groups, professional communities of practice, central government agencies, and vendor partnerships across the local government sector.

Key considerations for delivery models

Manawatū District Council will already have digital infrastructure and capability to meet their own statutory and operational obligations, including systems and support for customer services, websites, GIS, records, cybersecurity, telephony, property, rates, assets, building control, and district planning. The key consideration is not whether that technology capability exists. The question is how the regional council-specific layer would be maintained, separated, integrated, or transitioned under any future model.

GIS provides a useful illustration of the complexity involved, but the lesson applies across the broader Information Services environment. Combining GIS platforms involves far more than merging maps. It requires data analysis, harmonisation, metadata and lineage management, integration rebuilding, public service continuity, cybersecurity, identity and access controls, testing, dual-running, and decommissioning. Those same issues apply across regulatory systems, customer channels, records, telemetry, public alerting, cloud platforms, and cybersecurity.

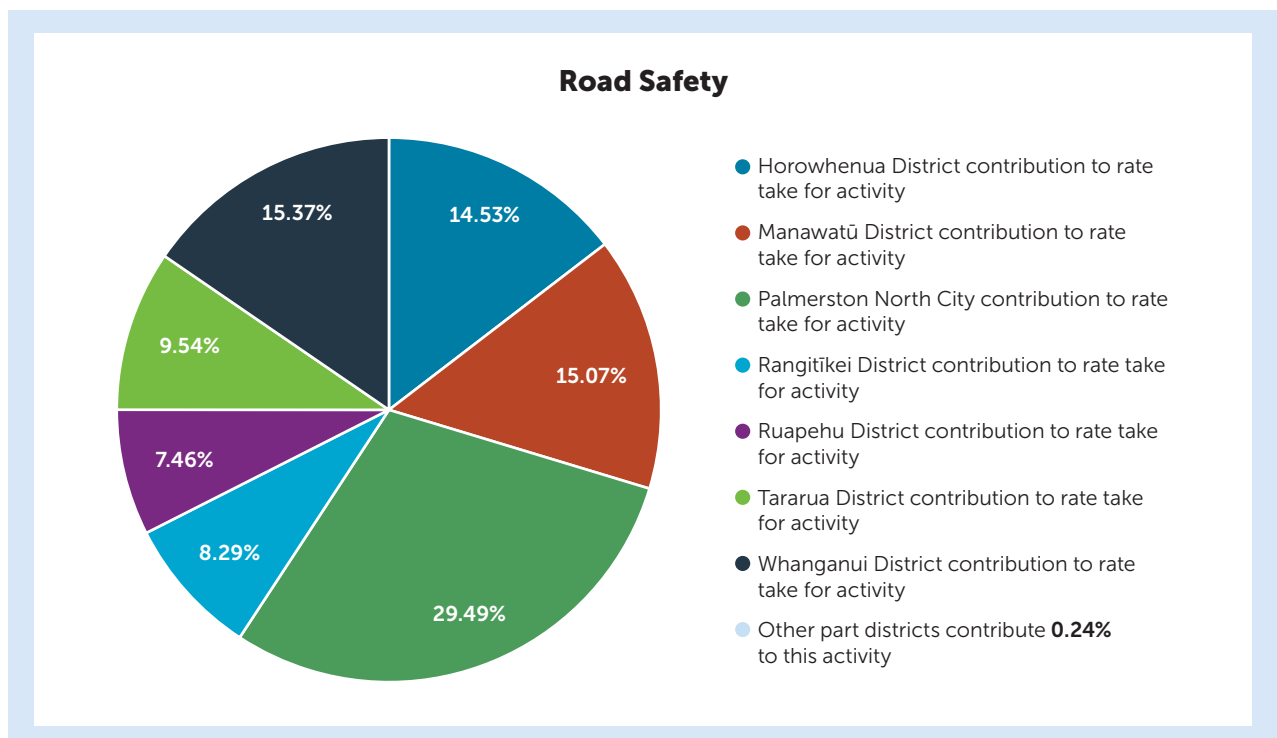
The regional council-specific layer that Information Services supports includes systems and services that simply do not map neatly onto district boundaries. These include IRIS and IRIS NextGen for regional regulatory functions, telemetry and river monitoring infrastructure, the public river height alerting system, regional remote sensing and geospatial products, information governance, and cross-boundary environmental data. These are supported by shared systems, contracts, integrations, cybersecurity controls, specialist capability, and sector relationships currently operating at regional scale.

Amalgamations may create opportunities for efficiency or shared investment (either between new entities or in a shared services/council-controlled organisation arrangement). However, this would need to be weighed carefully against transition costs, dual-running periods, data separation or harmonisation requirements, integration changes, contract implications, cyber risk, and the need to retain or recruit specialist capability. Any assessment would need to consider not only future operating costs, but also the cost, time, and operational risk involved in moving from the current regional model to a new arrangement.

Road Safety Activity

Road Safety at a glance

- Aim is to **reduce deaths and serious injuries on the region's roads** through targeted education, engagement, and behaviour change programmes.
- NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi co-fundings **58%** of this activity with the rest funded by general rates.
- Budget for the region: **\$960,298**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: **\$33,307**, which is a **6.3%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **Drivers do not stay within district boundaries**, with this activity bringing benefits across the region and beyond.
- Drivers do not stay within their home district, and road safety risk **does not concentrate neatly within territorial boundaries**.
- Fragmenting this into smaller programmes could **reduce coordination and could jeopardise access to NZTA co-funding** if the scale of individual programmes fell below what is required to attract subsidy.



Safer roads for everyone

Horizons' Road Safety activity works to reduce deaths and serious injuries on the region's roads through targeted education, community engagement, and behaviour change programmes. The programme is delivered at a regional level, with initiatives tailored to local communities, events, and vulnerable road user groups. While individual activities are delivered within specific districts, the benefits extend across the region and beyond.

Road safety activity in the Manawātū District focuses on delivering education, engagement, and behaviour change programmes across a mixed urban and rural network, with a high concentration of population in Whanganui city. Programmes are targeted to local risk factors and support safe travel within the city and across surrounding rural and coastal areas.

Horizons' road safety staff deliver targeted engagement with local communities and at local events, including engaging with young people in schools through programmes such as the Combined Adolescent Challenge Training Unit (CACTUS) and Students Against Dangerous Driving (SADD). The team also delivers road rules education and promotes safe behaviours for older drivers through workshops and community sessions. Host responsibility visits are undertaken at licensed premises across the district to promote sober driving and support safer environments. Road safety staff partner with New Zealand Police at roadside checkpoints and education stops, reinforcing behaviour change directly with drivers. Campaigns targeting driver distraction, alcohol impairment, and seatbelt use are delivered through community outreach and local partnerships. Manawātū residents also benefit from regional campaigns and large-scale interventions that reach audiences travelling across district boundaries.



Road safety team engaging with members of the public

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$960,298

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: \$33,307

Road safety is funded through a combination of general rates and a NZTA subsidy at a funding rate of 58%. This co-funding arrangement reflects the national interest in reducing road trauma and makes the programme significantly more cost-effective for ratepayers than it would otherwise be. There are no ongoing contractual obligations associated with this activity.

People and relationships

Two FTEs deliver the Horizons road safety programme across the entire region, supported by communications staff and the wider Transport team. Road safety coordinators work closely with territorial authorities, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, New Zealand Police and other road safety agencies both within the Horizons Region and with neighbouring regions through inter-regional activities.

