



Regional Council functions

Serving the Ruapehu 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
help@horizons.govt.nz
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Cover photo: Orautoha Stream from Ruatiti Road

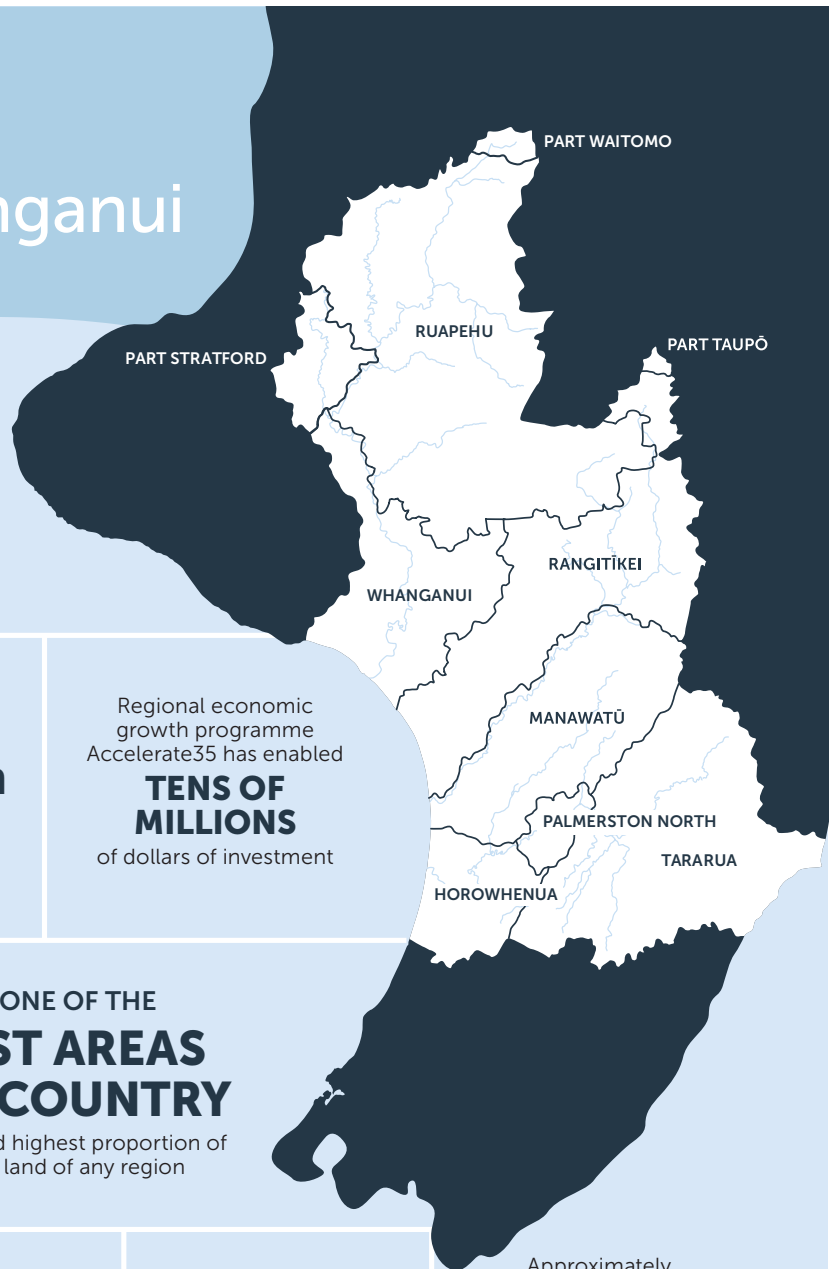
Ngā ihirangi

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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

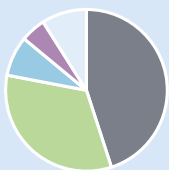
THERE ARE OVER
35,000km
of waterways in the
Horizons Region

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 Ruapehu community and environment

Ratepayers in the Ruapehu District contribute approximately \$4.2 million to deliver regional council functions, which is approximately 6.1% 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

Sharing its name with the maunga which dominates the landscape, the Ruapehu District is one of the largest in Aotearoa New Zealand by land area but has one of the smallest permanent populations. With a stable resident population of about 13,500 people, the seasonal population grows and shrinks as people base themselves in the district for tourism and associated business opportunities. The largest township, Taumarunui, sits at the confluence of the Whanganui and Ongarue rivers in the north. To the south sits Waiouru, best known for the army training area and Waiouru Military Camp – one of three military bases in the Horizons Region – and the southern end of the picturesque Desert Road section of State Highway 1. The economy is focused on tourism, farming and forestry, with the opening of the King Country Pet Food factory in 2024 injecting dozens of manufacturing jobs into the district. Multiple iwi are based in the Ruapehu District, including Ngāti Rangi, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Uenuku, and Te Ātihaunui a Pāpārangi. Te Awa Tupua (the Whanganui River catchment) flows through the Ruapehu District, as does Te Waiū o-Te-Ika (the Whangaehu River catchment).

Both of these awa, through Te Tiriti o Waitangi settlements, are governed by unique legislation to uphold their mauri.

The Ruapehu District is adapting to economic, social and environmental change while supporting resilient communities and sustainable economic opportunities. Economic transition, infrastructure affordability, natural hazards and long-term sustainability are recurring themes throughout Ruapehu District Council's strategic planning documents. Horizons contributes to many of the outcomes sought by Ruapehu District Council through flood protection, environmental management, transport services, science, land management and long-term planning, creating opportunities for continued collaboration across the district.

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 depot in the Ruapehu District, based in Taumarunui.

District Priority/Outcome	How Horizons contributes
Climate resilience	Flood protection, river management, hazard planning, emergency management and climate science.
Economic development	Supporting productive land use, transport services, environmental management, and the resilience of communities, businesses and infrastructure.
Environmental protection	Freshwater management, biodiversity programmes, land management and environmental monitoring.
Infrastructure planning and resilience	Supporting evidence-based planning, catchment management, natural hazard resilience and long-term infrastructure decision-making.
Partnerships and community wellbeing	Working alongside iwi, communities, catchment groups and partner organisations to support local outcomes.

Horizons' priority areas in Ruapehu

- Ruapehu districtwide flood resilience works
- Ngā Wai Tōtā o Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika
- Central Plateau Volcanic Advisory Group
- Raetihi-Ohakune public transport service
- Kia Whārite project to project and support whio and North Island brown kiwi populations
- Te Kōpuka
- Possum control and other pest animal and plant 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. A good example leveraging co-investment comes from the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI). Through our contracted funding arrangement with central government, and funding Horizons' portion via the Uniform Annual Charge for SLUI (funding gathered from across the region due to the regional benefits of SLUI), we have spent more money in Ruapehu District on SLUI works than what we have gathered in SLUI income from the district.



Waiora environmental education session at Managawhero River

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 Ruapehu District being at the top of a large Whanganui catchment, the district is a contributor to work done in the wider catchment.

Catchment Operations Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

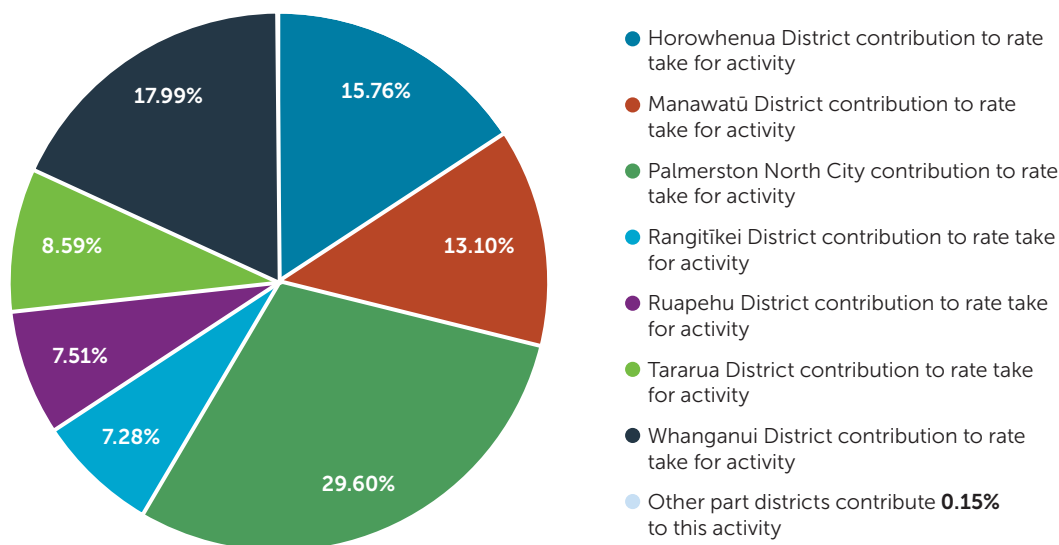
	Land Management	Freshwater and Partnerships	Biodiversity and Biosecurity	River Management and Flood Protection
Regional rates	5,114,164.31	3,672,349.08	10,457,457.77	17,846,633.19
Grants and subsidies	910,000.00	1,920,000.00	-	10,887,326.00
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	144,230.30	-	-	-
Other 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
Ruapehu District Rates	384,062.14	179,455.78	1,018,054.51	812,867.89
Ruapehu District contribution to rate take for activity	7.51%	4.89%	9.74%	4.55%

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 it is funded **universally through UAGC, general rates and user charges**.
- Regionally, **63,000** hectares of erosion control works have been completed to date.
- Budget for the region: **\$7.13 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: **\$384,062**, which is a **7.51%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget.
- Land Management activity undertaken in the district in 2024-25: **\$1.29 million** (including **\$804,233** for SLUI).
- 2024-25 expenditure in the Ruapehu District under this activity **exceeded its rates** contribution.
- **171** Whole Farm Plans developed under SLUI.
- **157,580** hectares of land mapped and **15,542** hectares of erosion control works completed to date.
- Modelling suggests erosion work could reduce sediment load in the region's rivers by about **50%**.
- How to **maintain the current level of service** to integrated catchment management in an amalgamation environment, when work in Ruapehu District catchments is being subsidised by other districts, will need to be carefully considered.

Land Management





Sheep on farmland

Understanding soil and keeping it where it belongs

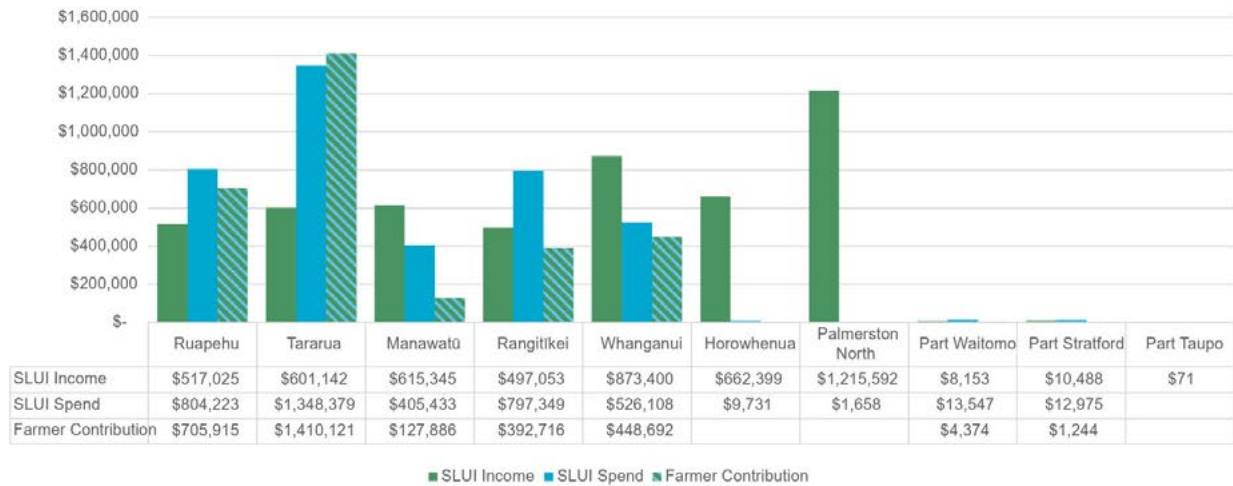
The primary delivery of the Land Management activity is the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI), which uses a variety of tools to treat erosion and address water quality issues. Horizons' land management advisors provide land use advice and targeted grant assistance to landowners and community groups 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 operating poplar and willow pole nurseries to supply erosion control materials.

The primary focus of Land Management works is on unstable hill country areas. Most hill country within the Ruapehu District is a focus for land use support and erosion control initiatives, making it one of the most significant districts for this activity across the entire Horizons Region. Since SLUI began in 2006, 171 whole farm plans have been

developed in Ruapehu District, with 157,580 hectares of land mapped and 15,542 hectares of erosion control works completed. A further 2,551 hectares have been completed under the Regional and Coast grant programme, including 124 hectares in 2024-25. Horizons also supports several small on-farm poplar and willow nurseries throughout the district, supplementing the main supply from nurseries in Bulls and Woodville with locally grown material. This approach helps to keep supply chains shorter and supports local landowners in accessing erosion control materials. The activity also maintains a regional network of sites to monitor long-term changes in soil health, with 11 of the 102 soil quality monitoring sites located in the Ruapehu District.

An important additional funding source for Land Management work in Ruapehu District is the Whanganui River Enhancement Trust (WRET). Horizons makes an annual application to WRET and has received between \$70,000 and \$100,000 per year since around 2006. This funding supports extra grant funding for land works within the Whanganui catchment, with the bulk of the spend occurring within the Ruapehu District.

Income and Spend for SLUI by TLA



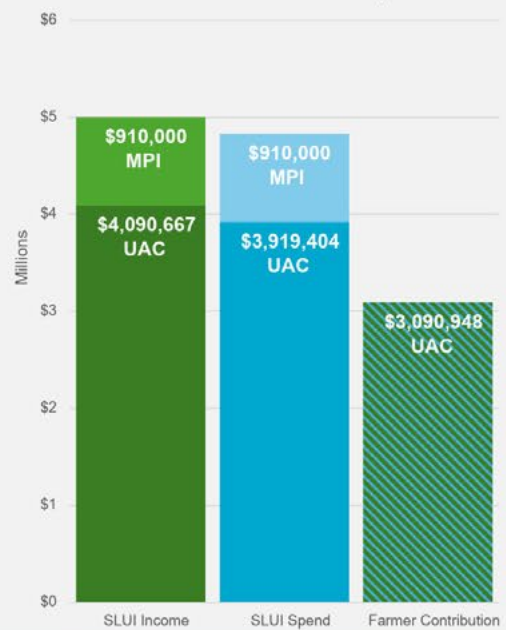
Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.

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.

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



Note: The numbers in this map are accounted for within the figures of the district map on the next page. This map shows the activities of SLUI, which is the main activity of Land Management at Horizons. The district map below is about the whole Land Management programme which includes providing land use advice, soil health monitoring, partnering with industry and community groups to promote sustainable land use practices, and operating poplar and willow pole nurseries.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$7.13 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: \$384,062

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. Funding agreements are also in place with the NZ Poplar and Willow Research Trust and the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust, which runs the annual Ballance Farm Environment Awards. Horizons also makes an annual application to the Whanganui River Enhancement Trust, receiving between \$70,000 and \$100,000 per year since around 2006 to support land works within the Whanganui catchment.

People and relationships

About 19 FTEs directly contribute to the Land Management activity across the region. The Ruapehu District is serviced by four advisors: two service the district from the Taumarunui office, one services the Ohakune area from Whanganui, and one services the Waiouru area from Taihape. 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, the Whanganui River Enhancement 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 the region's waterways. Work done at the top of catchments delivers benefits all the way to the bottom. This is why funding is structured on a universal basis, ensuring an integrated approach to catchment management where people contribute to work they benefit from even when it is done outside their district.

The Ruapehu District sits at the headwaters of the Whanganui River catchment. SLUI work undertaken in Ruapehu hill country directly influences sediment loads and water quality downstream through Whanganui and beyond. SLUI modelling suggests the work being undertaken could reduce sediment in the region's rivers (including the Whanganui) by about 50%, although this benefit may be reduced in future by climate change causing more frequent and intense storm events.

Maintaining this integrated catchment approach in an amalgamation environment will be a challenge, particularly given the Whanganui River catchment crossing multiple territorial authority boundaries. The Whanganui River Enhancement Trust funding relationship adds a further consideration. This funding has supported land works in the district for nearly two decades, and ensuring continuity of that relationship and its application to catchment-scale work will be important regardless of how future governance structures are designed.

