I hereby give notice that an ordinary meeting of the Integrated Catchment Committee will be held on:

Date: **Wednesday, 11 November 2026**
Time: **9.30am**
Venue: **Tararua Room**
Horizons Regional Council
11-15 Victoria Avenue, Palmerston North

INTEGRATED CATCHMENT COMMITTEE

AGENDA

MEMBERSHIP

Chair	Cr PF Wells
Deputy Chair	Cr BG Fraser
Councillors	Cr SL Dryland
	Cr HC Easton
	Cr EB Gordon
	Cr FJT Gordon
	Cr LL Jansen
	Cr GM McKellar
	Cr JM Naylor
	Cr ETJ Pue
	Cr NM Riley
	Cr AR Taylor
	Cr WK Te Awe Awe
	Cr T Teira

Michael McCartney
Chief Executive

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

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www.horizons.govt.nz

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

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

CONTACTS	**24 hr Freephone : 0508 800 800**	**help@horizons.govt.nz**		**www.horizons.govt.nz**
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REGIONAL HOUSES	**Palmerston North** 11-15 Victoria Avenue	**Whanganui** 181 Guyton Street		
DEPOTS	**Levin** 120-122 Hokio Beach Rd	**Taihape** 243 Wairanu Rd		
POSTAL ADDRESS	Horizons Regional Council, Private Bag 11025, Manawatū Mail Centre, Palmerston North 4442			

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AGENDA

1 Welcome/Karakia

2 Apologies and Leave of Absence

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

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

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

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

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

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

Further information is available by phoning 0508 800 800.

4 Supplementary Items

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

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

(i) The reason why the item was not on the Order Paper, and

(ii) The reason why the discussion of this item cannot be delayed until a subsequent meeting.

5 Members' Conflict of Interest

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

Minutes of the fourth meeting of the thirteenth triennium of the Integrated Catchment Committee held at 9.30am on Wednesday 29 July 2026, in the Tararua Room, Horizons Regional Council, 11-15 Victoria Avenue, Palmerston North.

PRESENT Crs PF Wells (Chair), SL Dryland (to 1.15pm), HC Easton, BG Fraser, EB Gordon, FJT Gordon (from 9.45am), LL Jansen, GM McKellar (via Zoom from 9.35am), JM Naylor, NM Riley, and AR Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE

Chief Executive	Mr M McCartney
Committee Secretaries	Mrs JA Kennedy
	Mrs R de Souza

ALSO PRESENT At various times during the meeting:

Dr E Daly (Group Manager Strategy, Regulation & Science), Dr J Roygard (Group Manager Catchment Operations), Mrs C Hesselin (Group Manager Governance, Engagement & Transformation), Mr C Davey (Biodiversity, Biosecurity & Partnerships Manager), Mr L Brown (Freshwater & Partnerships Manager), Mr G Cooper (Land & Partnerships Manager), Ms E Prouse (Information Coordinator), Mr J Galuszka (Manager Media & Communications), Mrs P Tan (Finance Business Partner), Mrs T Hunt (Integrated Catchment Management - Programme Lead), Ms L Totman, Mr R Dalrymple, Mr M Chrystall, Ms S Nichols, and Ms M Stevenson (Rangitīkei River Catchment Collective).

Deputations & Public Speaking:
Mr K Venter (Whanganui District Council) and supporters, Mr B Duffy (representing interest groups in Horowhenua and Levin) and supporters, and Mr I Passey (Riverina Pohangina Ltd), Mr S Carroll (Pohangina Farmer) and supporters.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Cr Naylor to open with a Karakia.

APOLOGIES

ICC 26-12 ***Moved*** ***Riley/Taylor***

That the Committee receives apologies from Crs Pue, Te Awe Awe, and Teira, and an apology from Cr F Gordon for lateness.

CARRIED

PUBLIC FORUMS / DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS

Deputation: Mr Venter (Whanganui District Council) spoke in support of a request for funding for a river edge erosion investigation at Aramoho. (Item 8, Report No. 26-117, Lower Whanganui Scheme, Aramoho River Edge Erosion Control Investigation Funding Request).

Cr Mckellar joined the meeting at 9.35am (via Zoom).

Mr Venter delivered a PowerPoint presentation which detailed the issues, possible solution, the RFP process and the next steps, subject to funding from Horizons Regional Council.

Deputation: **Mr Duffy** (representing interest groups in Horowhenua and Levin). Mr Duffy detailed his support for a request from a voluntary group to establish an extension to the current walkway near Lake Horowhenua onto a further part of Horizons' land (Item 9. Report No. 26-118, Arawhata Wetland - extension of walkway).

Cr F Gordon joined the meeting at 9.45am.

Mr Duffy delivered a PowerPoint presentation summarising the work to date, the stakeholders and volunteers involved, and a vision for the current track to be extended.

Public Speaking: **Mr Passey** (Riverina Pohangina Ltd), and **Mr S Carroll** (Pohangina Farmer) delivered a PowerPoint presentation which outlined the experiences and frustrations with the Pohangina, Oroua River Scheme, and detailed some ideas for possible solutions. Mr Passey suggested that a new group be formed called "Mitigation Repair Works" and outlined the groups role.

SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS
There were no supplementary items to be considered.

MEMBERS' CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
There were no conflicts of interest declared.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

ICC 26-13 ***Moved*** ***Riley/B Gordon***

That the Committee:

confirms *the minutes of the Integrated Catchment Committee meeting held on 13 May 2026 as a correct record, and notes that the recommendations were adopted by the Council on 26 May 2026, as amended with the addition of noting that Cr Taylor was absent on approved Leave of Absence under Apologies.*

CARRIED

PRESENTATION FROM THE RANGITĪKEI RIVERS CATCHMENT COLLECTIVE
Report No 26-116

Ms Totman and Ms Stevenson (Rangitīkei Rivers Catchment Collective) presented on the findings of a macroinvertebrate monitoring project funded through Horizons Regional Council's freshwater community Grants Programme.

ICC 26-14 ***Moved*** ***Fraser/Riley***

That the Committee recommends that Council:

a. receives the information contained in Report No. 26-116.

b. agrees that, in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, the matters in this report are not significant, and the appropriate level of engagement is inform.

c. receives the presentation from the Rangitīkei Rivers Catchment Collective on the findings of its macroinvertebrate monitoring project funded through the 2025–26 Freshwater Community Grants Programme.

CARRIED

LOWER WHANGANUI SCHEME - ARAMOHO RIVER EDGE EROSION CONTROL INVESTIGATION FUNDING REQUEST

Report No 26-117

Dr Roygard (Group Manager Catchment Operations) summarised the item about a funding request from Whanganui District Council which sought Horizons Regional Council's (HRC) support for an investigation into river edge erosion and river management options at the Aramoho riverfront precinct, and sought a decision on the funding request. Members debated the request and sought clarity around RFP process and HRC's ongoing involvement.

ICC 26-15 ***Moved*** ***Taylor/Fraser***

That the Committee recommends that Council:

a. receives the information contained in Report No. 26-117 and Annex.

b. agrees that, in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, the matters in this report are not significant, and the appropriate level of engagement is inform.

c. approves the funding of $46,500 (excluding GST) for a river edge erosion investigation at Aramoho to be led by Whanganui District Council. Approves the funding to be drawn from operational budgets of the Lower Whanganui Scheme in accordance with the scheme funding policy.

CARRIED

ARAWHATA WETLAND - EXTENSION TO WALKWAY

Report No 26-118

Dr Roygard (Group Manager Catchment Operations) introduced the item which sought Council's direction on a request from a voluntary group to establish an extension to the current walkway near Lake Horowhenua onto a further part of Horizons' land purchased for the Jobs for Nature Project that included the Arawhata Wetland. Members debated the introduction of an amended recommendation c. which requested further consultation to be undertaken. Members sought clarity around aspects of the project and levels of engagement. Mr Duffy (representing interest groups in Horowhenua and Levin) outlined the extent of consultation with various stakeholder groups that had already taken place. As the amended recommendation was not moved or seconded, debate followed on the original recommendation c. A procedural motion to put recommendations a.b. and c. was proposed.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

ICC 26-16 ***Moved*** ***B Gordon/Naylor***

That the Committee:

a. recommends that the original recommendations as set out in Report No. 26-118, Arawhata Wetland - Extension to Walkway be put to the vote.

CARRIED

ICC 26-17 ***Moved*** ***F Gordon/Easton***

That the Committee recommends that Council:

a. receives the information contained in Report No. 26-118.

b. agrees that, in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, the matters in this report are not significant, and the appropriate level of engagement is inform.

c. approves the track committee extending the existing track onto the new land area.

d. approves the development of signage on the wetland within existing budget from the Horowhenua District Water Quality Improvement programme.

Against: Cr Dryland

Abstain: Cr Jansen

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 11.36am.

The meeting reconvened at 11.45am.

ROOM FOR RIVER - POHANGINA AND ŌROUA
Report No 26-119

Dr Roygard (Group Manager Catchment Operations) spoke to the item which updated Council on one of the key issues for the Infrastructure Strategy (IS) that was in development around transition to a new delivery model. The item focussed on the room for river (river management lines) project in the Ōroua and Pohangina Rivers and sought Council's direction on the release of a report and next steps for work related to room for river (river management lines). Members debated the recommendations and provided their views on options presented. Clarification was provided by Dr Roygard and Mr Brown (Freshwater and Projects Manager). Recommendations a.b.c.d.i.&ii. were moved and seconded with a request to add the words "with context provided by a press release" to recommendation c. The recommendations were split with a.b.&c. put first, followed by recommendation d.i.&ii. with a division. Recommendation d.iii. was deleted.

ICC 26-18 ***Moved*** ***B Gordon/Riley***

That the Committee recommends that Council:

a. receives the information contained in Report No. 26-119.

b. agrees that, in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, the matters in this report are not significant, and the appropriate level of engagement is inform.

c. directs the Chief Executive to release publicly the report on River Management Lines for the Ōroua and Pohangina with context provided by a press release.