Key considerations for delivery models

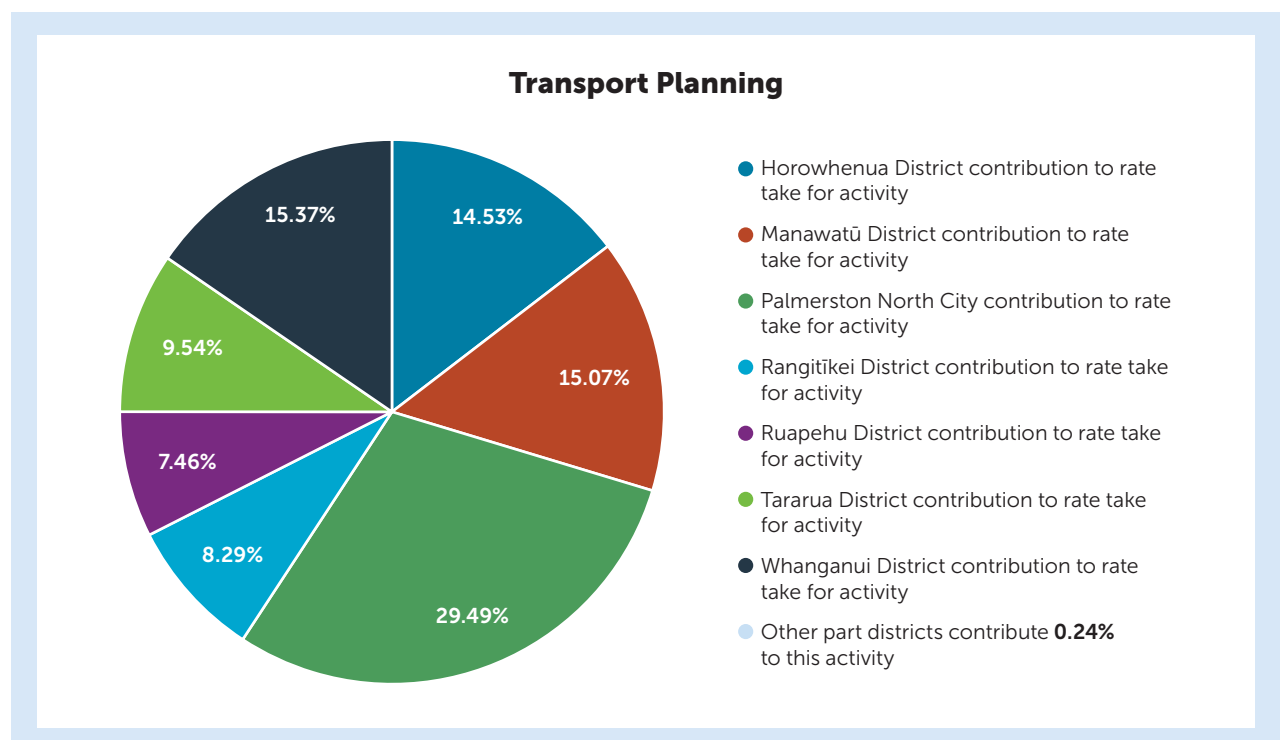
Road safety is one of Horizons' smaller activities by budget, but it delivers meaningful community benefit relative to its rating impact due to the NZTA co-funding arrangement, which effectively doubles the value of ratepayer investment. Maintaining eligibility for that co-funding depends on having a credible, organised programme that meets NZTA's requirements.

Drivers do not stay within their home district, and road safety risk does not concentrate neatly within territorial boundaries. This is why the programme is structured and funded at a regional level, and why inter-regional coordination with neighbouring regions is a feature of its delivery. Fragmenting this into smaller programmes could reduce coordination and could jeopardise access to NZTA co-funding if the scale of individual programmes fell below what is required to attract subsidy. Delivery at a smaller scale could see additional costs and/or additional responsibilities placed on other existing staff.

Transport Planning Activity

Transport Planning at a glance

- Aims to set the **strategic direction for land transport** across the region, identifying **priorities, investment needs, and long-term outcomes** for a connected, efficient, and resilient transport system.
- Budget for the region: **\$332,395**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: **\$25,981** which is a **7.4%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi co-fundings **51%** of this activity with the rest funded by general rates.
- The Regional Land Transport Plan is the primary gateway for **central government funding** for transport coming into the region.
- The **Regional Public Transport Plan** sets the framework for public transport services and infrastructure.
- Most transport investment relies on **co-funding** from the National Land Transport Fund.
- The transport system crosses district boundaries, meaning investment decisions in one area affect travel times, freight efficiency, and safety elsewhere, so planning is **structured and funded regionally and overseen by regional committees**.
- Sub-regional scale of transport planning would **duplicate effort and increase costs** while reducing coordination and weakening influence with NZTA.



Working on the ways we'll move

The Transport Planning activity helps to set the strategic direction for land transport across the region, identifying priorities, investment needs, and long-term outcomes for the transport system. This direction is delivered primarily through two statutory documents: the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP), which prioritises transport investment and identifies projects for central government funding; and the Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP), which sets the framework for public transport services and infrastructure. Both are required under the Land Transport Management Act 2003.

The RLTP is the guide central government uses when allocating transport funding for the region. Most transport investment relies on central government co-funding via the National Land Transport Fund. Including a project in the RLTP signals its importance to those who hold the purse strings and ultimately enable investment which benefits local contractors and the wider community.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$332,395

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: \$25,981

Transport Planning is funded by general rates and a NZTA subsidy at a funding rate of 51%. As with Road Safety, this central government co-funding significantly enhances the value of ratepayer investment in this activity.

People and relationships

One FTE delivers this activity, with support from the wider Transport team, governance and communications staff. Given the breadth of this function relative to staffing, this activity relies heavily on strong internal relationships to be successful.

Key relationships include the Regional Transport Committee, territorial authorities across the region, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, the Department of Conservation, New Zealand Police, KiwiRail, active transport advocates, road user groups, and transport planners in other regions.

Key considerations for delivery models

Transport planning is a statutory function under the Land Transport Management Act 2003, and the RLTP is the mechanism through which the region accesses central government transport funding. The RLTP must reflect the transport system as a whole, across all districts, and be developed in a way that satisfies NZTA requirements for co-funding eligibility.