2024-25 Activities

\$384,000

Rate contribution from the district to Land Management activities

\$1,288,000

Worth of Land management activities delivered in the district

2024-25 Key Outputs

1 Farm mapped
777 ha mapped area
893 ha erosion mitigation works

Total Outputs 2006-2025

171

Farms mapped

157,580 ha

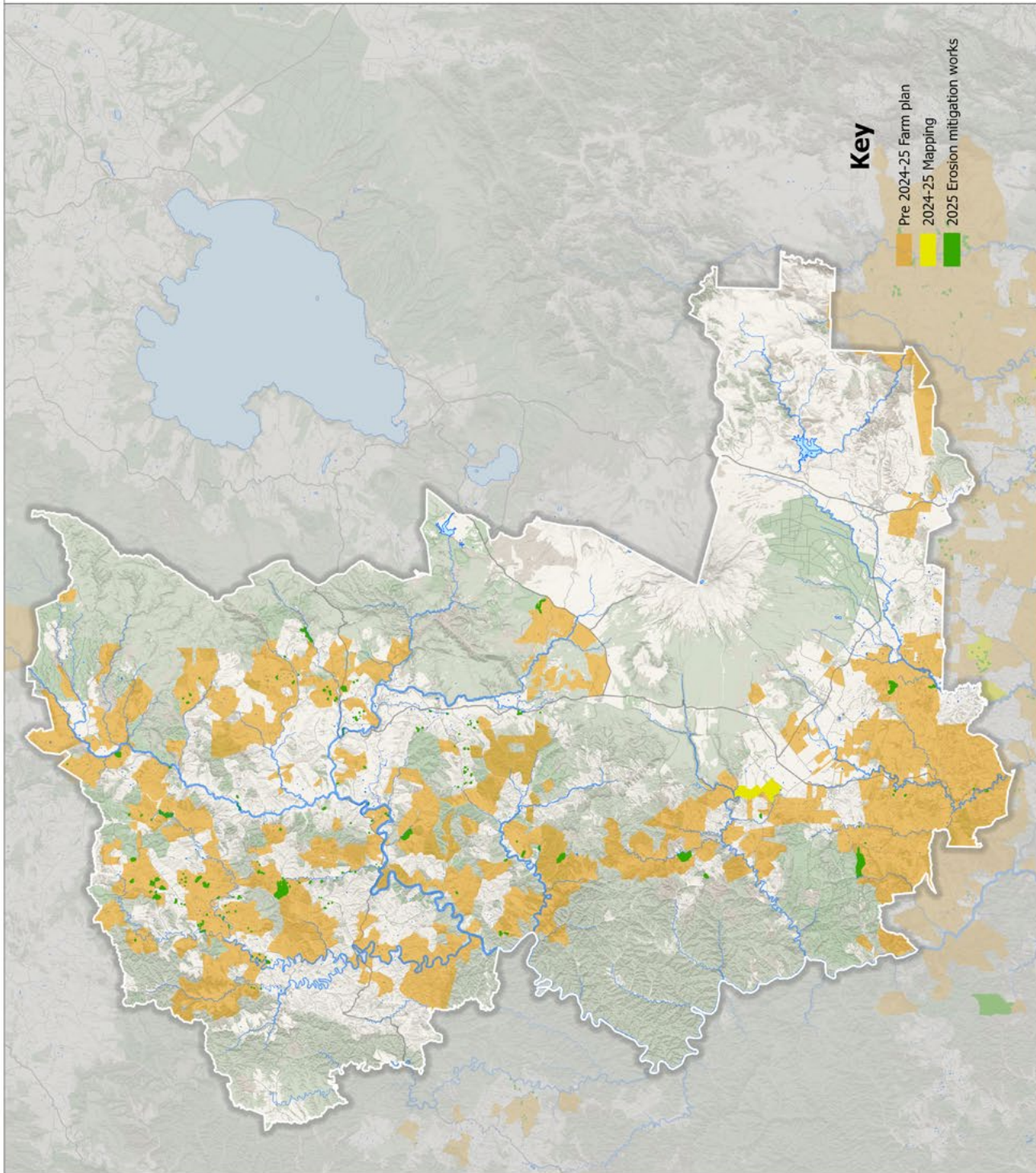
Total mapped area

18,093 ha

erosion mitigation works



Land Management Activities In Ruapehu District 2025 FY



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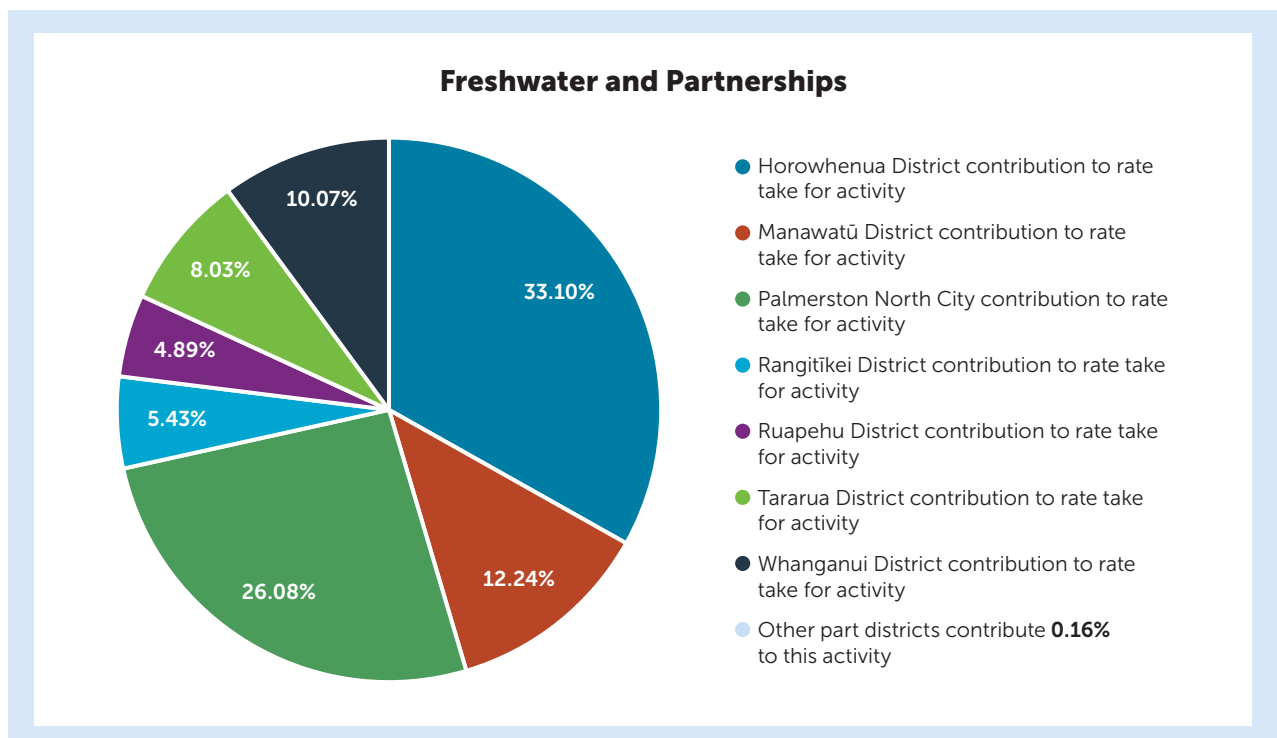


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Freshwater and Partnerships Activity

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 Ruapehu 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 Ruapehu District: **\$179,455**, which is a **4.89%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget.
- Freshwater and Partnerships activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$400,000**.
- Freshwater improvement activities are funded through a combination of **targeted rates, general rates, and central government funding**.
- 2024-25 expenditure in the Ruapehu District under this activity **exceeded its rates contribution** but benefitted from regional council advocacy for central government funding.
- About **11,500** plants were planted, and **1.7km** of stream fencing completed in the Ruapehu 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.
- The Ngāti Rangī Claims Settlement Act (25 July 2019) established the **Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika Framework**, creating statutory partnership arrangements for managing the Whangaehu River.
- The **Te Awa Tupua Act** established statutory partnerships agreements for managing the Whanganui River.



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, 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 Ruapehu District sits at the headwaters of two of the most significant river systems in the Horizons Region – the Whanganui and Whangaehu rivers. The district's volcanic plateau, steep terrain, and high rainfall create both significant freshwater values and significant pressures. These pressures include water quality impacts from land use, habitat disruption, and the effects of the district's unique volcanic environment. Freshwater health in Ruapehu has consequences that extend well downstream, through the Whanganui and Rangitikei districts and beyond.

In 2024-25, Freshwater and Partnerships activity in the Ruapehu District included 11,500 plants planted and 1.7km of stream fencing completed. Total activity expenditure in the district was \$400,000, exceeding the \$179,000 rates contribution from Ruapehu ratepayers. This reflects the regional funding model that directs investment according to need and environmental priority rather than purely by rates contribution.

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.

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 Ruapehu 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 11,500 plants were planted and 1.7km of stream fencing completed in the Ruapehu District in 2024-25.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$5.55 million

Rates collected for this activity from the District: \$179,455

Grant funding and external subsidies are sought wherever possible. Where these are not available, freshwater improvement activities are funded through a combination of targeted rates, general rates, and central government funding. Ruapehu ratepayers also 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. This reflects the regional and intergenerational 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 Ruapehu District include landowners, Ruapehu District Council, iwi and hapū – particularly those with connections to the Whanganui and Whangaehu rivers – community groups, the Department of Conservation, and central government agencies involved in freshwater management and biodiversity funding.

Key considerations for delivery models

Freshwater does not adhere to lines drawn on maps. The Ruapehu District sits at the top of major catchments whose health and management connect directly to communities downstream across multiple territorial authority areas. Water quality improvements achieved through riparian planting and fencing in Ruapehu's upper catchments deliver benefits that flow through to the Whanganui District and beyond. This upstream-downstream relationship means freshwater management in Ruapehu cannot be considered in isolation from the wider regional system.

The Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act, passed on 25 July 2019, includes Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika Framework, which establishes statutory partnership arrangements for the Whangaehu River. This framework requires Horizons to recognise and provide for Te Mana Tupua and Ngā Toka Tupua when exercising statutory functions or powers relating to the Whangaehu River. How this obligation would continue to be met under any post-amalgamation arrangement will be an important consideration. The same applies for the framework created under the Te Awa Tupua Act in regard to the Whanganui River.

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

\$179,000

Rate contribution from the district to Freshwater activities

\$400,000

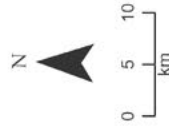
Worth of Freshwater activities delivered in the district

2024-25 Key Outputs

0 Fish passage remediations
1.7 km of stream fencing
11,500 plants planted

Key

- Fish passage remediation
- Planting project
- Fencing project



Freshwater Activities In Ruapehu District 2025 FY

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Biodiversity and Biosecurity Activity

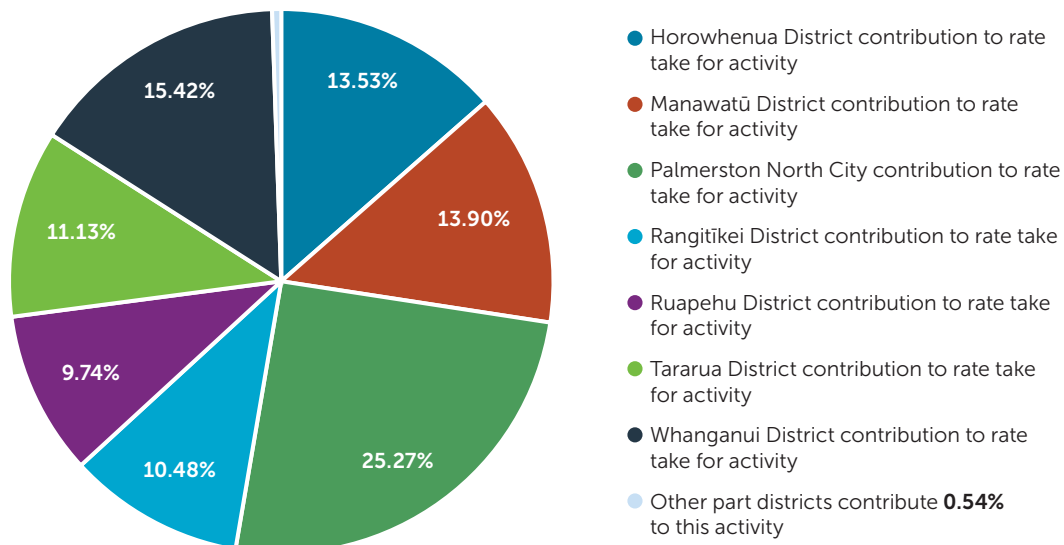
Biodiversity and Biosecurity at a glance

- 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 Ruapehu District: **\$1 million**, which is a **9.74%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget.
- Total activity expenditure in the district in 2024-25: **\$1.96 million**.
- Biodiversity activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$1.3 million**.
- Pest plant control activity undertaken in the district in 2024-25: **\$424,500**.
- Current expenditure in the Ruapehu 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 funded from general rates and UAC to recognise the regional benefit.
- **15%** is funded via a targeted rate to recognise the economic benefits of biosecurity protection for rural properties over **4** hectares.
- **1,403** plant pest control sites covering **33,227** hectares are managed in the district.
- **64,388** possum bait stations across **40** possum control operations in the district.
- Under Horizons' rook control programme, only **8 of 44** rookeries remain in the district.
- **2** biological control agents released in district to control Old Man's Beard.
- **6** priority habitat sites serviced in the district.
- Kia Whārite Icon Project spans **190,000** hectares across two districts (including Ruapehu), running for **17** years in partnership with Department of Conservation.
- Wilding conifer control around **Tongariro National Park** has been coordinated by Horizons (including predecessors) since 1982.
- Ruapehu has the largest area of possum habitat at over **142,000** hectares.



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 being reviewed, with a formal consultative process expected in 2027.

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

The Ruapehu District contains some of the most significant biodiversity and biosecurity landscapes in the Horizons Region. The district's combination of volcanic plateau, river catchments, and native forest remnants supports rare and threatened ecosystems. This unique landscape also creates significant pressure from pest plants and animals.

The possum control programme is the largest animal pest programme in the district, currently servicing 64,388 bait stations across 422,428 hectares, mapped across 40 possum control operations. Rook control is also a focus, with eight rookeries now actively managed – well down from the 44 rookeries when the programme began. Rooks are highly mobile and intelligent birds, with farmers asked to help identify but not disturb birds so staff can treat nests with toxins during spring nesting. The animal pest advisory service responds to enquiries for species outside the RPMP species list, including in peri-urban and urban environments. In the most recent year, 32 enquiries were responded to in Ruapehu out of a regional total of 587.

The pest plant team manages 1,403 sites with an operational area of 33,227 hectares in the district. High priority pest plants controlled in Ruapehu include African feather grass, alligator weed, Chilean rhubarb, climbing spindleberry, contorta pine, Darwin's barberry, Himalayan balsam, knotweed, moth plant, Mexican feather grass, old man's beard, rum cherry, Scots pine, and woolly nightshade. Old Man's Beard is well entrenched in many areas of Ruapehu, to the extent that chemical control alone is no longer the right approach in all locations. Staff have recently released two biological control agents to reduce infestation impact and limit spread over time. Wilding conifer control around Tongariro National Park is a mainstay of the pest plant programme, with the Pinus Contorta Coordinating Committee facilitated by Horizons still meeting on a biannual basis since 1982.

The biodiversity team manages six priority habitat sites covering 29 hectares in the district, as well as eight contestable fund projects worth \$89,017. The district is also home to the Kia Whārite Icon Project – a partnership between Horizons and the Department of Conservation running for 17 years, spanning a project area of 190,000 hectares and including rare and threatened ecosystems recognised as a priority for protection. The project spans two districts and has successfully delivered on its goals of increasing whio and kiwi populations. Whio are now a common sight in the Manganui-o-te-ao River and beyond, which is a remarkable outcome for one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most threatened native bird species.

Check Clean Dry work in the region is focused on the Upper Whanganui catchment, with freshwater advocate Didymo Dave a regular presence in the district encouraging good practice to protect waterways from invasive freshwater pests.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$10.46 million

Rates collected for this activity from Ruapehu District: \$1 million

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, with three of these contractors based in the Ruapehu District. Contractual arrangements include memoranda of understanding and contracts with funding partners in Kia Whārite and with the Department of Conservation for pest plant work in the Whanganui River catchment. The biodiversity team also manage contestable fund projects that support local groups undertaking environmental protection and enhancement work.

People and relationships

There are 38 FTEs in the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity across the region. In the Ruapehu District, 5.77 FTEs deliver biodiversity and biosecurity work programmes – 0.7 FTE in biodiversity, 2.27 FTE in biosecurity animals, and 2 FTE in biosecurity pest plants.

The biodiversity and biosecurity teams work with landowners, QEII National Trust, and Ngā Whenua Rāhui for on-site works, and alongside local iwi and Ngā Tangata Tiaki for work within the wider Whanganui catchment. Other key partners include Ernslaw One Ltd, Te Korowai o Wainuiārua, and Genesis Energy Ltd. Staff work within the compliance requirements of the Regional Pest Management Plan and maintain relationships with Ruapehu District Council roading and parks staff, the Department of Conservation Whanganui, Waka Kotahi, and KiwiRail. Community groups and schools undertake trapping supported by Horizons grants and staff expertise. The Tutsan Action Group, active for over a decade, was a key community driver for more than \$1 million of central government investment in tutsan management in the district.