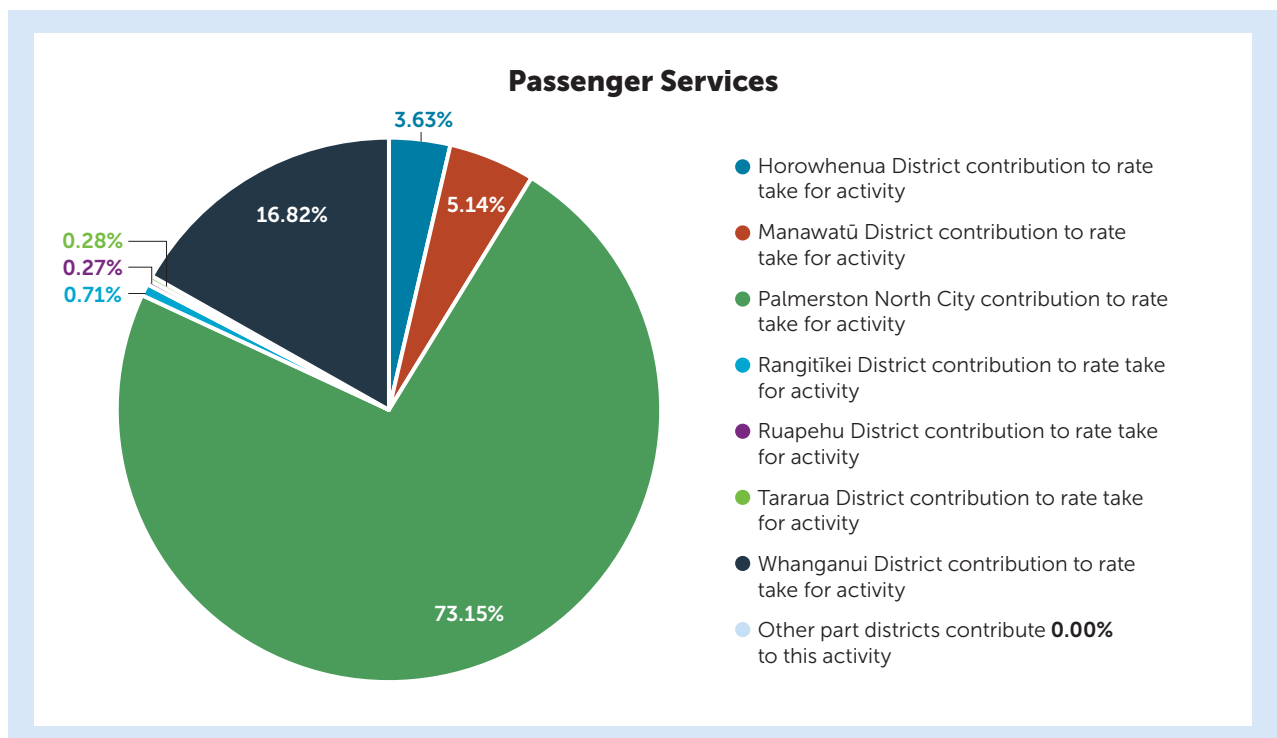
The transport system does not follow district boundaries. State highways, rail corridors, freight routes, and public transport networks cross multiple territorial authority areas. Investment decisions made in one district affect travel times, freight efficiency, and safety outcomes in others. This is why transport planning is structured and funded at a regional level, and why the Regional Transport Committee – and for the RPTP, the Passenger Transport Committee – brings together representatives from across the region to oversee it.

Delivery transport planning at a sub-regional scale could create significant uncertainty and duplication. If each post-amalgamation entity were required to produce its own equivalent of the RLTP or RPTP, the same quantum of planning work would need to be replicated multiple times, at greater overall cost, with reduced coordination, and with a weaker collective voice in negotiations with NZTA over funding priorities.

Passenger Services Activity

Passenger Services at a glance

- Aims to deliver **public transport services** that enable access to employment, education, healthcare, and social activities.
- Public transport services are not just buses – **Total Mobility and community transport services** are also a part of this activity.
- Budget for the region: **\$20.7 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: **\$423,428**, which is a **5.14%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through a **targeted passenger services rate** and **subsidies** from NZTA Waka Kotahi.
- **Fully electric buses** begin to service Feilding township and the Feilding-Palmerston North service from July 2026.
- The Manawatū District has **625** Total Mobility registered users, with **14,408** trips delivered annually.
- Community transport services including **St John Feilding shuttle** and the **Rural Bus Manawatū** delivered thousands of trips in 2024-25, supporting residents who would otherwise struggle to access services.
- Horizons also holds a 35-year agreement with Greater Wellington Regional Council for the **new Lower North Island Rail Improvements (LNIRIM) passenger rail services**.
- This **significant contractual agreement** requires careful consideration in any amalgamation to ensure clear management, accountability for obligations, and fair distribution of benefits across future entities.
- Public transport **does not stop at district boundaries**, and cross-boundary services require coordination that benefits from a regional outlook.
- Delivering passenger services at a district level would **duplicate key functions, reduce efficiencies, and likely increase costs** for the same or lower level of service compared to the current regional model.



Creating community connections

Passenger Services delivers public transport services across the Horizons Region. This includes urban and regional bus networks, Total Mobility services, passenger rail contributions, and community transport initiatives. These services enable access to employment, education, healthcare, and social activities, supporting an accessible, connected, and inclusive transport system. The activity covers procurement and contract management of bus operators, delivery of services in line with the Regional Public Transport Plan, contributions to passenger rail services including the Capital Connection, management of the Total Mobility scheme, and support for community transport initiatives.

Passenger Services in the Manawatū District provides a mix of localised services centred on Feilding and regional connections, supporting access for both township and rural communities. Services are targeted to where they provide the greatest benefit, reflecting the district's dispersed population and travel patterns. Many journeys involve travel to Palmerston North for work, education, healthcare, and services not available locally, reinforcing the importance of maintaining reliable regional connections.

In July 2026, Horizons is launching fully electric buses and improved services for Feilding, a significant upgrade for the district's public transport network that reflects ongoing investment in service quality and environmental sustainability. Bus services within Feilding support travel to key destinations including schools, employment areas, and local services, while regional and inter-district connections link the district to Palmerston North and the wider region. The Palmerston North-Feilding service has some of the strongest fare recovery of any passenger transport service in the region.

The Total Mobility scheme provides subsidised transport for people with disabilities and mobility issues, enabling access to essential services and community participation. In the Manawatū District, there are 625 registered Total Mobility users, with 14,408 trips delivered in 2024-25.

The Community Transport scheme funds health and community vehicles to assist people in accessing services they may otherwise be unable to reach. In the Manawatū District, this

includes the Rural Bus Manawatū (\$50,000 in 2024-25) and St John Feilding (\$7,000, supporting 5,998 passenger trips in 2023-24). Together these services provide a vital safety net for residents across a dispersed rural district with limited access to scheduled public transport.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$20.7 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$423,428

Passenger Services is funded through a targeted passenger services rate applied at a district level. NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi co-funds a significant portion of this activity through the National Land Transport Fund, with the funding rate varying depending on the type of service, meaning ratepayer contributions are leveraged to deliver more than rates alone could fund.

Contractual obligations include a nine-year public transport bus contract, Total Mobility contracts with transport operators (one-year terms), and the Capital Connection passenger rail arrangement. Horizons also holds a 35-year agreement with Greater Wellington Regional Council for the new Lower North Island Rail Improvements (LNIRIM) passenger rail services. This long-term commitment will shape enhanced rail connectivity for decades for Manawatū District, the Horizons Region, and others across the lower North Island.

People and relationships

Nine FTEs deliver this activity across the region, supported by customer services, communications, and governance staff. Key relationships in the Manawatū District include NZTA, transport and planning teams at Manawatū District Council, bus operators, Total Mobility transport providers, and community transport providers including St John Feilding and Rural Bus Manawatū.

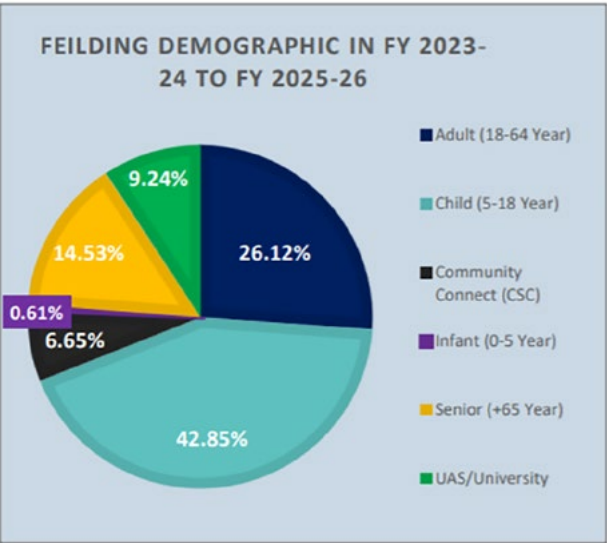
Key considerations for delivery models

Public transport does not stop at district boundaries. Many of the journeys that matter most to Manawatū residents involve travel to Palmerston North for hospital appointments, tertiary education, employment, and services not available locally. The Feilding-Palmerston North Service has some of the best fare recovery of any passenger transport service in

the region. These cross-boundary connections depend on coordination and contractual arrangements that span multiple territorial authorities and require a regional entity to manage them effectively.

The 35-year LNIRIM rail agreement with Greater Wellington Regional Council is a significant long-term contractual commitment. Any structural change arising from amalgamations would need to consider carefully how this agreement would be managed, what entity or entities would hold the obligations, and how the benefits would be distributed across what may be multiple post-amalgamation entities within the Horizons Region.

Delivering Passenger Services at a sub-regional scale would create duplication across a number of areas, including public transport and Total Mobility operations, monitoring and reporting, ticketing systems, and real-time bus information infrastructure. These systems and functions generate efficiencies at regional scale and become more expensive per ratepayer when fragmented. The launch of fully electric buses and improved Feilding services in July 2026 represents a significant investment in the district’s public transport future — maintaining the regional infrastructure and contractual frameworks that make such investment possible will be an important consideration in any structural change.



Feilding bus demographic in last 3 FY (2023-24 to Jan 26)

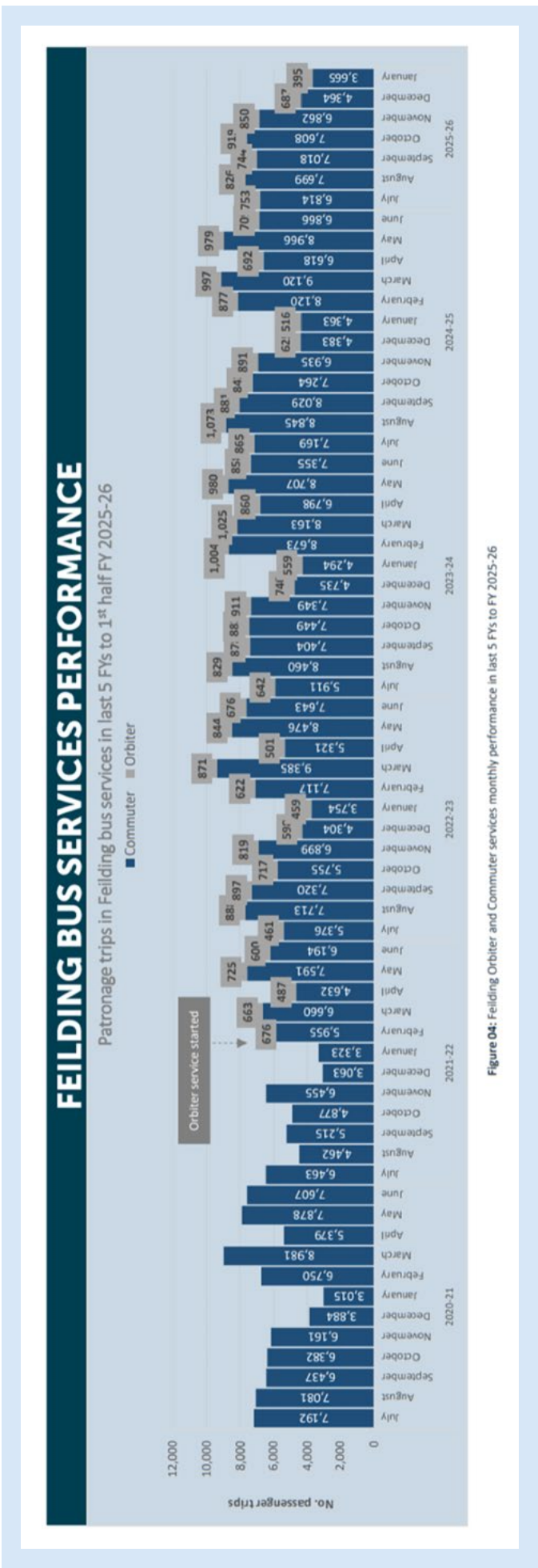
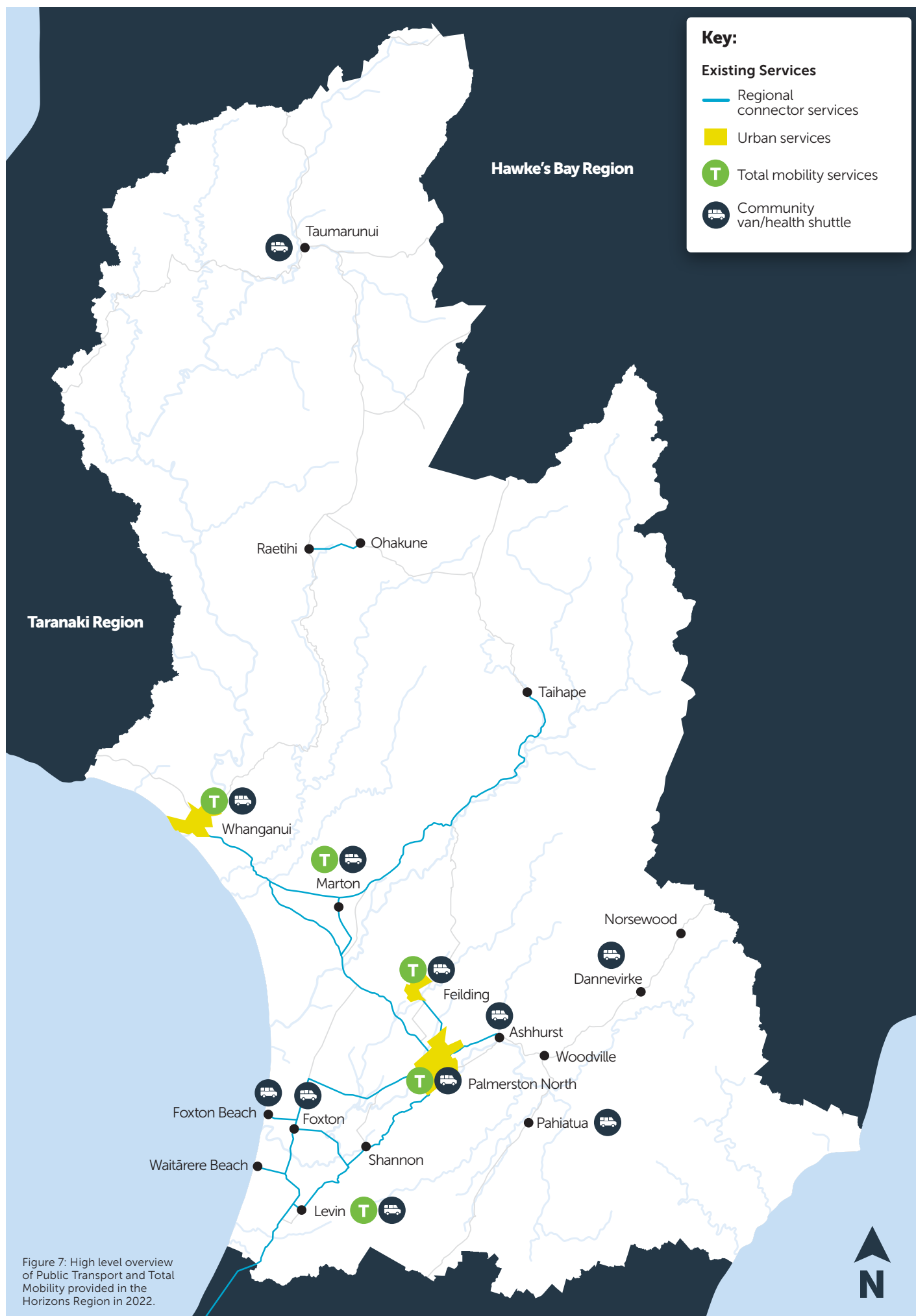