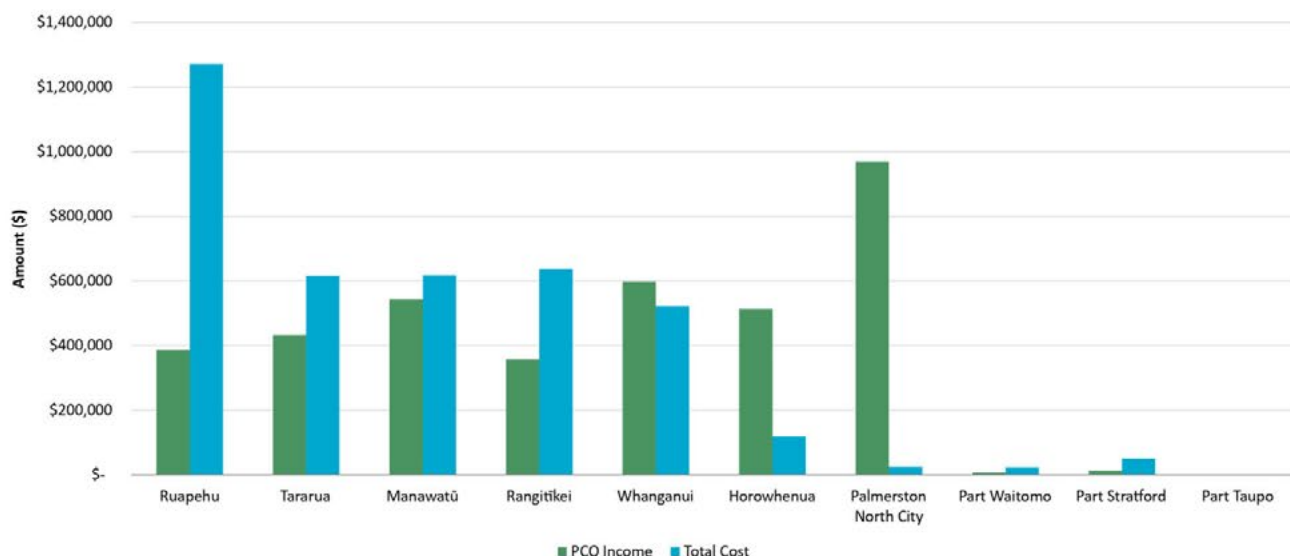
Key considerations for delivery models

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. This is particularly true in the Ruapehu District, where pest species moving via coastal, freshwater and terrestrial environments can rapidly spread across council boundaries. This is partly why the Regional Pest Management Plan exists – to ensure a regional-scale response to issues, helping keep pest infestations in control, no matter where they come up, to try to avoid them spilling over into other territorial authority areas. This also feeds into an integrated catchment management approach to biodiversity, given its reliance on biosecurity.

The regional funding model is a significant consideration for the Ruapehu District. Current expenditure in the district is nearly double the rate contribution collected from Ruapehu ratepayers, meaning the district receives substantially 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.

Finally, delivering the range of biodiversity and biosecurity work in isolation within the Ruapehu District would be challenging, given the current approach of part-roles functioning across the wide range of specialist demands of pest control, community group support, site and contract management and advisory services. The current model spreads expertise across multiple districts.

Income and Spend for PCO by TLA



Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.

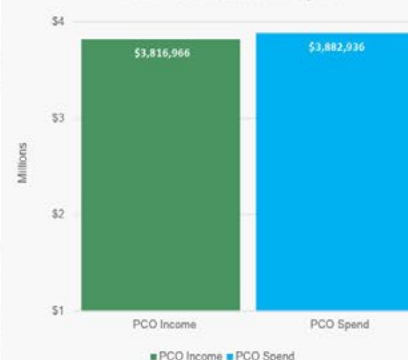
Income sources are from PCO Rates Revenue, comprising General Rate (55%), Environmental Initiatives (30%), and Biosecurity & Biodiversity >4ha rate (15%).

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



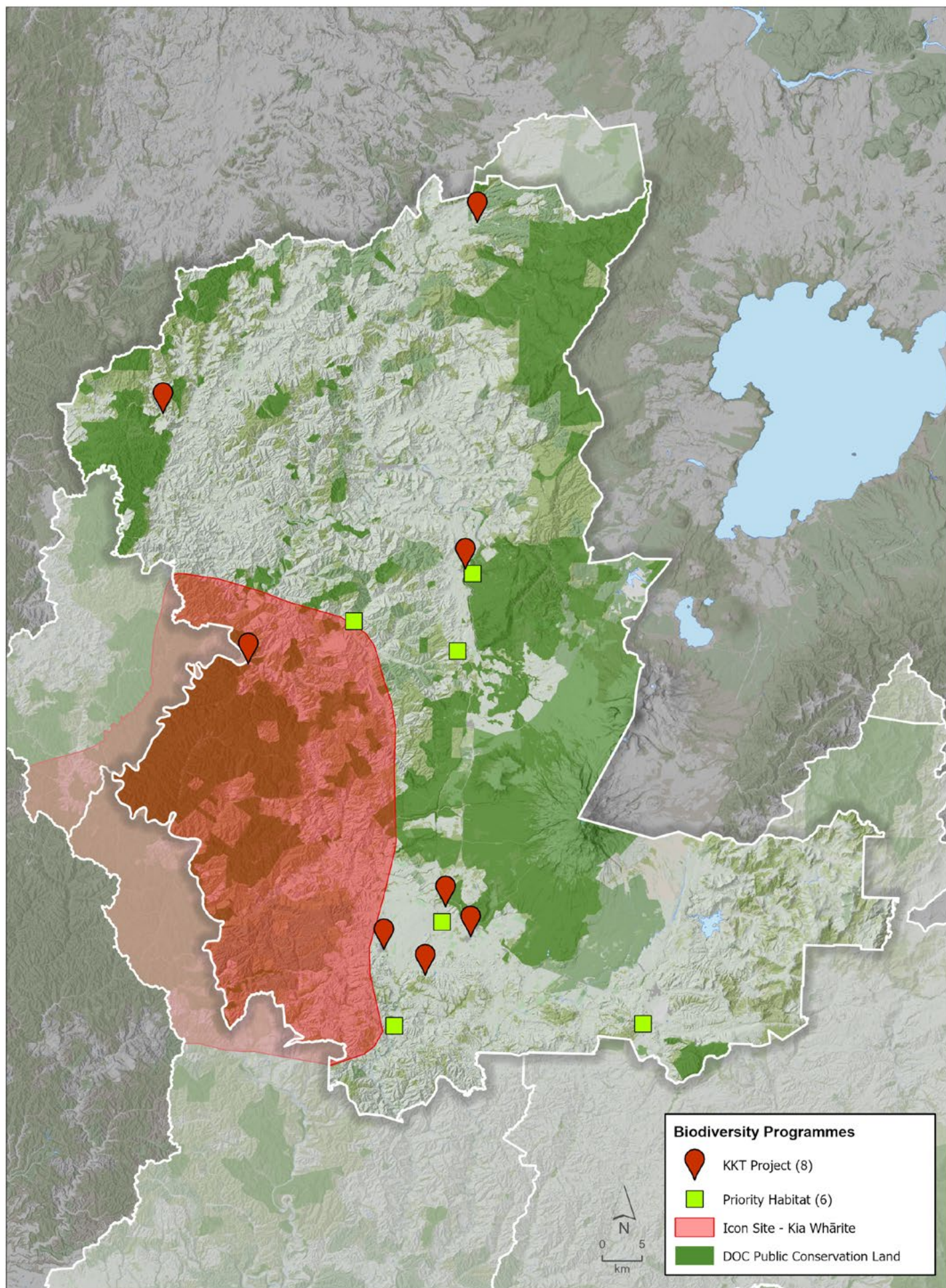
Income
Spend



Possum Control Income and Spend by TLA

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



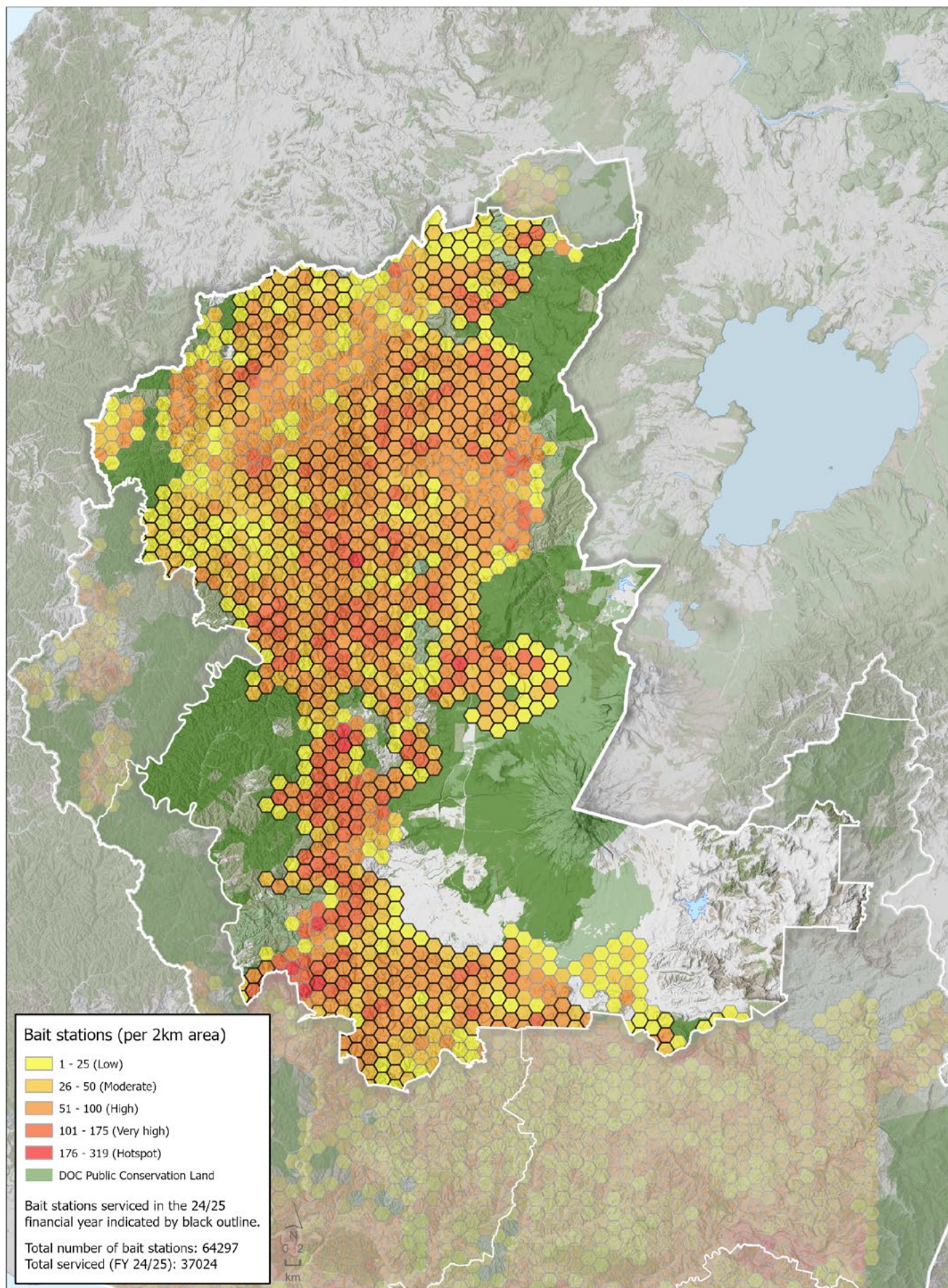


Biodiversity Programme Activities

Ruapehu District

Prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 3/06/2026

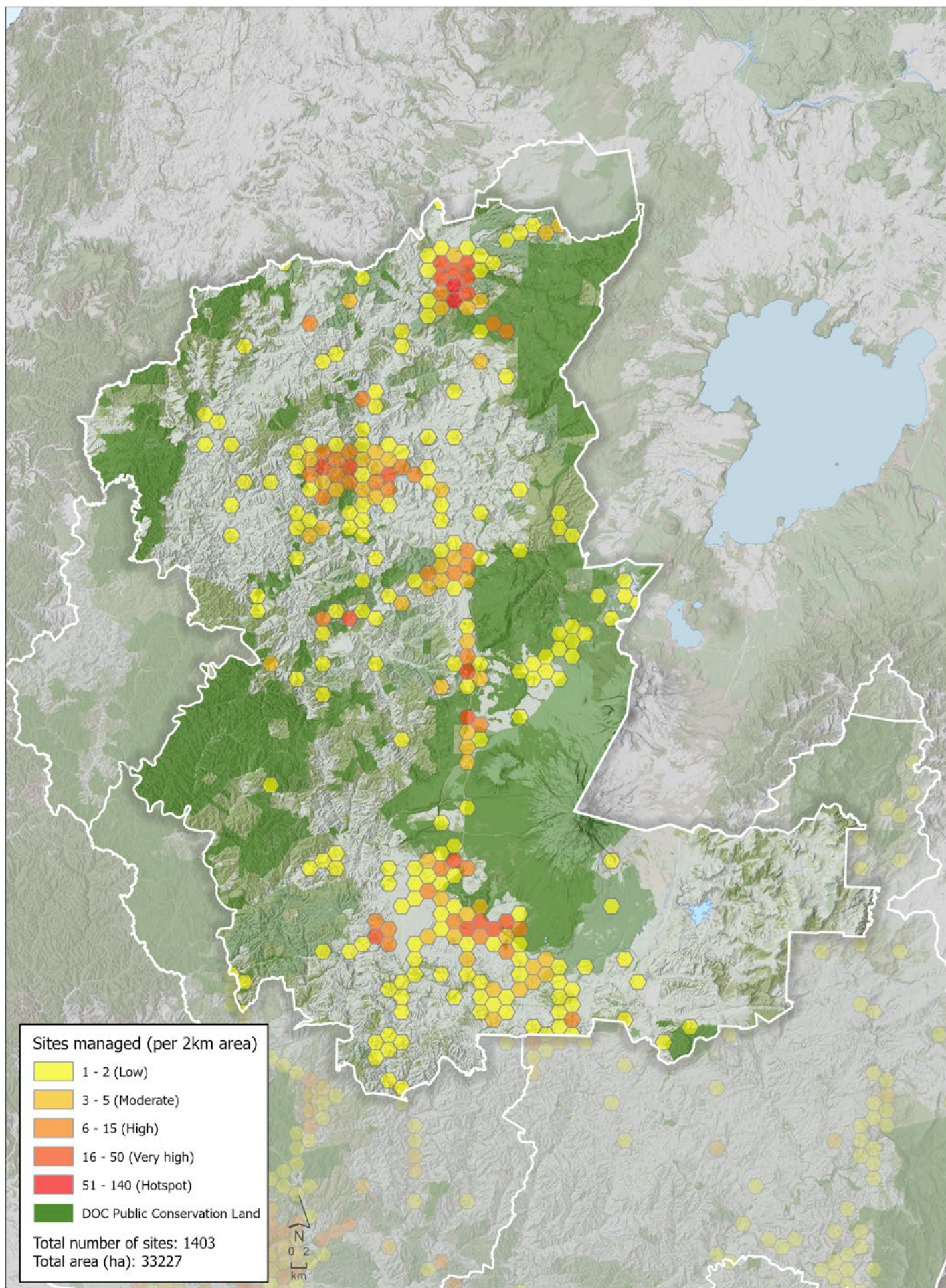
horizons
REGIONAL COUNCIL



Possum Control Programme - Bait Station Coverage

Ruapehu District

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



Biosecurity Pest Plants - Managed Sites

Ruapehu District

Prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 3/06/2026

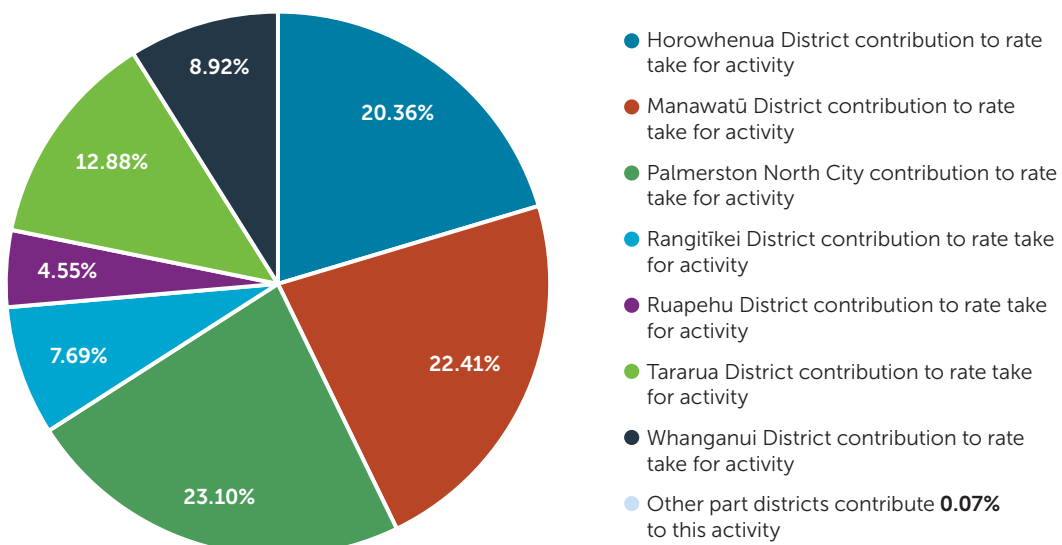


River Management and Flood Protection Activity

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 Ruapehu is shaped by what happens across the entire catchment. With Ruapehu at the top of the catchment, the district has a **mix of rural and urban communities** that are prone to flood risks.
- **34** river and drainage schemes across the region, including **5** in the Ruapehu District which are a mix of channel maintenance and district wide.
- **3,844** assets across all schemes are valued about **\$1.2 billion**, with the Ruapehu District having **3** schemes that are channel maintenance only, that do not have assets, and two schemes with **48** assets with a replacement value of about **\$18.4 million** (**2%** of the regional total, as of June 2025).
- Budget for the region: **\$20.89 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: **\$812,867** which is a **4.55%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget.
- River Management and Flood Protection activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$625,206**.
- 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 Ruapehu District is served by five river and drainage schemes. Three schemes are channel maintenance only, and two contain 48 assets.