Figure 04: Feilding Orbiter and Commuter services monthly performance in last 5 FYs to FY 2025-26



Working together – Partnerships, Governance and Leadership

This group is made up of the following activities:

- Community Wellbeing and Relationships
- Governance
- Iwi and Hapū Relationships

The Partnerships, Governance and Leadership Group provides the leadership and oversight for Council's strategic decision-making and relationships, and community wellbeing in the region. The governance function, made up of the elected members sitting as Council, the six committees of Council and the Joint Committees, represent their constituent communities around the Council table.

This group is also focussed on developing and maintaining strong iwi and hapū partnerships, as well as informing, educating, and empowering the diverse range of communities across the rohe, including in the Manawatū District.

The Partnerships, Governance and Leadership Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

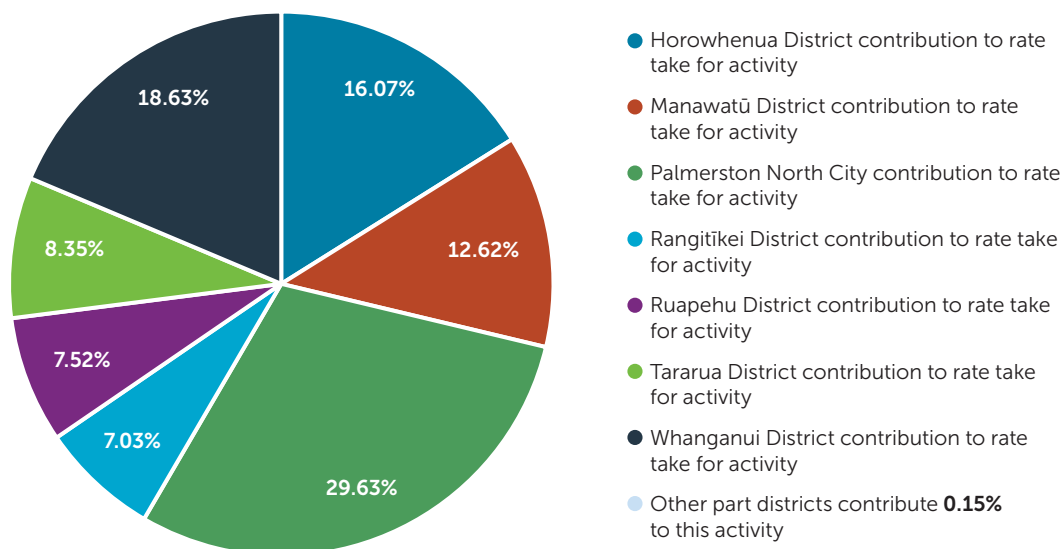
	Community Wellbeing and Relationships	Governance	Iwi and Hapū Relationships
Regional rates	1,977,687.80	3,629,622.15	508,216.82
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	80,000.00	5,000.00	220,000.00
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	5,818.44	180,345.00	1,448.49
Total Operational Expenditure	2,051,869.36	3,454,277.15	726,768.33
Manawatū District rates	249,527.36	457,954.00	64,122.36
Manawatū District contribution of rate take to activity	12.62%	12.62%	12.62%

Community Wellbeing and Relationships Activity

Community Wellbeing and Relationships at a glance

- Aim is to **inform, educate, and empower communities** by being a trusted and credible source of meaningful information.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.05 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: **\$249,527.36**, which is a **12.62%** contribution to the operational budget.
- Activity is funded **100% through the Universal Annual General Charge** as the benefits of community engagement, public information, and environmental education are shared across the entire region.
- Team well connected with **Manawātū District Council** peers, particularly during emergencies.
- **25** regional media releases relevant to the Manawātū District in 2024-25.
- **62%** of all Horizons media releases in 2024-25 were relevant to the Manawātū District
- **21** Enviroschools in the district, with **405** students and teachers engaged in education and professional development sessions.
- **7** Enviroschools facilitators region-wide, **2** work specifically in the Manawātū District.
- **The Enviroschools programme** relies on regional coordination, where shared facilitation, training, and curriculum delivery create efficiencies, smaller scale delivery would be more costly and less consistent.
- **3** community events attended in the district in 2024-25.
- Consistent regional delivery ensures **clear, unified messaging and services across boundaries**, while fragmentation risks confusion for communities using cross-district services such as public transport and Civil Defence.
- Regional delivery also **allows lessons and messaging from one area to be applied across the region** for services that span multiple districts and spreads staff subject matter knowledge more widely.

Community Wellbeing and Relationships



Telling our stories and keeping our communities informed

The Community Wellbeing and Relationships activity engages with the community and delivers communications campaigns through a variety of channels, including digital and social media, media liaison, publications, consultation documents, reports and summaries, material for field staff, and event management. This activity also assists with the promotion, shortlisting, and reporting of several grants and sponsorships Horizons offers, and delivers customer service functions for the organisation. The emphasis of this work is to inform, educate, and empower communities by serving as a trusted, credible source of meaningful information. This includes internal communications within the organisation, to Horizons councillors, and to relevant stakeholders. The physical size of the Horizons Region is a key consideration for both internal and external communications.

Due to the regional scale at which this activity operates, it also serves as the communications lead for partnership projects, including the Manawatū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group, Te Āpiti-Manawatū Gorge, Manawatū River Leaders' Forum, Tōtara Reserve Regional Park and the Accelerate35 partnership. This includes media releases, website updates, and general administration support as required.

To engage with the region's tamariki and rangatahi, Horizons facilitates the Enviroschools programme throughout the region and delivers programmes such as Waiora stream studies, pest tracking and trapping, native flora and fauna education, and other community engagement activities. Horizons' Senior Environmental Educator works alongside community groups, the Department of Conservation, territorial authorities, and other environmental education providers to deliver environmental education. The Enviroschools programme is part-funded by territorial authorities, who pay according to the number of schools and early childhood education centres that are signed up, with Horizons also part-funding this mahi.

The Communications team, alongside other appropriately trained staff across the organisation, provides support and resourcing to territorial authorities during emergency events, primarily through the

Public Information Management function (PIM) within the CIMS structure at the Emergency Coordination Centre level. The team helps provide consistent messaging across the region through the MWCDEM website, the Manawatū-Whanganui Civil Defence Facebook page, and by providing and receiving advice from territorial authorities and partner organisations. The Group PIM function, which every region across the motu has, is held by Horizons' Media and Communications Manager. This employee ensures all PIMs across the region at a variety of institutions – not just councils – are equipped to respond in emergencies.

In the Manawatū District, Horizons delivers bespoke communications campaigns alongside business-as-usual support across all activities. One example is the communications work for the tweaked Feilding public transport services. This started with the Moving Manawatū consultation campaign, which delivered a two-part survey to the Manawatū community to see what they wanted from their public transport services. This then led into the promotion and marketing campaign for the improved services, which include a fully electric and rebranded fleet, improved frequency, and the introduction of Sunday services.

Business-as-usual communications support in Manawatū covers a wide range: biosecurity and biodiversity awareness, community grant support, Connect public transport service updates, harbourmaster navigation safety communications on the Manawatū River, science education campaigns, and ongoing promotion of Horizons services to the community.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.05 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$249,527.36

The Community Wellbeing and Relationships activity is funded 100% through the Universal Annual General Charge, reflecting the fact that the benefits of community engagement, public information, and environmental education are shared across the entire region.

People and relationships

About 7 FTEs support the Communications team and associated activities, based in Palmerston North. Customer Services functions are delivered by 6.5 FTEs based at multiple offices across the region. This increases from August to November during the rates season.

The team works closely with subject matter experts across Horizons to forge relationships. A prime example includes working with the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Activity on consultation and adoption of the Tōtara Reserve Management Plan. This involved significant collateral creation, as well as promotion of the consultative process. The Communications team undertakes work on behalf of Tōtara Reserve Advisory Board, which features members from Horizons Regional Council, Rangitāne o Manawatū, Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua, representatives from the local community, Camp Rangi Woods Trust, Pohangina Catchment Care Group, Manawatū District Council and campers.

The environmental education function has key relationships with schools and early childhood education centres participating in Enviroschools. There are also relationships with district council communications staff and media organisations with interests in stories in the Manawatū District.

Key considerations for delivery models

Consistency matters across boundaries. The Connect public transport brand, tsunami signage, civil defence messaging, and environmental education programmes all depend on consistent branding, content, and delivery standards across district boundaries. Fragmented post-amalgamation communications structures could risk undermining that consistency. This could create confusion for communities and users who interact with services that cross district lines.

There is also the benefit of applying lessons across boundaries. Public transport is a prime example. Horizons has launched multiple new or improved public transport networks in recent years, alongside public transport planning campaigns such as the Regional Services Review. Lessons learned during a campaign in one territorial authority area are applied to a campaign in another area, then

another, and another, and then across the region. This ensures local voices are used where they are most effective, while lessons are efficiently applied across the region without requiring cross-entity debriefs or education.

The Manawatū River is another example of the benefit of regional delivery. Communications regarding river navigation safety through the harbourmaster function, flood events across the catchment, and water quality all involve a waterway that crosses multiple territorial authorities. Coordinating consistent, timely, and accurate public messaging about the benefits from a single communications function with a regional view.

The Enviroschools programme depends on regional coordination. With 2 facilitators working across the Manawatū District alone, and the programme operating across the entire region, the efficiencies of shared facilitation, training, and curriculum development are significant. Delivering an equivalent programme at a district or smaller scale would require each entity to independently resource facilitation and coordination. This would likely come at a greater cost and with less consistency.

Internal communications present their own challenge at the regional scale. With staff spread across multiple service centres and depots from Ruapehu to Horowhenua, maintaining organisational cohesion and ensuring teams in different districts are aware of what is happening across the region are ongoing tasks. When done poorly, the common voice becomes disjointed, and confusion can abound. This is an issue already being experienced during the Three Waters process. Any structural change that further fragments staff populations would increase this challenge rather than reduce it.



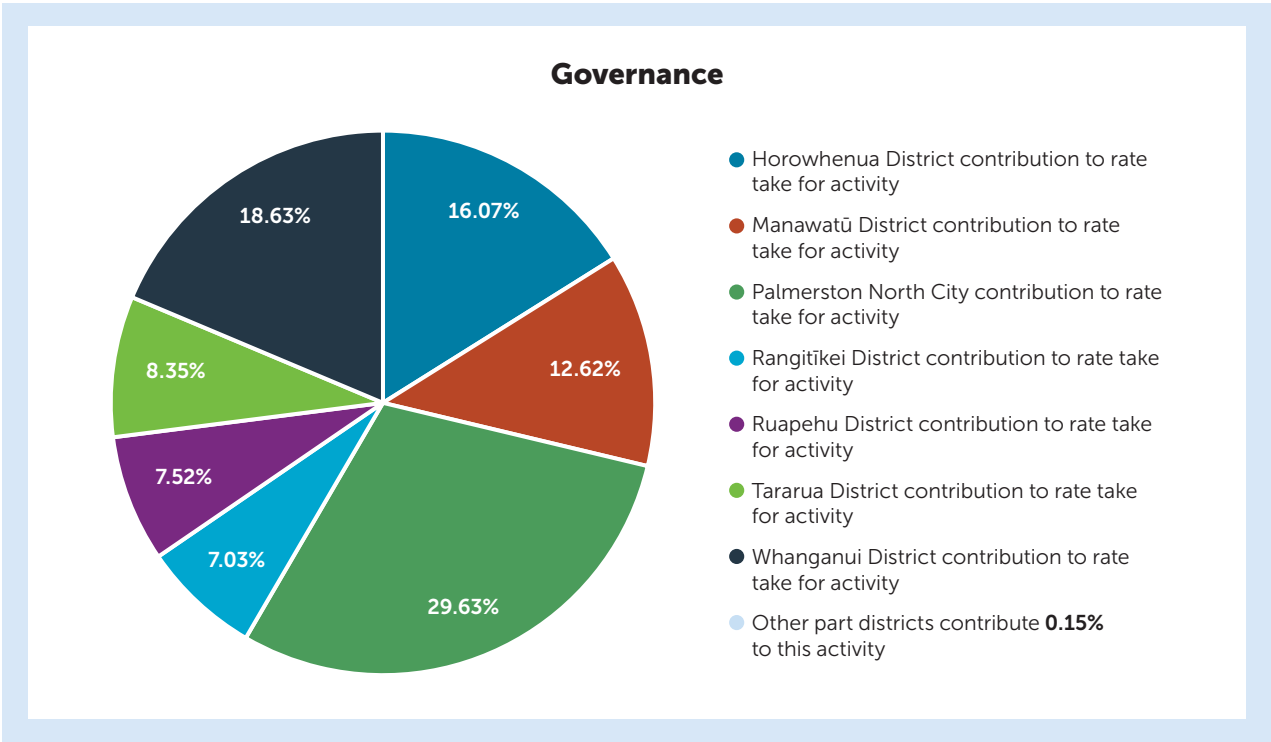
Tōtara Reserve open day guided walk

Governance Activity

Governance at a glance

- Aims to provide the **structure, process and support required for elected members** to carry out their statutory decision-making and oversight responsibilities.
- Budget for the region: **\$3.45 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: **\$547,954**, which is **12.62%** contribution to the operational budget.
- Activity is funded **general rates**, reflecting the fact effective democratic oversight of the organisation benefits the entire region.
- **36** council and committee meetings, **36** workshop days held in 2024-25.
- Council meets with each **territorial authority** across the region at their place to discuss current issues, concerns, and priorities.
- Outside of **Council committees**, the activity supports the **Mayoral Forum and MWCDEM Joint Standing Committee**.

- Regional council governance **differs fundamentally from district and city governance**, as it operates across the entire region with councillors elected on a regional basis to make decisions on cross-boundary issues, reflecting a distinct role and relationship with communities and the environment.
- The amalgamation process raises complex questions about **structuring regional governance, requiring careful design to ensure fair representation across areas**, particularly given the scale and cross-boundary challenges of the Horizons Region.
- Following the October 2025 referendum confirming **Māori wards**, how this democratically supported representation would be maintained under amalgamation remains uncertain and requires careful consideration.