These schemes protect areas containing state highways, Crown assets, productive land, lifeline utilities, population centres, and wildlife habitats. The district's position at the headwaters of major river systems, including the Whanganui and Whangāehu, means flood events generated in Ruapehu's steep, high-rainfall catchments have consequences for the towns within the district, and in water that flows downstream through the Whanganui and Rangitikei districts. The volcanic plateau and mountain terrain also create unique flood risk characteristics, with rapid catchment response times and the added complexity of lahar risk from Mt Ruapehu influencing emergency response planning in parts of the district. Research done by Te Uru Kahika, the collective of regional and unitary councils, and presented in the Beyond the Deluge 2.0 report shows every \$1 invested into this activity saves \$5 to \$8 in avoided damage.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$20.89 million

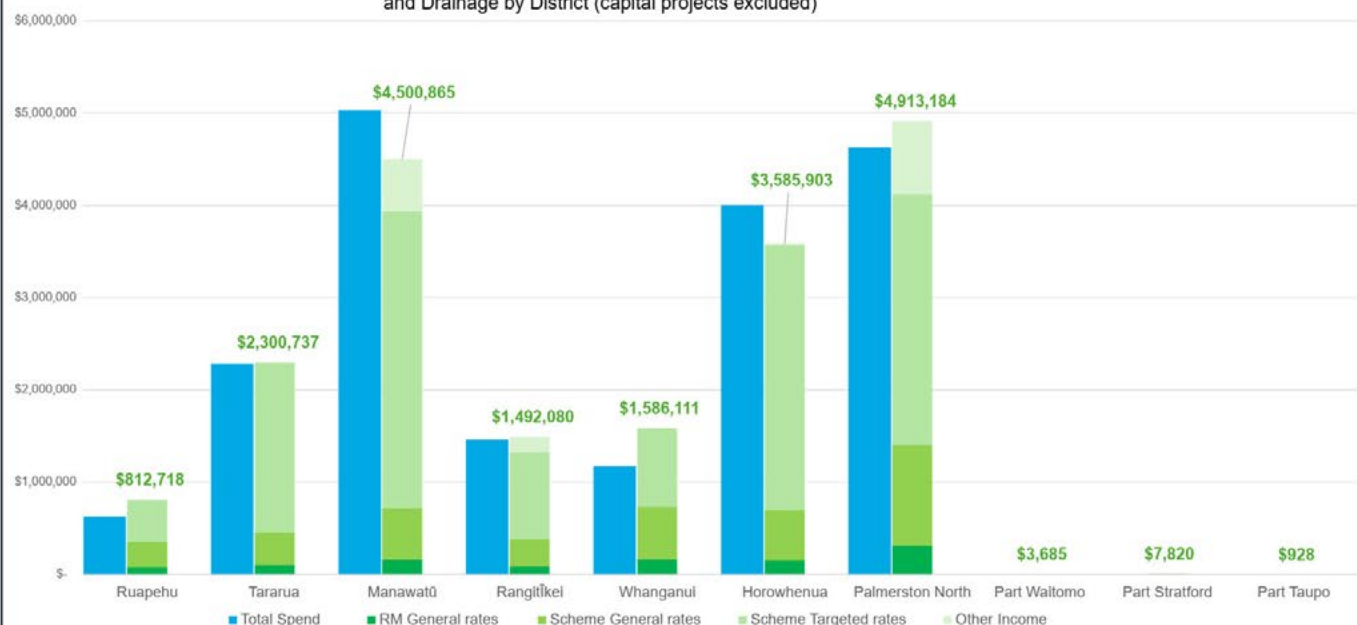
Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: \$812,867

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. Schemes may also have loans, emergency reserves, and renewal reserves. Non-scheme activities, such as grants and subsidies, are funded 100% through general rates.



Newly built stopbank to provide flood protection

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	\$ 1,480,402	\$ 1,189,786	\$ 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

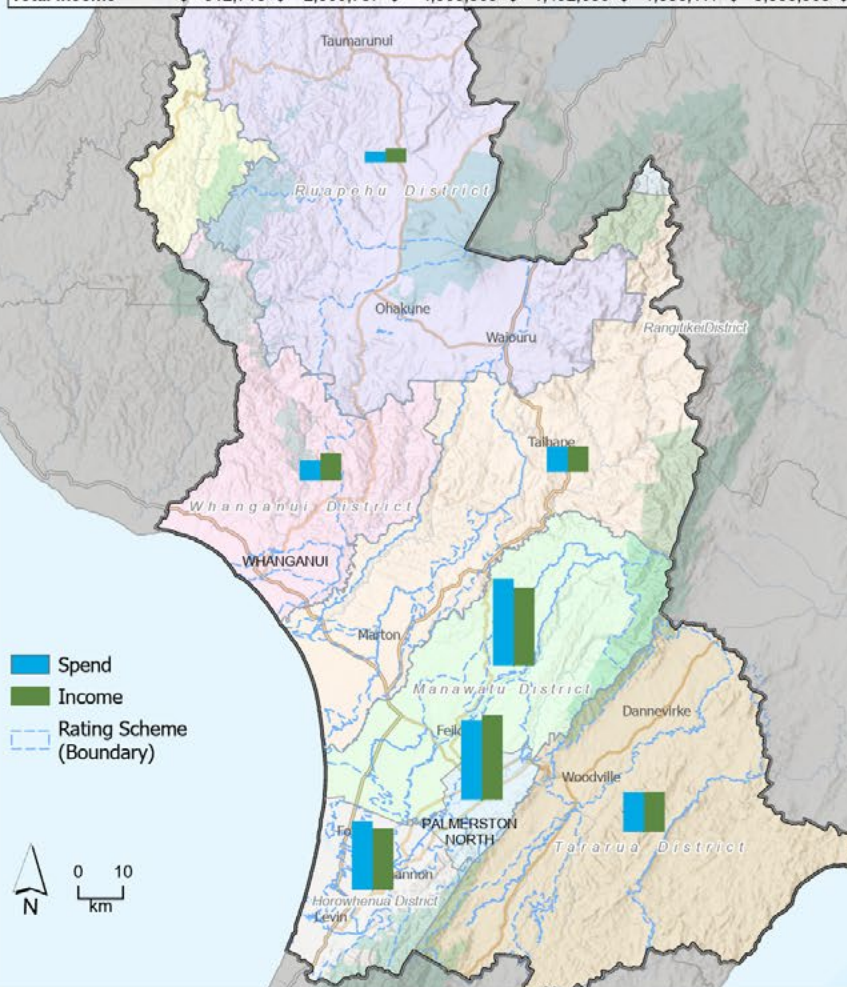
The river management and flood protection operational programme data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year. (GST exclusive)

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.

People and relationships

Ruapehu District schemes sit within Horizons' Northern operational area, which also covers schemes in the Rangitikei and Whanganui districts. Within these teams, there are 4.5 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 corporate functions (e.g. finance, communications, HR), science and policy, and information services. 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.

Some schemes have scheme committees that provide governance input on the scheme's activities and funding arrangements, meeting 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. There is a Ruapehu Flood Resilience Collaboration agreement between Horizons and Ruapehu District Council to collaborate on a joint work programme includes a range of commitments to flood resilience projects in Taumarunui, several areas of road near Matiere on the Ōhura Road that flood regularly and Ohakune.

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 the region to ensure the best results along river catchments.

The Ruapehu District's position at the headwaters of major catchments means the flood risk it generates does not stay within its boundaries. River management decisions made in Ruapehu about channel maintenance, stopbank standards, dams, and flood response have direct consequences for downstream communities in the Whanganui and Rangitikei districts. This reinforces the importance of a regionally coordinated approach to river management and flood protection, enabling consistent decisions about infrastructure investment 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, including the source of 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.

The rating mechanisms for schemes have evolved over time and been reviewed at various stages. The complexity of these mechanisms, increasing costs, and other factors have contributed to calls from the community for a review of scheme rating systems. Horizons' integrated catchment management planning work, funded via the Long-term Plan, aimed to include a review of scheme rating systems. In a post-amalgamation environment, new unitary authorities would need to consider how to address this complexity.

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 Ruapehu District's position at the top of the Whanganui catchment makes it an important location for understanding cumulative effects across the catchment, as well as contributing to activities that have downstream impacts.

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

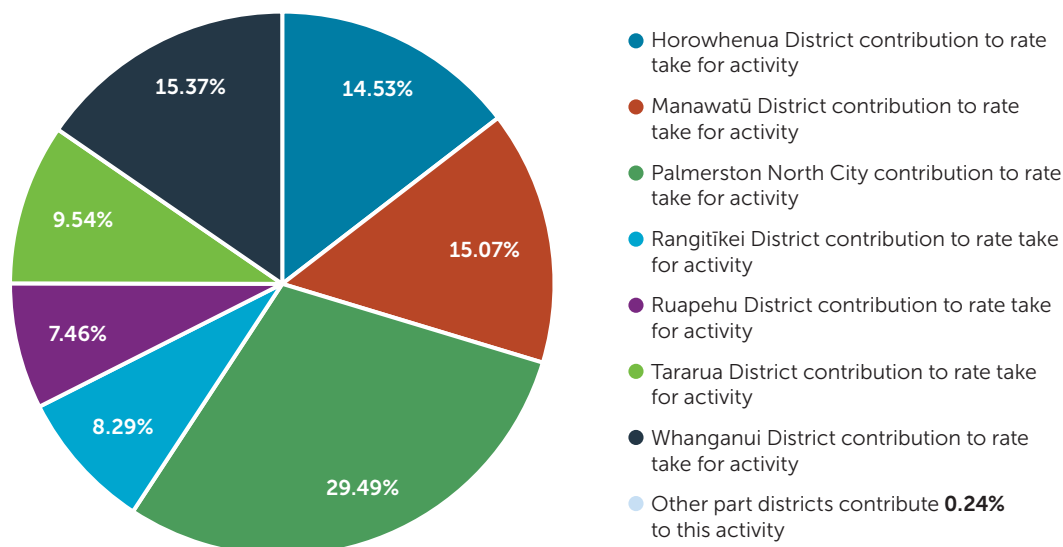
	Regulatory Management	Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience	Science and Environmental Reporting
Regional rates	3,605,571.97	4,669,015.16	4,992,501.62
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	4,142,295.55	-	1,947,405.18
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	389,980.00	752,101.13	-
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
Ruapehu District Rates	268,954.84	348,281.55	372,441.57
Ruapehu District contribution to rate take for activity	7.46%	7.46%	7.46%

Regulatory Management Activity

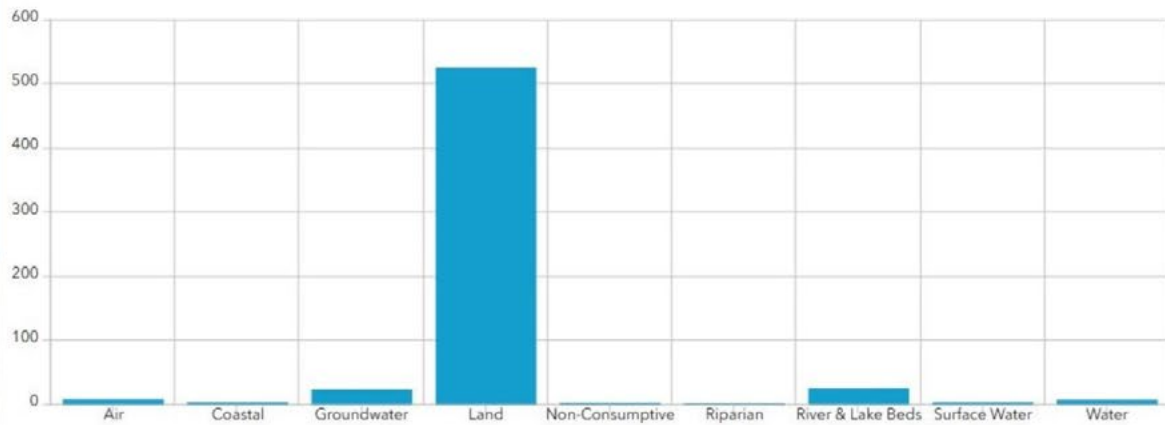
Regulatory Management at a glance

- 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 Ruapehu District: **\$269,954** which is an **7.46%** 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.
- **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.
- **986** authorised consents and permitted activities administered by Horizons in the district, which is **6.8%** of the region's 24-25 year total.
- Key projects for the district include the cycle way trail extension of **Te Ara Mangawhero**, reconsenting of the **Winston Pulp International (WPI) mill** and the **Hurewaka windfarm**.
- Many of the consented activities Horizons regulates are connected to wider catchment dynamics that extend **well beyond the district's boundaries**.

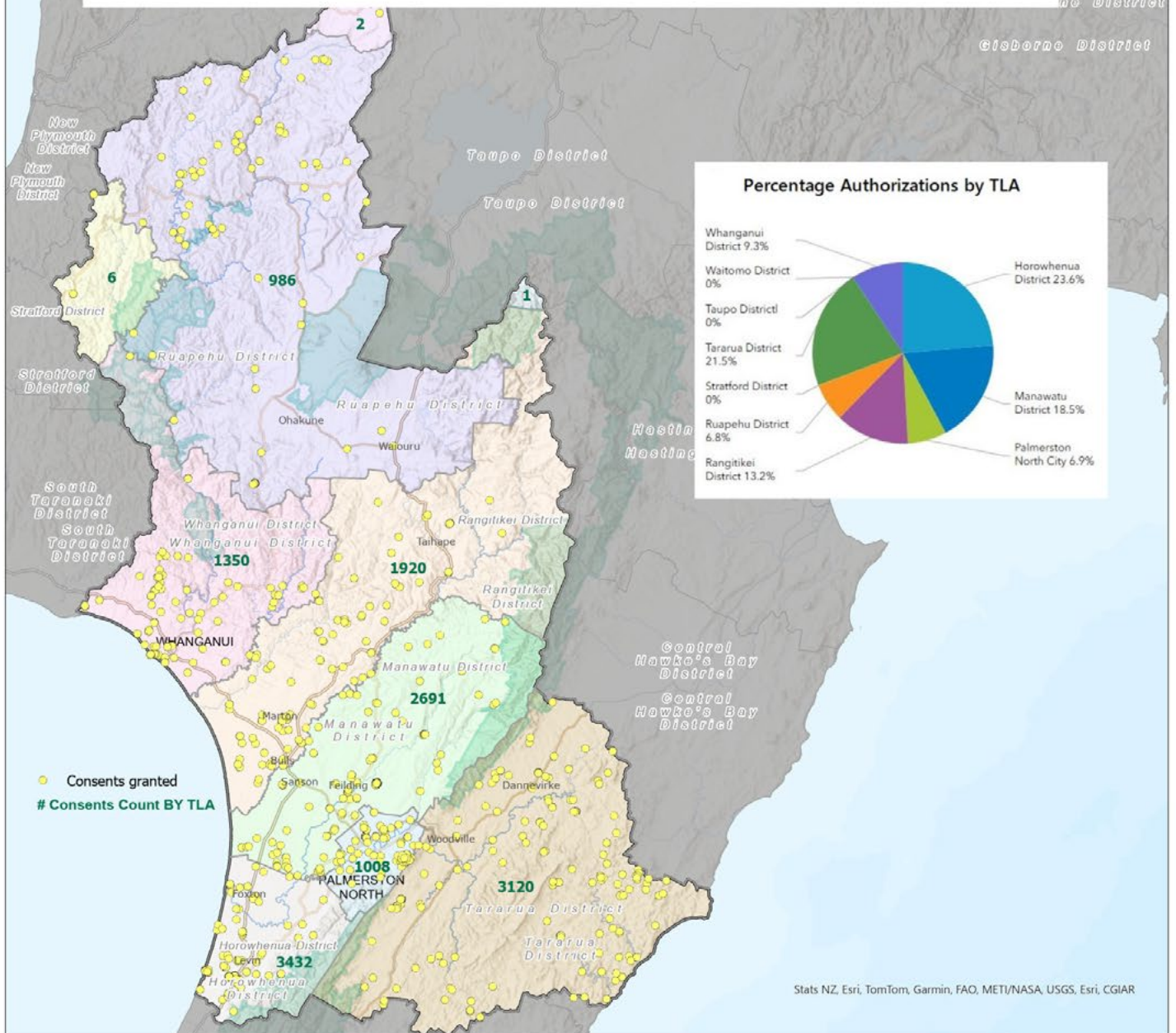
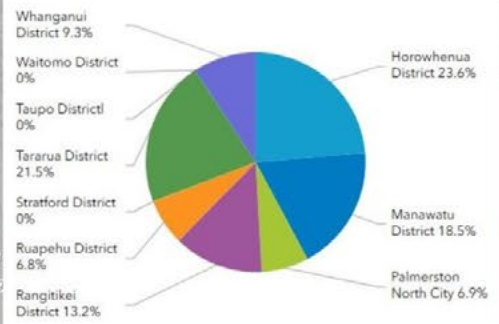
Regulatory Management



Consent Authorizations by Type



Percentage Authorizations by TLA



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

Authorized Consents and Permitted Activity

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

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



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 Ruapehu District are varied, reflecting the diverse mix of activities, which include horticulture, agriculture, industrial processing, water takes for towns and villages, wastewater discharges, development of cycle ways and activities affecting the district's unique volcanic and wetland 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 Ruapehu District some key projects for the Regulatory activity include development of the cycle way trail extension Te Ara Mangawhero Phase 2 through the Tongariro national park and reconsenting of the Winston Pulp International (WPI) mill. Additionally, the Hurewaka Windfarm is a listed project under the Fast Track legislation.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$8.13 million

Rates collected for this activity from Ruapehu District: \$269,954

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. Staff from across the wider organisation also support the Regulatory Management activity, including, but not limited to, corporate functions (e.g., finance, communications, HR), science and policy, and information services.