Democracy at a regional scale

The Governance activity provides the structure, processes, and support required for elected members to carry out their statutory decision-making and oversight responsibilities. This includes facilitating Council and Committee meetings, workshops, and governance processes; providing governance advice; supporting policy and decision-making processes; and ensuring compliance with legislative requirements. The activity enables effective democratic governance by ensuring decisions are made transparently, lawfully, and in a way that reflects community interests and statutory obligations.

Horizons' councillors provide governance oversight and decision-making for the organisation through regular Council and Committee meetings. In addition to setting and monitoring policy, councillors keep abreast of relevant matters so emerging issues for the region can be investigated and planned for. The Governance team supports elected members with administrative support, compiling agenda items, running meetings, and coordinating council meeting livestreams.

In 2024-25, Horizons held 36 council and committee meetings and 36 workshop days. The Governance team also provides secretariat support to the Mayoral Forum which usually meets four times per year alongside any additional workshops and meetings the Forum agrees to hold. On an annual basis, Horizons seeks to meet with each territorial authority across the region at their place to discuss current issues, concerns, and priorities, including with Manawātū District Council.

Finances and contract

Budget for the region: \$3.45 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawātū District: \$547,954

The Governance activity is funded through general rates, reflecting the fact effective democratic oversight of the organisation benefits the entire region.

People and relationships

2.5 FTEs support the Governance activity. The team provides administrative and governance support to elected members across all council and committee processes.

Key relationships for this activity include Horizons' elected councillors, the chief executive and senior leadership team, territorial authority mayors and chief executives, and the wider local government sector. The Mayoral Forum relationship is particularly important, providing a regular forum for regional mayors to engage with Horizons on matters of shared interest.

Key considerations for delivery models

Regional council governance is distinct from district and city council governance in both structure and function. Horizons is governed by councillors elected from constituencies spanning the entire region, with decision-making responsibilities for matters which cross all district boundaries. This regional mandate is not simply a scaled-up version of district governance. Rather, it reflects a fundamentally different set of functions and a different relationship with the communities and environments being governed.

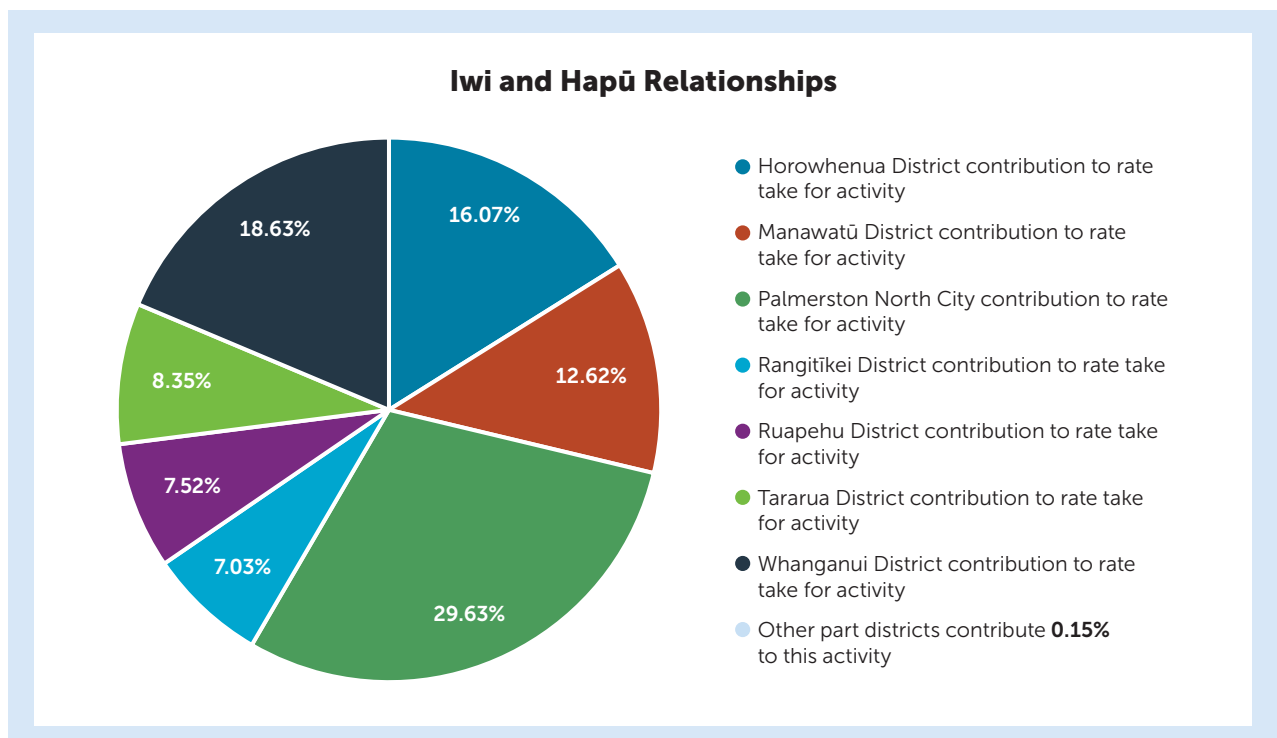
The amalgamation process raises questions about how regional council governance functions would be structured within any post-amalgamation entity. No matter the future governance makeup of regional functions – a large unitary council, community boards, CCOs, sub-unitary councils, governing boards made up of mayors/other district representatives, or other entities – there would need to be careful design and coordination to ensure fairness in decision-making and voice between smaller and larger areas. The experience of unitary authorities elsewhere in Aotearoa New Zealand provides some useful reference points, but the scale and complexity of the Horizons Region – spanning seven districts and one city, with major river systems, significant biodiversity assets, and a large public transport network – presents challenges that would require careful and deliberate governance design to navigate well.

Finally, in the October 2025 referendum to determine if Māori wards should remain, the option to retain these for the region received the most votes. The poll result was binding and would apply for Horizons Regional Council elections to be held in 2028 and 2031. How this representation, that communities democratically indicated they wanted, would be preserved through amalgamation is unclear but important to consider.

Iwi and Hapū Relationships Activity

Iwi and Hapū Relationships at a glance

- Aims to build and **maintain relationships with iwi and hapū across the rohe**, enabling meaningful engagement and participation in regional decision-making to ensure Horizons meets its responsibilities to Māori and legislative obligations.
- The Horizons Region is home to more than **35 iwi** and more than **100 hapū**.
- Budget for the region: **\$726,768**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: **\$64,112**, which is a **12.62%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through the **Universal Annual General Charge**, reflecting the fact the whole region benefits from Horizons upholding its statutory obligations and maintaining strong relationships with tangata whenua.
- The Manawatū District sits within a **rich and complex iwi and hapū landscape**.
- Horizons has **2** Memoranda of Understanding, **3** iwi environmental management plans, and **3** Mana Whakahono ā Rohe initiated in the Manawatū District.
- **12** iwi and hapū engagements undertaken in the Manawatū District in 2024-25.
- Iwi and hapū areas of interest and mandate often **traverse multiple district boundaries**.
- **Treaty settlement obligations and Mana Whakahono ā Rohe are legally binding** arrangements, and any amalgamation must consider how these obligations would be carried forward, which entity or entities would hold them, and how continuity of relationship would be maintained through a period of significant change.
- The main risk is **damaging established iwi and hapū relationships** during a critical period, as organisational disruption could undermine long-standing trust and progress, requiring new partnerships to be rebuilt post amalgamation.



Honouring our obligations, building lasting partnerships

The Iwi and Hapū Relationships activity supports Horizons to build and maintain relationships with iwi and hapū, and to enable meaningful engagement and participation in regional decision-making. It ensures Horizons meets its responsibilities to Māori, fulfils its legislative obligations, and strengthens partnerships by incorporating tangata whenua perspectives into council processes and decision-making. This includes providing technical expertise and supporting engagement in policy development, planning, and governance processes; facilitating co-governance and co-management arrangements; and building organisational capability to meet Treaty and statutory obligations.

The activity also supports policy development and adherence to Te Tiriti settlement obligations through technical and planning advice, as well as supporting other parts of Horizons in meeting their own obligations to iwi and hapū in areas including consenting, biosecurity, freshwater, and emergency management.

The Manawatū District sits within a rich and complex iwi and hapū landscape and this overview of the activity is simply that – an overview. As such, Horizons acknowledges this section will not capture all the details and facets of this activity. However, Horizons wishes to provide insight into this work and the things to consider as we look at amalgamation.

Horizons maintains relationships with Rangitāne o Manawatū (PSGE), Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga(iwi confederation), Mūaupoko, Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa and Ngāti Hauiti In the Manawatū District, Horizons has two Memoranda of Understanding, three Iwi Environmental Management Plans, and three Mana Whakahono ā Rohe initiated, alongside the two Treaty settlements in the district. These formal arrangements are the foundation of relationships that go well beyond compliance. These relationships they shape how Horizons approaches resource management, planning, and community engagement across the district.

In 2024-25, the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team (named Te Pae Kōuka) undertook 226 engagements with iwi and hapū across the region, with 12 of these — 5% — in the Manawatū District.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$726,768

Rates collected for this activity from the Manawatū District: \$64,112

This activity is funded through the Universal Annual General Charge, reflecting the fact the whole region benefits from Horizons upholding its statutory obligations and maintaining strong relationships with tangata whenua. The expenditure relates to relationships with the region's mana whenua and to ensuring the Council meets its obligations with respect to iwi and hapū involvement in policy development and decision-making.

People and relationships

There are four FTEs in Te Pae Kōuka. Other staff across Horizons also contribute to this activity within specific functions. For example, a consents navigator in the Regulatory Management team supports iwi and hapū engagement within the consenting process. This reflects the fact the obligation to engage meaningfully with tangata whenua runs across the organisation, not just through a single team.

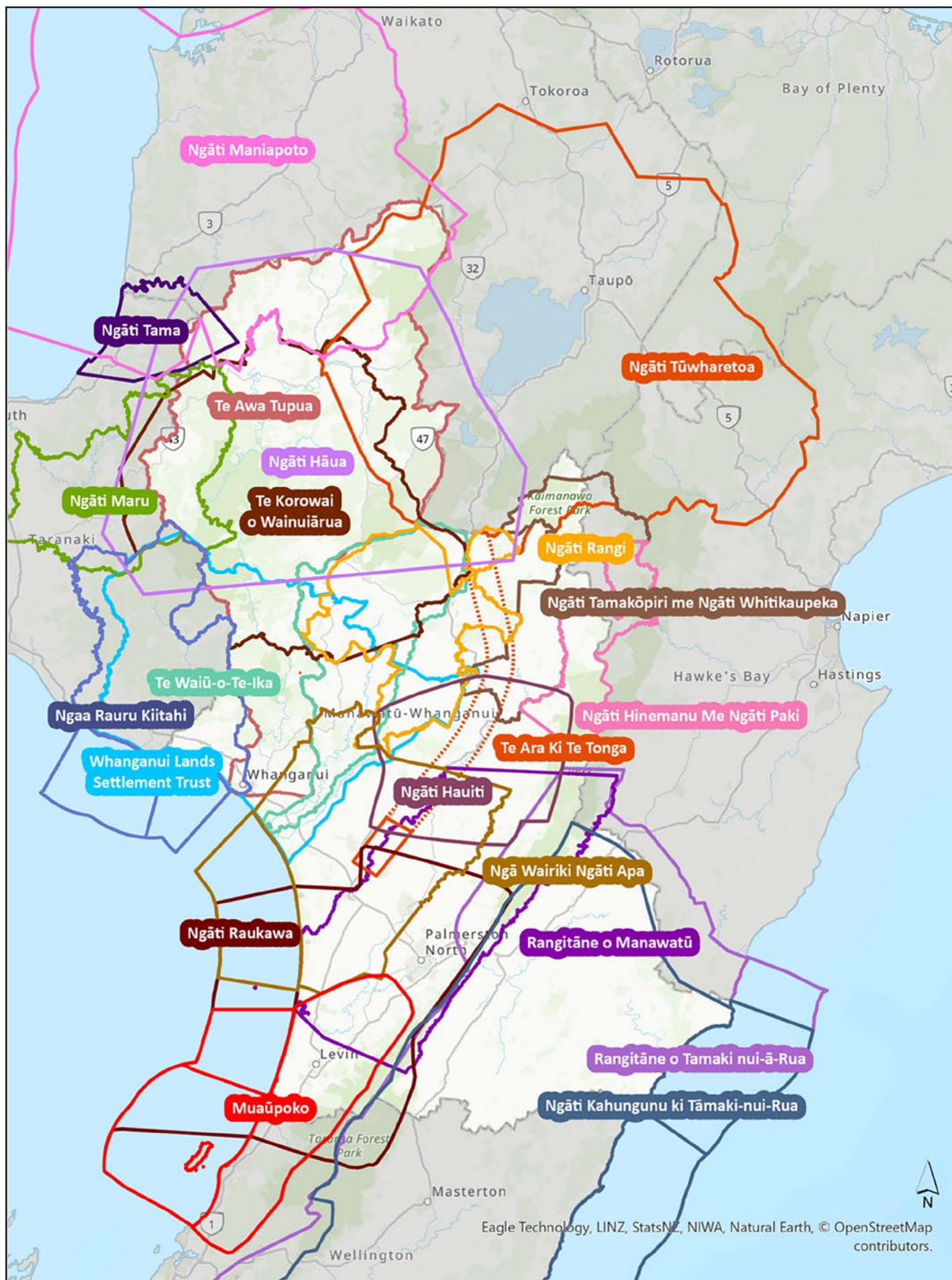
Key relationships in the Manawatū District include iwi and hapū (including hapū collectives), and Manawatū District Council's iwi relations, emergency management, and policy teams.

Key considerations for delivery models

Regional-scale iwi and hapū relationships reflect the fact areas of interest and mandate held by iwi and hapū frequently traverse multiple district and regional council boundaries. A single iwi may have relationships and interests spanning several territorial authority areas simultaneously. Managing those relationships can benefit from a consistent, regionally coherent approach.

Treaty settlement obligations and Mana Whakahono ā Rohe arrangements – a tool designed to assist tangata whenua and local authorities to discuss, agree and record how they will work together under the Resource Management Act (RMA) – are formal, legally binding commitments. Any structural change arising from amalgamations needs to carefully consider how these obligations would be carried forward, which entity or entities would hold them, and how continuity of relationship would be maintained through a period of significant organisational change.

The broader risk is one of relationship damage at a critical time. Iwi and hapū across the Manawātū District are actively engaged in processes that depend on stable, well-resourced partners. Disrupting organisational structures could set back progress that has taken years to build, and undermine the trust that makes meaningful partnership possible. While territorial authorities have their current partnerships with iwi and hapū in place, creating new partnerships post-amalgamation would be an essential process for all involved.



Map of iwi authority boundaries in the Horizons Region (as at December 2025)



For more information visit www.horizons.govt.nz
or freephone Horizons on **0508 800 800**