Regulatory Management staff work closely with a range of external parties. This includes consent applicants and holders, Ruapehu 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.



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.

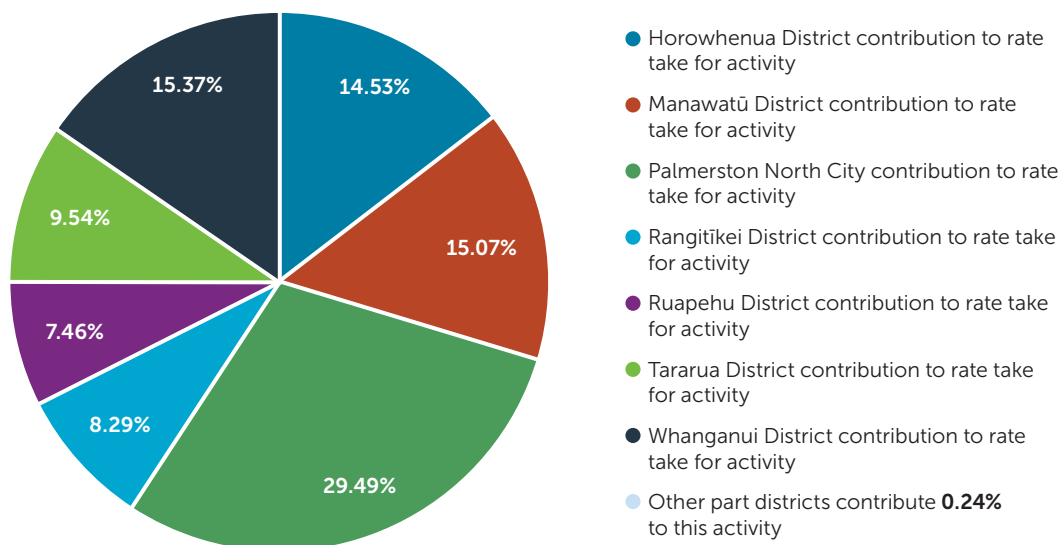
As part of wider resource management system reforms, central government has signalled it was looking at whether regulatory functions should be taken from councils and put into a national body. No decision has yet been made on this by central government, but a decision either way would impact resourcing 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 Ruapehu District are **\$348,281**, which is a **7.46%** rate contribution to the operational budget.
- **1** rural advice engagement occurred in the district in 2024-25, along with **22** region-wide engagements.
- This activity is funded through **general rates** and the **Universal Annual General Charge**, given that 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.
- 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 Ruapehu District sits within a varied planning environment, with a number of natural hazard, freshwater, biodiversity 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 Change coordination 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 Ruapehu district: \$348,281

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 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, biodiversity, 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. The Horizons Policy Team are 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 of Council provide significant support to the region's rural sector, community groups and industry in the form of advice, funding opportunities, and information development.

Another core workstream for the Horizons Policy Team is meeting the treaty settlement obligations of Te Awa Tupua and Ngāti Rangī Claims Settlement acts, which include undertaking the secretariate functions for the governance groups implementing the settlements. This work is driven in tandem by both the policy and iwi and hapū relationships teams.

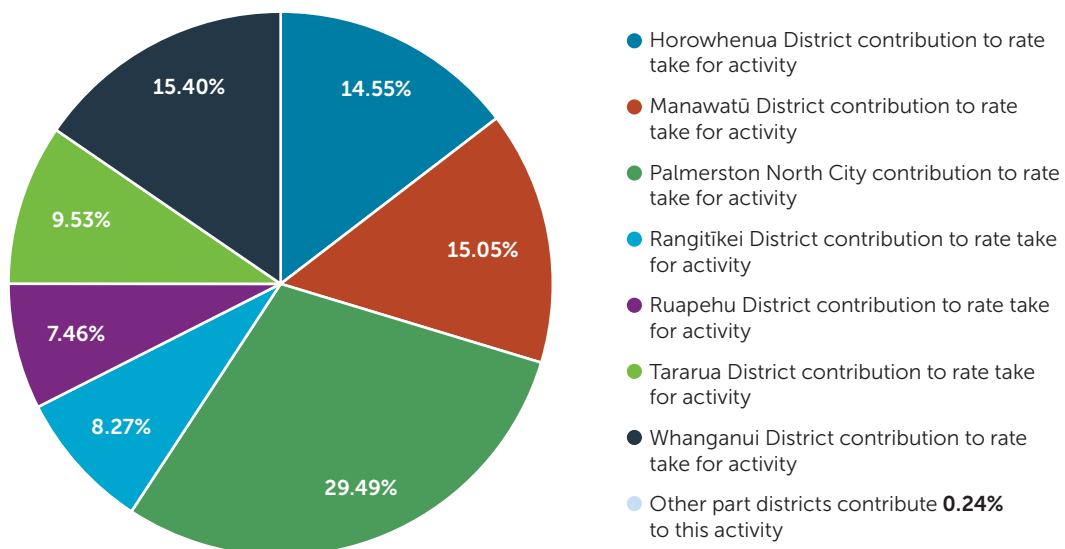
To deliver this activity at a district scale, Ruapehu would need to either resource their planning and climate resilience teams with in-house expertise able to prepare rural and environmental policy, and engage in the rural sector space, or they would need to contract this resource. Sub-regional delivery 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 Ruapehu District: **\$372,441** which is an **7.46%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through **general rates** due to the 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 Ruapehu District: approximately **\$266,000**.
- Monitoring activities in the Ruapehu District cost about **\$346,000**.
- **9** swim spot sites in the district are tested weekly from November to April for water quality.
- **33** State of Environment (and major point source discharge) monitoring sites in the Ruapehu District.
- Data collected in Ruapehu District feeds into regional-scale analysis that informs resource management decisions benefiting not only the district, 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 trends of natural resources, supporting the development of policies to sustain those resources, and assessing whether those 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 mitigation measures on in-stream 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 levels, and groundwater levels, as well as continuous monitoring of a range of environmental variables, such as temperature, soil moisture, and atmospheric pressure. These programmes directly benefit the monitoring of the state and trends of natural resources, which this activity delivers. These programmes also provide significant benefits 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 Ruapehu District cost approximately \$346k. 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, funded through both general rates and targeted Section 36 charges from 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 Ruapehu District's diverse and distinctive environments – volcanic plateau, steep mountain catchments, native forest, river headwaters, and geothermal features – means it features prominently in Horizons' monitoring networks. The district's position at the headwaters of major river systems, including the Whanganui and Whangaehu, makes it a critical location for understanding catchment-scale processes that affect water quality and quantity far downstream. The volcanic environment also introduces unique water quality considerations, including the influence of volcanic soils and in some instances, water derived from the crater lake. This can result in regionally unique water chemistry and a potential impact for volcanic activity on river systems. Finally, waterways in this district are also subject to significant diversions with large volumes from the Whanganui and Whangaehu river catchment headwaters, being diverted to flow ultimately down the Waikato River, rather than to the west coast. Data collected in Ruapehu feeds into regional-scale analysis that informs resource management decisions benefiting the whole region, not just the district itself.

This activity is also responsible for the contact recreation programme, more commonly known as the swim spot monitoring programme. In the Ruapehu District, nine sites are tested weekly during the warmer months for bacterial contamination, while 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 make informed decisions about where to swim. While Horizons staff do the testing across most of the region, Ngāti Hāua tests the northern sites – from Ohakune to Taumarunui.

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 the 24-25 period, this included significant work on developing science and policy for the Oranga Wai plan change process.

These costs are broadly spread across the region, with information from across the region drawn upon equally. In all cases, these benefit from economies of scale. The cost to this district for these functions was approximately \$328,000.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$6.9 million

Rates collected for this activity from Ruapehu District: \$372,441

Funding from resource consent holders in Ruapehu District: approximately \$266,000

This activity is funded through general rates and 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 enable 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.

This activity holds a contract with Ngāti Hāua for contact recreation testing.

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, Land Management, 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 has a strong relationship with Horizons' general communications staff, ensuring that the science Horizons collects is communicated effectively to communities. Other staff from across the wider organisation also support this activity, including, but not limited to, corporate functions (e.g., finance, policy, and information services).

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 the land type or river catchment scale to ensure dataset robustness 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 duplicating these systems, substantially increasing overall costs to ratepayers across the region with 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. This is particularly true of the Ruapehu District, with many sites being more distant, harder to access, or more subject to environmental extremes than other parts of the region. For this reason, many activities undertaken within this district are more expensive on a per site or catchment basis, as compared with other parts of the region.



Science team collecting water samples

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 Horowhenua District benefits from regional scale delivery of the rural advice, emergency management and environmental data services in particular.



Installing environmental data monitoring equipment

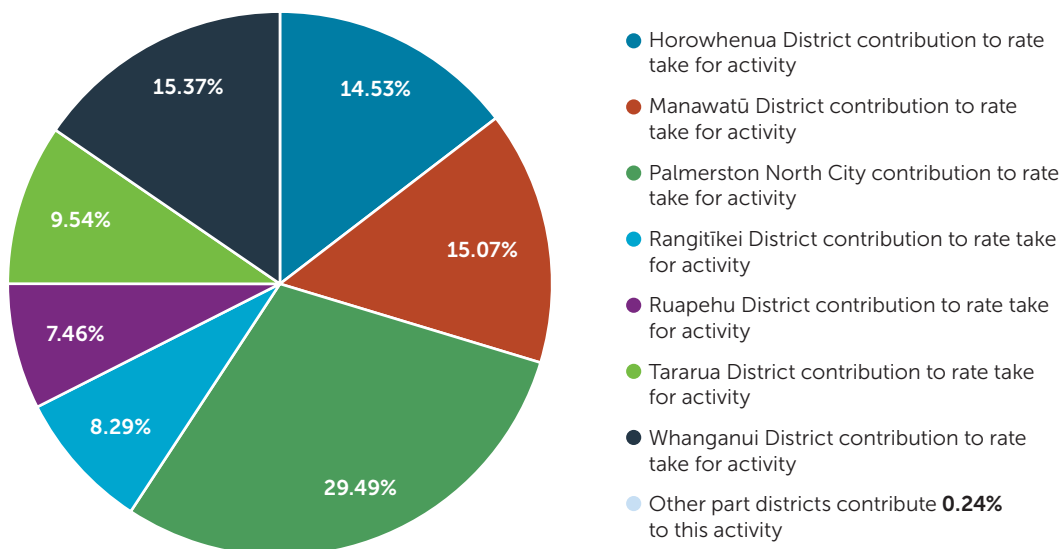
Transport and Regional Services Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year								
	District Advice	Emergency Management	Environmental Data	Information Management	Road Safety	Transport Planning	Passenger Services	
Regional rates	425,179.58	2,304,614.26	-	1,797,786.28	220,959.77	172,360.90	8,234,416.17	
Grants 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	
Ruapehu District Rates	31,715.94	171,910.91	-	134,104.47	16,482.32	12,857.13	22,500.80	
Ruapehu District contribution to rate take for activity	7.46%	7.46%	0.00%	7.46%	7.46%	7.46%	0.27%	

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 Ruapehu District: **\$31,715**, which is a **7.46%** 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.
- **3.25** FTEs regionally, with **0.24** FTE supporting the Ruapehu District.
- **1,076** requests for land development or property information responded to across the region in 2024-25, with **65** property requests for the district.
- Horizons coordinates natural hazard information for inclusion in **Land Information Memoranda** (LIMs) issued by Ruapehu District Council.
- The Ruapehu District contains **9** classifiable dams subject to the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.
- 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 dam.

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. This activity is also responsible for dam safety regulation across the region under the Building Act 2004 and the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.

The District Advice team responded to 1,076 requests for land development or property information and advice across the Horizons Region in 2024-25. 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. It also ensures that accurate, publicly accessible information is available online, including through the [Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer](#) and the [District Advice Public Viewer Property Enquiry map](#), supporting transparency and enabling the public and councils to gather information for themselves.

In the Ruapehu District, this activity responded to 65 property requests in 2024-25. The Ruapehu District's volcanic and mountainous terrain, combined with its river systems and geotechnical complexity, means natural hazard considerations are particularly significant for land use and development decisions in the district. The Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer and associated technical reports are important tools for landowners, developers, and council staff navigating these risks.

On the dam safety side, Ruapehu District contains 9 classifiable dams 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 across the region including in Ruapehu District.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$425,179

Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: \$31,715

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, except for a collective agreement with other North Island regional authorities, under which Waikato Regional Council acts 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 0.24 FTE allocated to the Ruapehu District. Other staff from across the wider organisation also support this activity, including, but not limited to, corporate functions (e.g., finance, HR), science and policy, and information services.

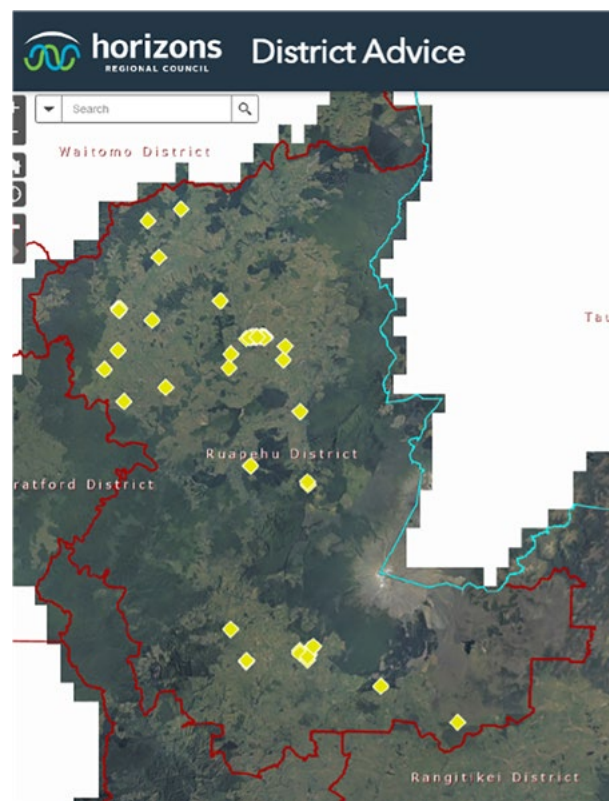
Key relationships in the Ruapehu District include Ruapehu District Council staff working in planning, policy, building, infrastructure, GIS, and LIM teams; members of the public, landowners, consultants, and developers; and dam owners and their consultants.

Key considerations for delivery models

Although District Advice is one of Horizons' smaller activities in terms of budget, it plays an important role in connecting regional council functions with the day-to-day decisions that communities and territorial authorities make about land and property. Natural hazard information, LIM inputs, and land development guidance all flow from this activity into decisions about where people build, how land is developed, and how risk is understood and managed at the property level.

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 can be shared efficiently. The Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer is a good example - a tool that took investment to build and that now serves the public and multiple councils across the region. Replicating equivalent capability at a district scale would cost significantly more for the same or lesser result.

Dam safety regulation presents a specific structural consideration in any post-amalgamation environment. Horizons currently holds regulatory responsibilities for large and classifiable dams under the Building Act 2004, including maintaining a regional dam register, managing safety requirements, monitoring compliance, and implementing policy on dangerous, earthquake-prone, and flood-prone dams. If these responsibilities were to transfer to a district-level entity, that entity would need to become a Building Consent Authority for dams. This process would require 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 cost, and the relatively small number of classifiable dams in any single district makes it difficult to justify the investment or maintain the specialist expertise required at a smaller scale.



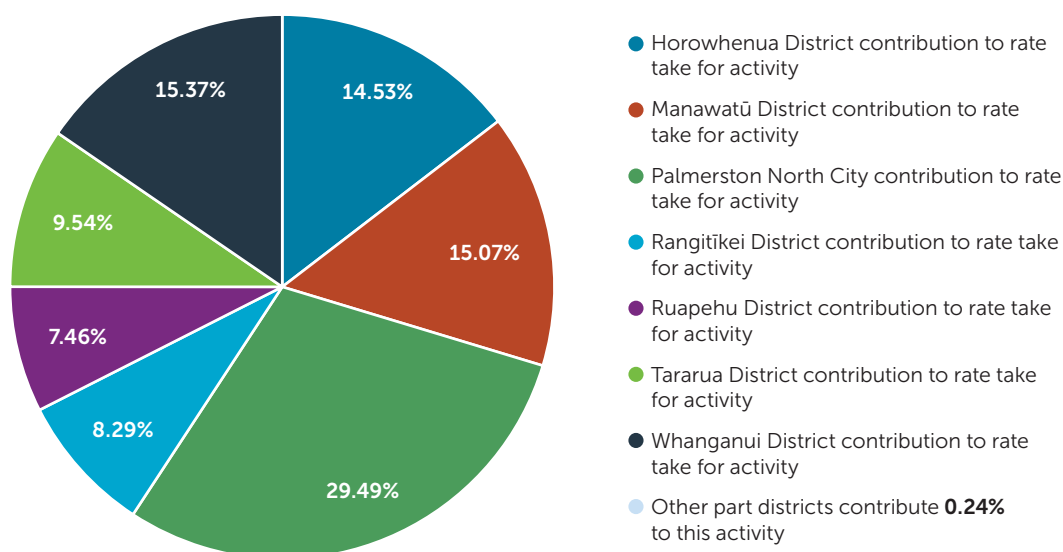
District Advice Land Development Enquiries in the Ruapehu District

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**.
- 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.
- The Ruapehu District has one of the most **complex hazard environments** in the region, including volcanic risk from Mt Ruapehu, upper Ruapehu river flooding, severe weather and snow events, and a large, sparsely populated rural area with limited access routes.
- The Ruapehu District's integration into a regional system gives its communities efficient access to **surge workforce capacity, specialist expertise, and coordination infrastructure**. Funding this independently as a sub-unitary could come at a high cost.
- 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.

Emergency Management



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 and partner agencies together to create a coordinated regional system.

The activity provides a Group Emergency Coordination Centre (GECC) capability housed in Te Ao Nui, the only IL4-rated building in the region. It ensures staff across the region – especially council staff – can support response and recovery functions, delivers community preparedness and resilience engagement, undertakes hazard-specific planning, and coordinates response and local coordination during local and regional events. Horizons also maintains an office and field depot in Māta Street, Taumarunui, supporting operational delivery within the district.

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 Ruapehu District has one of the most complex and unique hazard environments in the entire Horizons Region. Volcanic risk from Mt Ruapehu (including lahars and eruption-related hazards) sits alongside upper catchment river flooding, frequent severe weather and snow events, and the challenges of a large, sparsely populated district with limited access routes. Events can occur with limited warning; communities can become isolated through road closures or infrastructure failure; and impacts regularly include transport disruption across key state highways, power and communications outages, and restricted access for emergency response teams. These are not theoretical risks, but recurring realities for Ruapehu communities that require sustained, specialist emergency management capability to plan for and respond to.

In addition to civil defence functions, Horizons' Emergency Management activity covers oil spill response. Oil spill response capability covers preparedness planning, 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 requiring specialist capability and equipment that it would not be cost-effective for a single territorial authority to maintain alone. Horizons also provide navigation safety advice and guidance across all the regions waterways.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.35 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: \$171,910

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 such as the D4H common operating platform, training and exercise providers, specialist planning support, and communications and coordination systems.

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 operations centres as liaison officers and specialist advisors, ensuring issues and needs are quickly escalated to the Group level. These deployments have happened into Ruapehu District multiple times recently, including during the Tongariro fires and flood events.

Key relationships for this activity in Ruapehu District span a wide and specialised network. For emergency management functions this includes Fire and Emergency New Zealand, New Zealand Police and ambulance services, lifeline utilities across transport, power, and communications, Ruapehu District Council's emergency management staff, the Department of Conservation, volcanic monitoring agencies including GeoNet and GNS Science, the Central Plateau Volcanic Advisory Group (led by the Group which includes an operation plan if there's an event), iwi and Māori partners, health and welfare organisations, neighbouring councils, other Emergency Management groups, and the National Emergency Management Agency. The inclusion of volcanic monitoring agencies and the Central Plateau Volcanic Advisory Group distinguishes Ruapehu's relationship network from most other districts in the region, reflecting the unique hazard environment the district presents.

Key considerations for delivery models

Emergencies do not respect territorial boundaries. The Ruapehu District sits at the headwaters of major river catchments, where upstream flooding and river flows directly influence downstream districts (especially Whanganui District). Volcanic events from Mt Ruapehu can affect multiple districts simultaneously, through impacts on transport corridors, air quality, and downstream lahar pathways. Severe weather events that isolate Ruapehu communities can simultaneously disrupt state highways that connect the wider North Island.

This is the fundamental reason emergency management is structured as a regional system. The Emergency Management Group model exists because effective preparation, response, and recovery require consistent standards, shared capability, and coordinated command structures. The Ruapehu District's integration into a regional system gives

its communities efficient access to surge workforce capacity, specialist expertise – especially relevant for volcanic hazards – and coordination infrastructure. Funding this independently as a sub-unitary could come at a large cost.

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, drawing on their knowledge of local waterways and infrastructure. 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, including volcanic and flood risk assessments. Separating these functions across different post-amalgamation entities could risk breaking the operational integration that makes the current system effective.

A standalone Ruapehu-only emergency management model would be very costly relative to the district's population size, would require duplication of specialist capability and could significantly limit access to surge resources during large events. 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 were fragmented.



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 Ruapehu District: approximately **\$239,000** from general and targeted rates.
- The estimated cost to deliver this activity at a Ruapehu District-only scale is **\$574,000** 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.
- Ruapehu District has **two major catchments** that pose a flood risk to the communities that live close to the Whanganui and Whangaehu rivers, as well as large number of critical sub-catchments i.e. Ohura, Ongarue.
- More than **600** monitoring points from the Ruapehu District are in Horizons' environmental archives, with **41** key continuous stations.
- While lower the Whangaehu and Whanganui Catchments are beyond boundaries of Ruapehu District, it critical that information from the **upper catchment** is available for decision making in the **lower catchment**.
- Rainfall gradient ranges from **1000mm** to **6,500mm** within the central high country, and convective thunderstorms do move south from the coastal Waikato.
- A gazetted airshed in Taumarunui continuously monitors **PM10/PM2.5** and meteorological parameters such as wind speed and direction, temperature to aid with understanding of inversion layers and particle build up.
- Horizons Environmental data activity has historically supplied **data backup services** to Ruapehu District council; particular focus on drinking and wastewater information.
- 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

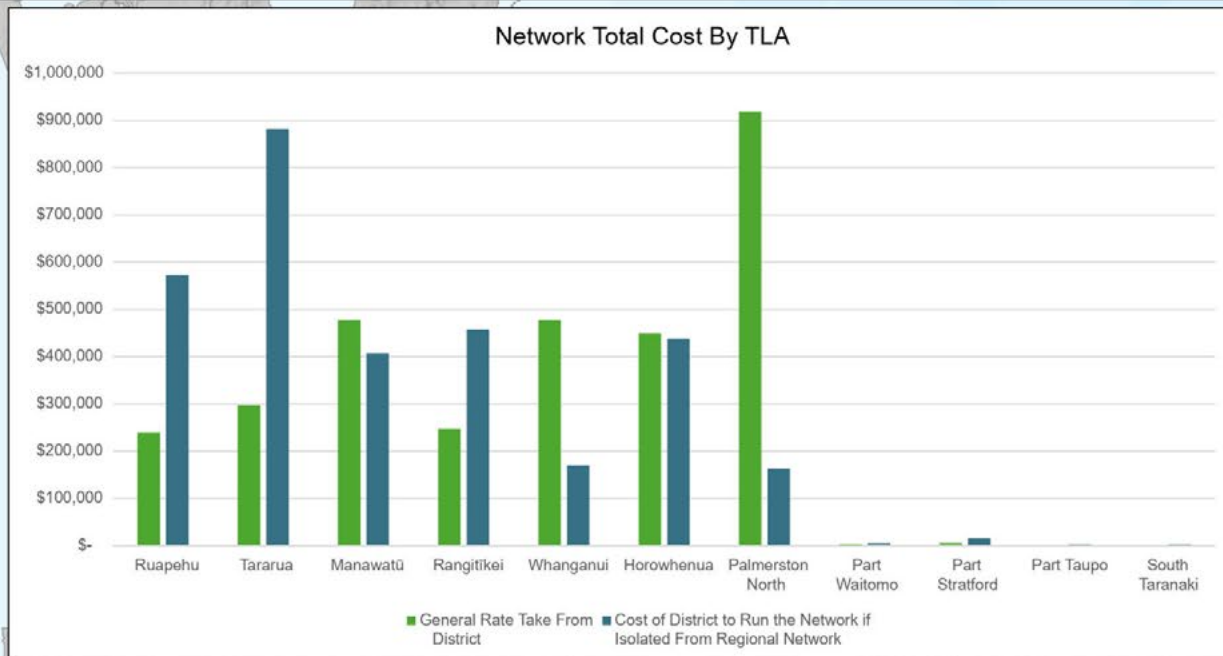
The Environmental Data activity delivers and maintains the hydrological and environmental monitoring networks and data systems underpinning almost everything Horizons does. It operates as an internal, service-driven function, funded by internal stakeholders including Science, Emergency Management, Freshwater, and Catchment Operations. This arrangement reflects the fact that 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 that support catchment analysis and floodplain mapping; and regional hydrological data platforms that enable 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.

Horizons invested significantly into the Ruapehu District post-2004, re-opened a significant number of stations previously closed by the Whanganui-Rangitikei catchment board and DSIR/NIWA. The increase in monitored locations reflects its complex hydrology and flood risk profile. There are more than 600 monitoring points in Horizons' environmental archives within the district, 16 primary river level and flow stations. The district also has 18 primary rainfall stations, 6 live webcams and more than 175 consent authorisations. There are also flood alarms in Ohura and early lahar detection on Mount Ruapehu.

The Ruapehu District has limited national weather radar coverage, which Horizons' next-generation flood forecasting system is expected to incorporate. The rainfall gradient across the district is extreme, ranging from 1000mm to 6,500mm within the central high country. This makes accurate monitoring and forecasting particularly challenging, but also particularly important. The Whanganui catchment is a complex flood forecasting environment with limited high-country data, requiring real-time data from neighbouring councils, including Taranaki and Waikato regional councils. The Whanganui at Pipiriki station, one of the older monitoring sites in the region with flood history dating back to the early 1900s and has been open (1960s) and closed (1980s) by preceding authorities until Horizons re-opened the station early 1990, requires data from more than 80 sites across the entire wider catchments, including data from Horizons, Taranaki and Waikato regional councils, to provide an accurate flood forecasts. 2015 was the largest flood (15.7m) on the continuous data but this event was dwarfed by flood events of the early 1900 (1904 19.6m & 1940 20.8m). This station is critical to provide early decision making and evacuations in Whanganui City.

The Whangaehu Catchment begins at Te Wai ā-Moe, the Mount Ruapehu crater lake. The water is high in minerals and at times very acidic and can be as low as 2pH even at the coast. This is a unique waterway, and the only river in the southern hemisphere of this nature, and creates a unique technical challenge for monitoring due to the impact the acidic water has on sensors and infrastructure. Lahars are another significant feature of this catchment. The 2007 lahar travelled down the catchment at 11m³/s (40km/hr). Given the sharp volcanic nature of the lahar sediments, almost 20mm of concrete was stripped of the bridge piers down the catchment. The remote capture video (from a low-powered cellular webcam) of the 2007 lahar was a New Zealand first and Horizons still receives international requests for this information and footage. While lower sections of the Whangaehu and Whanganui catchments are outside the Ruapehu District, it critical information from the upper catchment is available for decision making in the lower catchment.

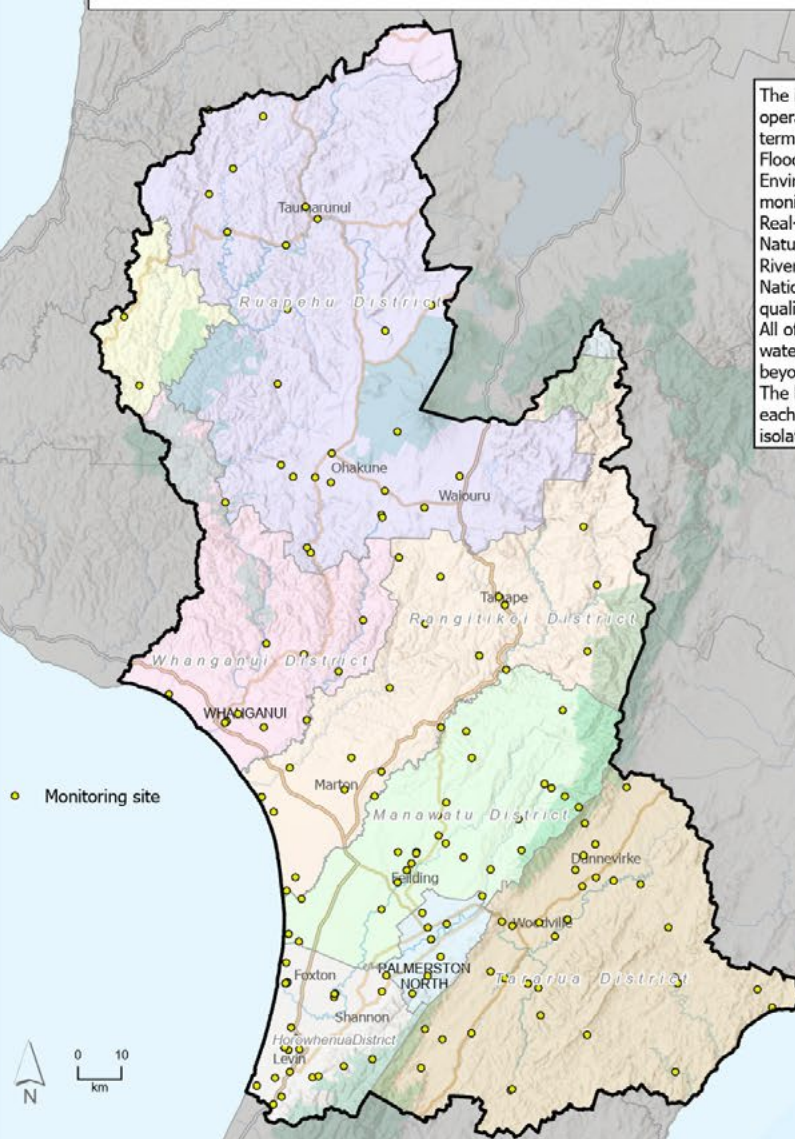


The information displayed is based on current financial year 2025-2026 operational budget for the Environmental Data Activity, relating to the long-term monitoring network (including web-cameras) which is the foundation for: Flood Modelling, Prediction, Alarming, Engineering and Design. Environmental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



Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$3.8 million

Rates collected from his activity from the Ruapehu District: approximately \$239,000 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 that 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, survey profilers, and Maritime New Zealand-certified boats and skippers.

People and relationships

There are 28 FTEs supporting this regional 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, the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website, the Ministry for the Environment, MetService, and Environment Southland.

Key external relationships in the Ruapehu District include Ngāti Rangī. Broader relationships include the Department of Conservation, NZ Defence Force, Fire and Emergency NZ, 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 duplicating these systems and associated costs, likely increasing the overall expense to ratepayers for equivalent or lesser capability.

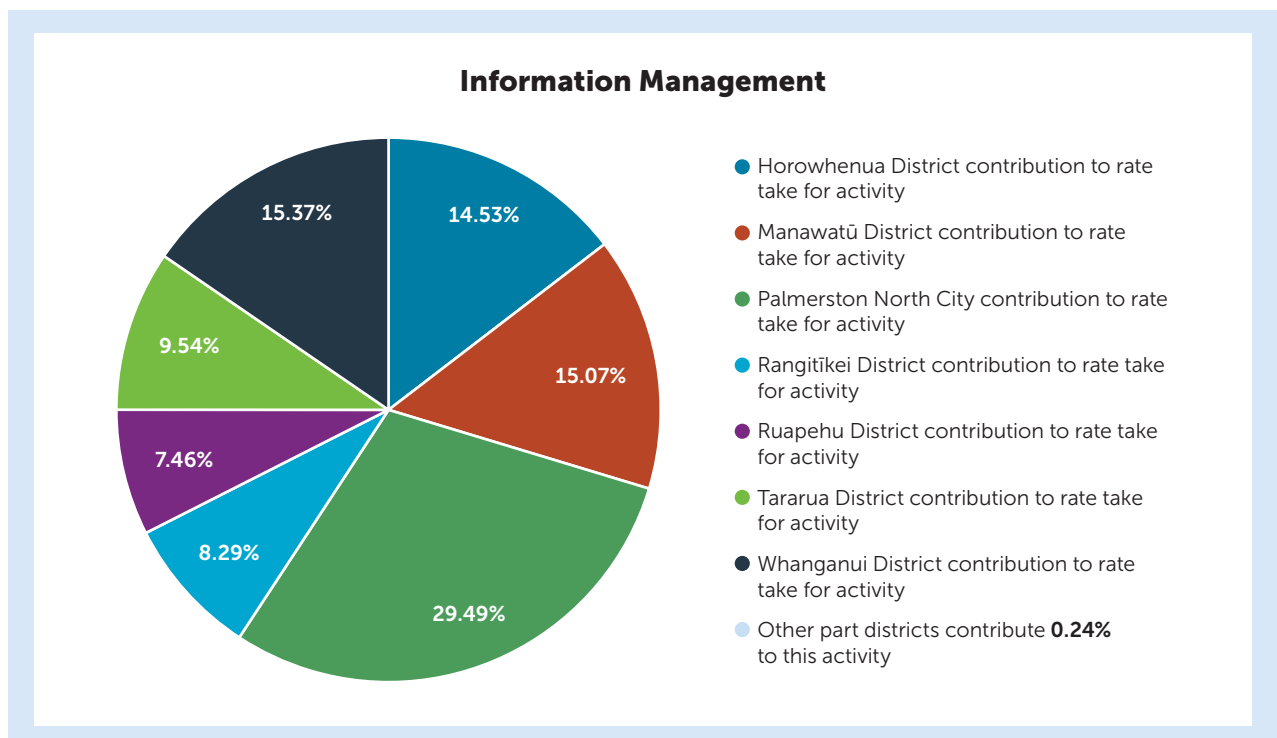
The cross-boundary nature of the data itself reinforces this point. Flood forecasting for these catchments requires real-time data from more than 100 sites spanning multiple regional council jurisdictions. The Ruapehu District catchments are reliant on data from Taranaki Regional Council and Waikato Regional Council. 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 Ruapehu-only scale is \$574,000. 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 Ruapehu ratepayers currently contributing approximately \$240,000 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 Ruapehu District: **\$134,104**, which is an **7.46%** 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.
- Ruapehu 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**.



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 Ruapehu 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 aspect of Horizons' Information Services activity, however, is how it enables regional council-specific services that operate across district boundaries.

Key examples are IRIS and IRIS NextGen. IRIS is the digital system Horizons uses to support regional council activities, including consenting, compliance monitoring, contact 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 uncertainty about whether 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 that enables the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and river height alerting processes, providing the public with 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: \$1.797 million (information management component, excluding IT)

Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: \$134,104

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 exist 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

Ruapehu District Council will already have digital infrastructure and capability to meet its 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.

GI 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.

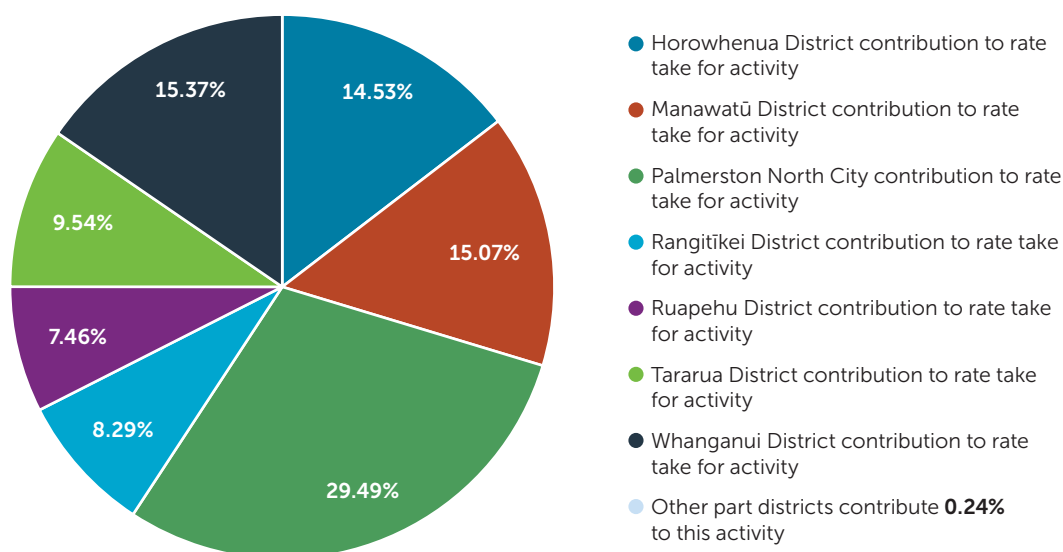
Amalgamations may create opportunities for efficiency or shared investment (either between new entities or in a shared services/ council-controlled organisation arrangement). However, this would need to be weighed carefully against transition costs, dual-running periods, data separation or harmonisation 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 Ruapehu District: **\$16,482** which is an **7.46%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- Road safety staff engage with young people in Ruapehu schools through targeted initiatives such as the **CACTUS and SADD programmes**.
- The annual **Ohakune Mardi Gras** is a significant road safety engagement opportunity, with staff delivering targeted messaging to large crowds each year.
- **Drivers do not stay within district boundaries**, with this activity bringing benefits across the region and beyond.
- 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.

Road Safety



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.

The Ruapehu District experiences significant through-traffic along State Highway 1 and other key regional routes, with seasonal peaks driven by skiing, summer tourism, and events at Tongariro National Park. Horizons' road safety staff deliver targeted engagement with local communities and at local events. This includes 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. Host responsibility visits are undertaken at licensed premises across Ruapehu and neighbouring districts to promote sober driving and support safer environments. Road safety campaigns and messaging are delivered at community events and through local partnerships, with a focus on key risk areas including alcohol, distraction, and fatigue.

The annual Ohakune Mardi Gras represents one of the most significant road safety engagement opportunities in the district each year. With large crowds attending the event — including both local residents and visitors from across the region and beyond — it provides a high-value opportunity for targeted behaviour change communications. Ruapehu 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 Ruapehu District: \$16,482 which is an 7.46% rate take contribution to the operational budget

Road safety is funded through a combination of general rates and an NZTA subsidy at a 58% funding rate. 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, 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.

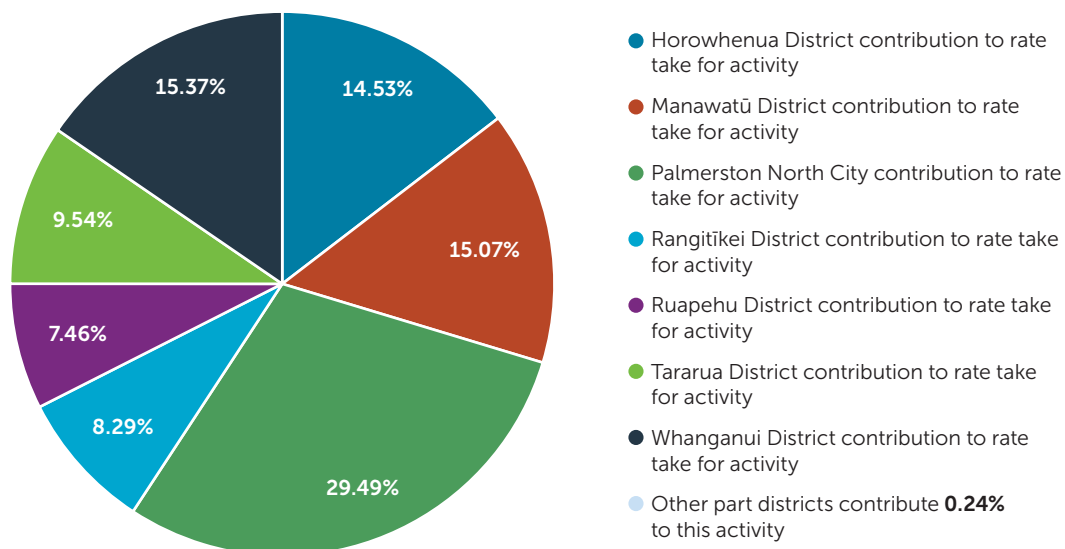
Drivers do not remain within their home district, and road safety risks do not neatly align with territorial boundaries. This is why the programme is structured and funded at a regional level, and why inter-regional coordination with neighbouring regions is a feature of its delivery. Fragmenting this into smaller programmes could reduce coordination and jeopardise access to NZTA co-funding if the scale of individual programmes fell below the level required to attract subsidy. Delivery at a smaller scale could result in 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 Ruapehu District: **\$12,857**, which is an **7.46%** 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.

Transport Planning



Working on the ways we'll move

The Transport Planning activity helps set the strategic direction for land transport across the region by 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 Ruapehu District: \$12,857

Transport Planning is funded by general rates and an NZTA subsidy at a 51% funding rate. 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 levels, this activity relies heavily on strong internal relationships to succeed.

Key relationships include the Regional Transport Committee, territorial authorities across the region, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, 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 to satisfy NZTA requirements for co-funding eligibility.

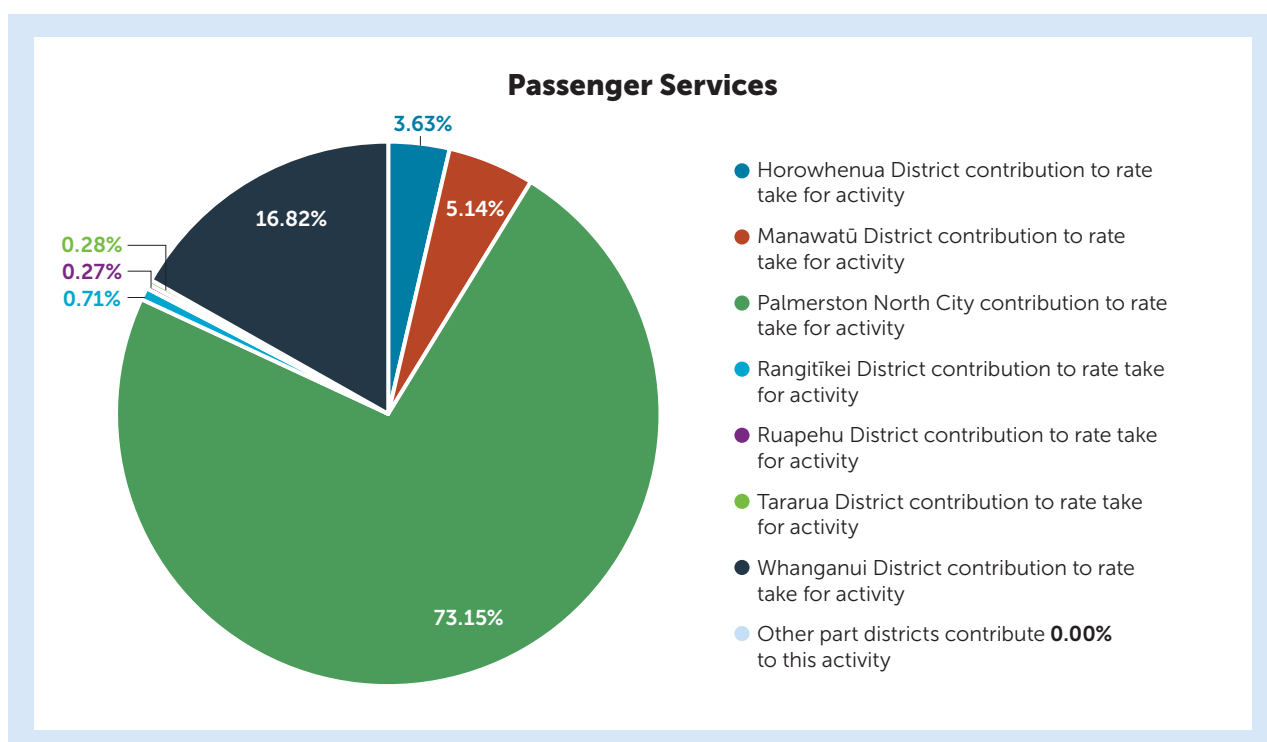
The transport system does not follow district boundaries. State highways, rail corridors, freight routes, and public transport networks cross multiple territorial authority areas. Investment decisions made in one district affect travel times, freight efficiency, and safety outcomes in others. This is 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

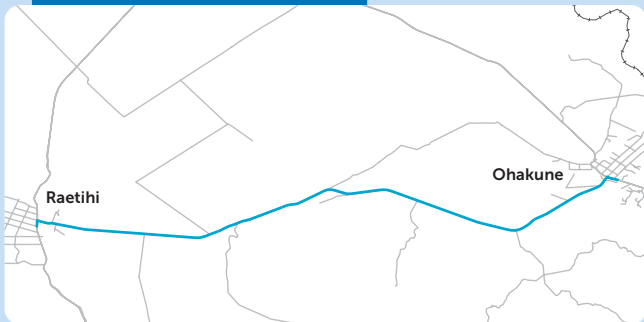
Passenger Services at a glance

- 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 Ruapehu District: **\$22,500**, which is a **0.27%** contribution to the annual activity budget in 2024-25.
- This activity is funded through a **targeted passenger services rate** and **subsidies from NZTA Waka Kotahi**.
- The **Raetihi–Ohakune service** is the primary scheduled public transport route serving the district, reflecting local demand rather than a full urban network.
- Community transport services, funded by Horizons, play a particularly significant role in Ruapehu delivering over **5,400** passenger trips annually from Taumarunui.
- Public transport does not stop at district boundaries and **cross-boundary services** require coordination that benefit 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.



Rangitikei and Ruapehu Regional Services

OHAKUNE TO RAETIHI



TAIHAPE TO WHANGANUI



MARTON TO PALMERSTON NORTH



TAIHAPE TO PALMERSTON NORTH



Figure 23: Regional Commuter services in the Rangitikei and Ruapehu District.

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 Ruapehu District reflects the district's rural and dispersed character. Rather than an urban bus network, the district is served by targeted services, most notably the Raetihi-to-Ohakune service. Community transport plays a particularly significant role in Ruapehu, with services delivering over 5,400 passenger trips annually from Taumarunui and additional trips supported through St John Waimarino services. These services provide a vital connection to healthcare, essential services, and community participation for people in areas not served by scheduled public transport, including older residents and those without access to private vehicles. The Taumarunui service receives \$18,5000 in funding, and St John Waimarino \$4,000 in funding annually.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$20.7 million.

Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: \$22,500

Passenger Services is funded through a targeted passenger services rate applied at a district level. This is why territorial authority areas which make a greater contribution to the operational budget have proportionally higher levels of service. NZTA co-funds a significant portion of this activity through the National Land Transport Fund, with the funding rate varying by service type.

Contractual obligations include public transport bus contracts, Total Mobility contracts with transport operators (one-year terms), and the Capital Connection passenger rail arrangement.

People and relationships

Nine FTEs deliver this activity across the region, supported by customer services, communications, information services, and governance staff. Key relationships in the Ruapehu District include NZTA; transport and planning staff at Ruapehu District Council; bus operators; community transport providers, and community transport providers including St John Waimarino.



Key considerations for delivery models

Public transport does not stop at district boundaries. While the Raetihi-to-Ohakune service operates within the Ruapehu District, the St John health shuttle takes people to appointments in Whanganui. Cross-boundary public transport services require coordination that benefits from a regional outlook.

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, and real-time bus information infrastructure. These systems and functions generate efficiencies at regional scale and become more expensive per ratepayer when fragmented. A district-level alternative would likely mean higher costs for the same or lesser level of service.

PATRONAGE PERFORMANCE RANGITIKEI & RUAPEHU

Marton - Rangitikei & Ruapehu ridership in last 5 FYs to half 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 focused 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 Ruapehu District.

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

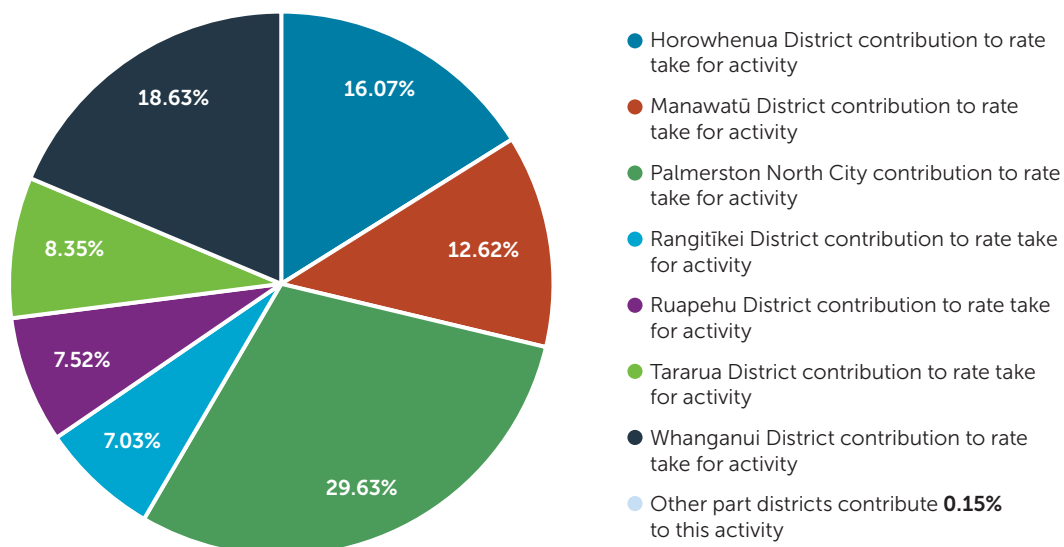
	Community Wellbeing and Relationships	Governance	Iwi and Hapū Relationships
Regional rates	1,977,687.80	3,629,622.15	508,216.82
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	80,000.00	5,000.00	220,000.00
Funding surplus/(shortfall) (Reserves 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
Ruapehu District Rates	148,764.96	273,026.21	38,228.91
Ruapehu District contribution to rate take for activity	7.52%	7.52%	7.52%

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 Ruapehu District: **\$148,764**, which is a **7.52%** 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 **Ruapehu District Council** peers, particularly during emergencies.
- **25 regional media releases relevant to Ruapehu District in 2024-25.**
- **45%** of all Horizons media releases in 2024-25 were relevant to the Ruapehu District.
- **10** Enviroschools in the district, with **456** students and teachers engaged in education and professional development sessions.
- **7** Enviroschools facilitators region-wide, **1** works specifically in the Ruapehu 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.
- **1** community event 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 river heights and rainfall alerts.
- 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 and the Accelerate35 partnership which promotes economic growth across the region. 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 Waioira 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 PIM-trained staff across the organisation, provides support and resourcing to territorial authorities during emergency events, primarily through the Public Information Management function 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. For example, the communications team hosted a hui for city and district council and partner organisation PIM representatives, focused on sharing knowledge, experiences and running through some exercises, to grow skills and develop PIM capability within the region.

In the Ruapehu District, Horizons delivers bespoke communications campaigns alongside business-as-usual support across all activities. For example, each year, communications staff support the Science and Environmental Reporting activity to deliver a campaign for the Taumarunui community, raising awareness of air quality issues and encouraging residents to burn dry wood over winter. Taumarunui has one of Horizons' two monitored airsheds, and the One Plan requires us to encourage practices that will improve air quality.

Business-as-usual communications support in Ruapehu covers a wide range: biosecurity and biodiversity awareness, community grant support, Connect public transport service updates, river management improvements, 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 Ruapehu District: \$148,764.96

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 the work with the biodiversity and biosecurity team to promote work undertaken as part of the Kia Whārite project in the Ruapehu District. A collaborative biodiversity project between Ruapehu and Whanganui districts, Horizons and Department of Conservation, Kia Whārite aims to improve land, water and biodiversity health while enhancing community and economic wellbeing through a range of actions. 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 Ruapehu 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.

Like many of Horizons' activities, there is also the benefit of regional scale for communicating core environmental messages for the district. Examples for the Ruapehu District include promoting the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI), pest control and river management upgrades where communication experts with in-depth knowledge of regional council functions can coordinate consistent, timely, and accurate public messaging and collateral at an efficient scale and cost.

The Enviroschools programme also depends on regional coordination. With seven facilitators working in the region and one dedicated in the Ruapehu District, 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 presents its 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 is an ongoing task. 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.



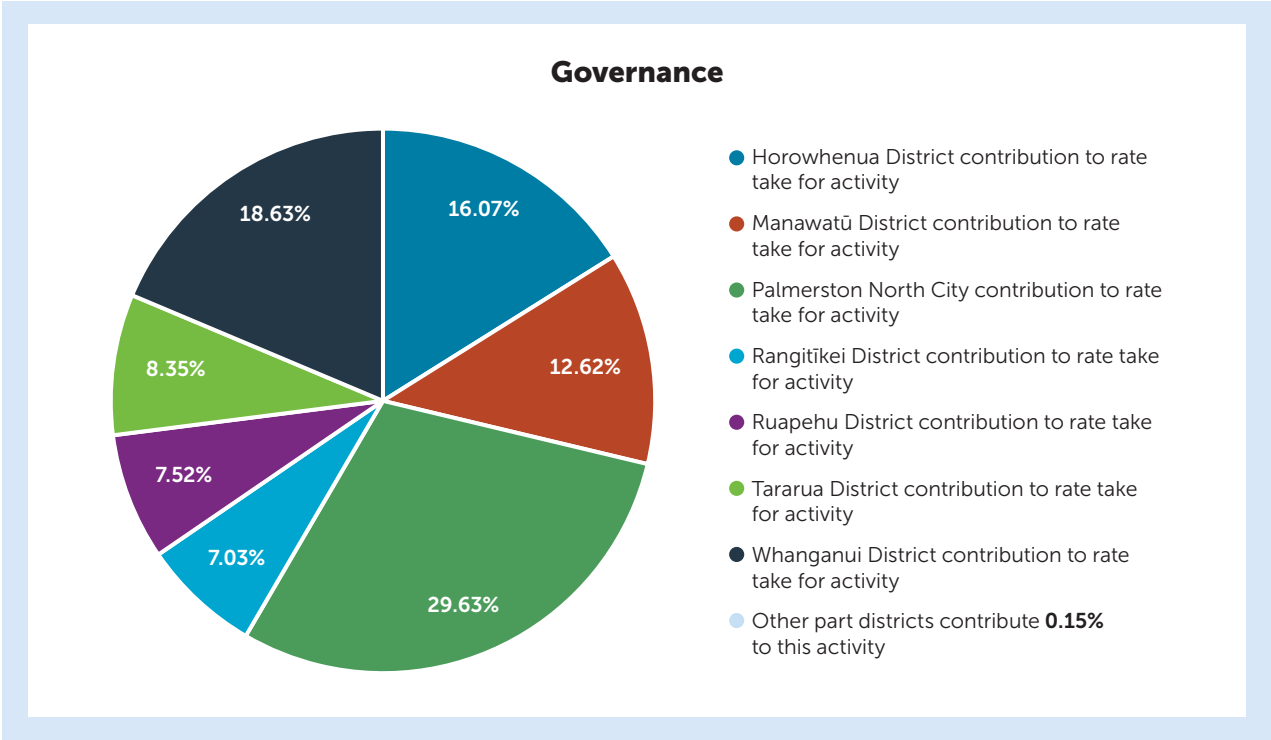
Environmental education wai hui

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 Ruapehu District: **\$273,026**, which is **7.52%** 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 Ruapehu District Council.

Finances and contract

Budget for the region: \$3.45 million

Rates collected for this activity from the Ruapehu District: \$273,026

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.

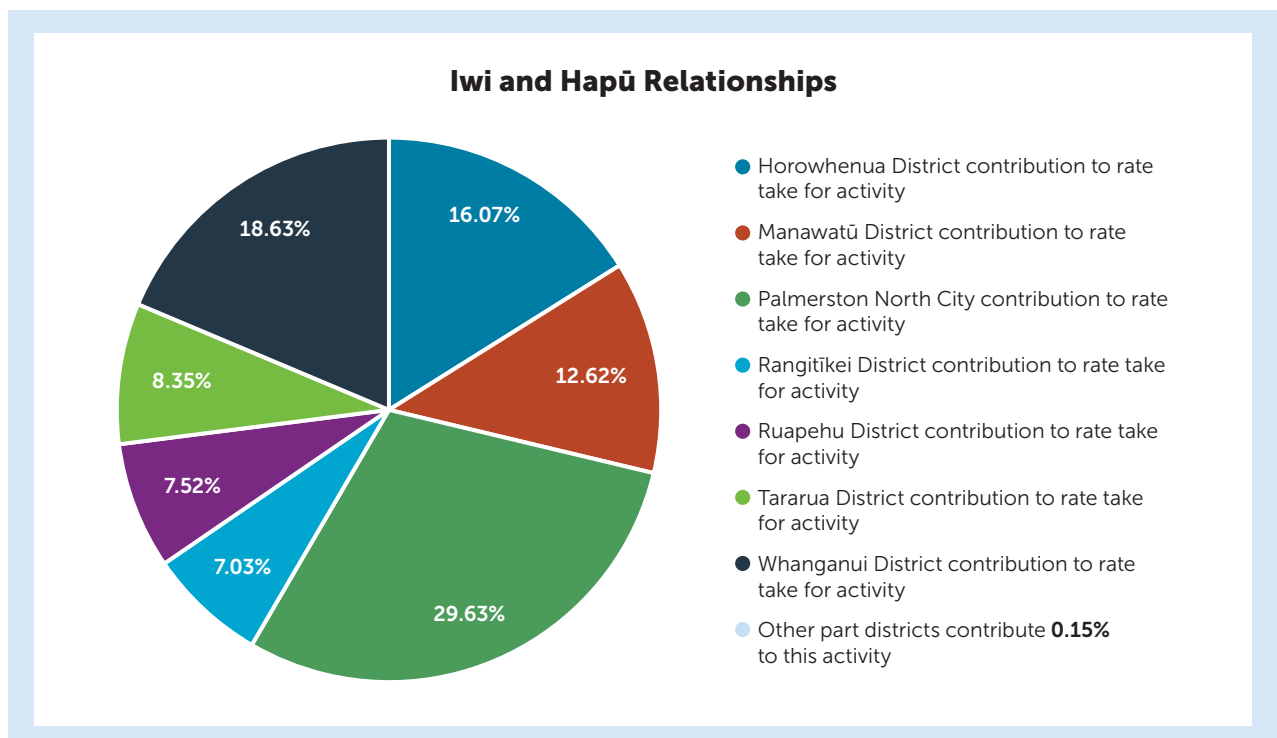
The amalgamation process raises questions about how regional council governance functions would be structured within any post-amalgamation entity. No matter the future governance makeup of regional functions – a large unitary council, community boards, CCOs, sub-unitary councils, governing boards made 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 in the Ruapehu District: **\$38,228**, which is a **7.52%** 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 Ruapehu District sits within a **rich and complex iwi and hapū landscape**.
- Horizons has **3** iwi environmental management plans lodged with Council, three MoP/MoU, and **3** Mana Whakahono ā Rohe initiated in the Ruapehu District.
- **35** iwi and hapū engagements undertaken in the Ruapehu District in 2024-25.
- **Eight** treaty settlements within (or partly within) the Ruapehu district.
- 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 Ruapehu District sits at the headwaters of the Whanganui River, and the river provides a powerful connective thread through the iwi and hapū relationships relevant to this district. Many of the iwi and hapū with interests in Ruapehu hold connections extending downstream through the Whanganui District; their rohe, whakapapa, and environmental interests do not stop at district boundaries. This means the iwi and hapū relationship work Horizons undertakes in the Ruapehu District is closely intertwined with work across the wider Whanganui catchment.

The Ruapehu 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 the activity, however wishes to provide insight to this work and things to consider as we look at amalgamation.

A key feature of this activity in the Ruapehu District is the specific legislative obligations Horizons holds under two Treaty settlement Acts. The Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act places specific administrative requirements on Horizons, including the administration of Te Kōpuka and the development of an Action Plan to give effect to Te Heke Ngāhuru. The Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act similarly places secretariat requirements on Horizons, including administering Ngā Wai Tōtā, supporting the development of Te Tāhoratanga, and endeavouring to fund unbudgeted requests from Ngā Wai Tōtā to support its operation. These are not discretionary commitments – they are legally binding obligations that Horizons must resource and deliver, and both are particularly relevant to communities and environments within the Ruapehu 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 35 (15%) in the Ruapehu District – many of which involved iwi with direct connections to the Ruapehu District through the Whanganui River.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$726,768

Rates collected for this activity in the Rangitikei District: \$38,228

This activity is funded through the Universal Annual General Charge, reflecting the fact that 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 regarding iwi and hapū involvement in policy development and decision-making. Legislative obligations under Te Awa Tupua and the Ngāti Rangi settlement are typically funded through this function.

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 that the obligation to engage meaningfully with tangata whenua runs across the organisation, not just within a single team.

Key relationships in the Ruapehu District include iwi and hapū with connections to the district and the upper Whanganui River catchment: Ngāti Rangi, Ngāti Whitikaupeka, Ngāti Haua (Upper Whanganui), Ngāti Maru, Ngā Rauru, and Ngāti Maniapoto, as well as Post Settlement Governance Entities including Te Korowai o Wainuiārua and Te Nehenehenui. Given the Whanganui River's passage through both Ruapehu and Whanganui districts, relationships with Ngā Tangata Tiaki, Whanganui iwi / Te Atiahanui a Pāpārangi, and other river iwi are also relevant to work undertaken in the Ruapehu District. In addition to direct iwi and hapū relationships, the team supports policy development from a te ao Māori lens, governance with Treaty settlement obligations, the emergency management function, and the regulatory team with advising applicants on navigating iwi environmental management plans and relationship agreements.

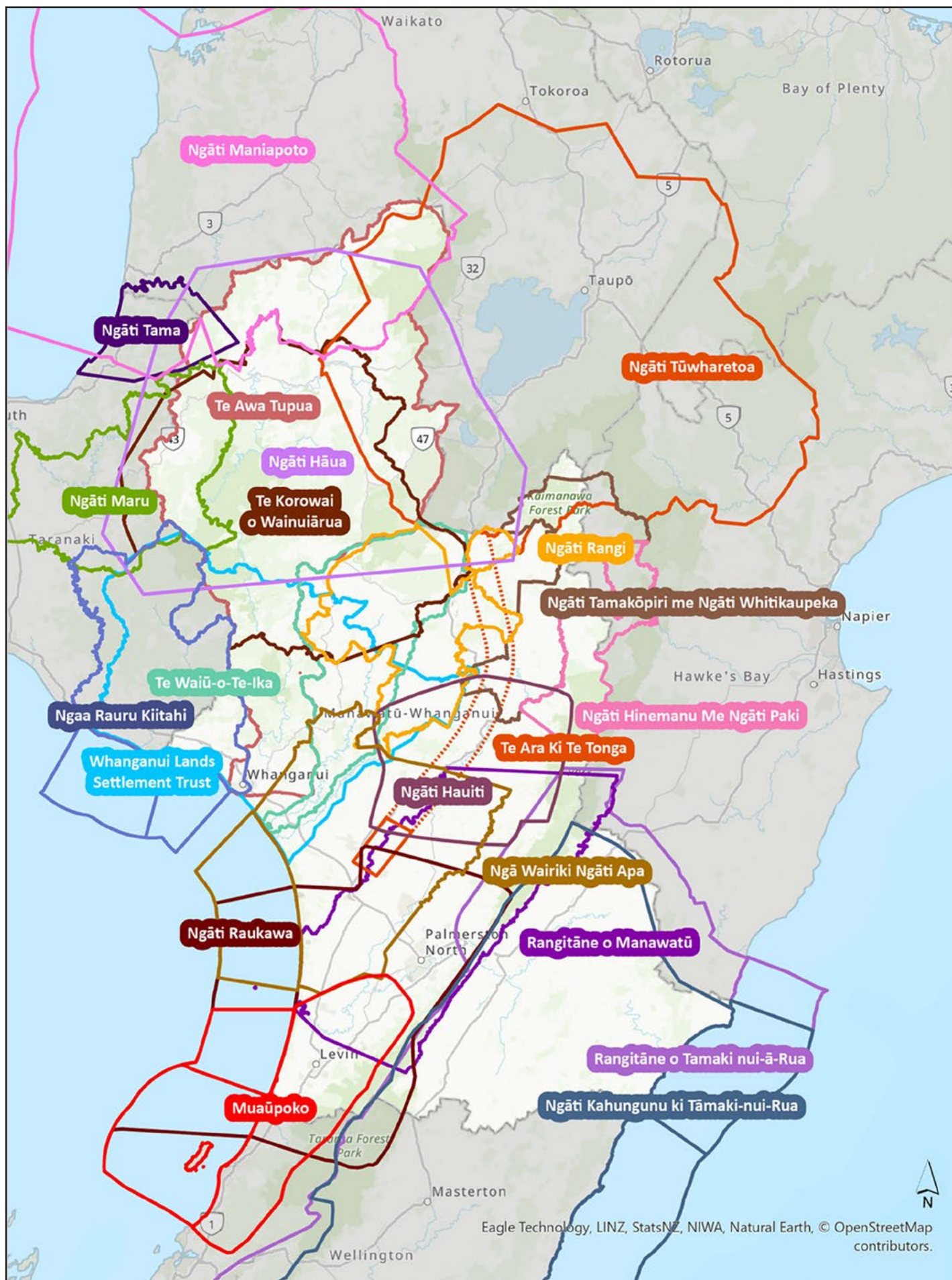
Key considerations for delivery models

Iwi and hapū relationships cannot be managed at a district scale alone. The areas of interest and mandate held by iwi and hapū in the Ruapehu District frequently traverse district and regional boundaries. This is most visible through the Whanganui River, which connects communities, whakapapa, and environmental interests from the mountains to the sea across multiple territorial authority areas. Managing those relationships requires a consistent, regionally coherent approach that a fragmented post-amalgamation structure may struggle to provide.

The legislative obligations Horizons holds under Te Awa Tupua and the Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act add a particularly significant dimension to this consideration. These are statutory instruments that place specific obligations on Horizons Regional Council that would need to be carefully re-assigned to a specific entity in any post-amalgamation environment. That entity would need to be adequately resourced to fulfil them.

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 damage to relationships at a critical time. Iwi and hapū across the Ruapehu 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 existing partnerships with iwi and hapū, creating new partnerships post-amalgamation would be essential 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**