CARRIED

During the voting process for recommendation d.i.&ii. a point of order was called to suspend the vote while further clarification in support of d.ii. was provided.

ICC 26-19 ***Moved*** ***F Gordon/Riley***

That the Committee recommends that Council:

d. directs the Chief Executive to:

i. continue the implementation of the room for river approach in the Lower Rangitīkei Scheme; and

CARRIED

ii. continue to work on room for river (river management line) projects including in the Mangatainoka Catchment.

For: Crs Naylor, Taylor, B Gordon, F Gordon, Wells, Riley

Against: Crs Dryland, Easton, McKellar

Abstain: Crs Jansen, Fraser

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 12.45pm.

The meeting reconvened at 1.15pm.

CATCHMENT OPERATIONS PROGRESS REPORT
Report No 26-120

Dr Roygard (Group Manager Catchment Operations) introduced the report which overviewed the activity of the Catchment Operations group that included the biosecurity, biodiversity, freshwater, land, and river management and flood protection activities of the Long-term Plan (LTP). The report provided some background information on the various programmes, updates on progress on the Annual Plan targets, and Council decisions on additional work programmes. Dr Roygard, Mr Brown (Freshwater & Partnerships Manager), and Mr Davey (Biodiversity, Biosecurity & Partnerships Manager) took Members through a PowerPoint presentation detailing the Catchment Operations group activities and clarified questions. Mr Davey provided an overview of Bird Flu and explained how the response was being managed. Members' debated the future funding model for the advancement of works identified in Table 64: Actions identified for Makirikiri scheme in item 26-72 and status. It was noted that the works would be advanced from the Scheme budget and revisited at a later date.

Dr Roygard gave an overview of the Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme and referred to recommendations c. - g. which sought additional loan funding for the Scheme. Following debate, the Chair put recommendations a. through to g.

ICC 26-20 ***Moved*** ***Wells/Riley***

That the Committee recommends that Council:

a. receives the information contained in Report No. 26-120.

b. agrees that, in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, the matters in this report are not significant, and the appropriate level of engagement is: inform.

c. approves an emergency and renewal reserve drawdown equivalent to the total amount for these reserves for the Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme in the 2026-27 year. The drawdown is to be in accordance with the Funding Policy of the scheme, 80% targeted (reserves in this case), 20% general rate (general rate reserves in this case).

d. notes for the Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme the loan funding approval of $200,000 excluding GST approved in April 2026 and additional $250,000 of loan funding approved via the Annual Plan 2026-27 provides a total of $450,000 loan funding in the 2026-27 Annual Plan Budget. Approves increasing the loan funding by up to $550,000 for the Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme to complete additional works over multiple years. The additional up to $550,000 loan is to be funded over 10 years in accordance with the Funding Policy of the scheme 80% targeted, 20% general rate.

e. approves consenting costs for the Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme to be loan funded over a period of 10 years via the approved loan funding above.

f. approves for the Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme funds that were budgeted to be provisioned to increase reserves ($60,000) to be reallocated for capital loan payments in the 2026-27 year.

g. agrees the Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme works are a priority and that the work to completed with the loan funding will likely occur over a number of years due to staff capacity. Notes the additional work will draw on staff time from across the River Management and Flood Protection Activity and may be completed in place of other River Management and Flood Protection Activity in the region.

Abstain: Crs Taylor, F Gordon

CARRIED

INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE AND DRAFT INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2027-57 OPTIONS
Report No 26-121

Dr Daly (Group Manager Strategy, Regulation & Science) introduced the report which provided a progress update on Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and included both the ICM Programme and operational delivery. The report presented the Draft Infrastructure Strategy 2027-57 Key Issues and associated levels of change for the Council to determine the preferred level of change to guide the continued development of the Strategy. Mrs Hunt (Integrated Catchment Management - Programme Lead) and Dr Roygard (Group Manager Catchment Operations) summarised the key points and took Members through the recommendations. Following debate by Members' around the preferred level of change for each of the key issues as set out in recommendation d., it was moved and seconded that the item be rolled over to the 12 August, 2026 Strategy & Policy Committee meeting for further debate.

ICC 26-21 ***Moved*** ***Naylor/Riley***

It is recommended that the Committee:

a. refers Report No. 26-121, Integrated Catchment Management Progress update and Draft Infrastructure Strategy 027-57 Options to the 12 August, 2026 Strategy & Policy Committee.

CARRIED

Prior to the close of the meeting, Cr F Gordon explained that she abstained in error to Report No. 26-120, Catchment Operations Progress Report. Cr F Gordon thought she was abstaining against recommendations d - g only. Had Cr F Gordon known she was voting for the entire recommendations a - g, she would have voted 'for'. As there is no provision in Standing Orders for a member to change their vote once the resolution has been 'Carried', Cr F Gordon's original vote stands.

After the meeting had closed, Cr Taylor explained that he abstained in error to Report No. 26-120, Catchment Operations Progress Report. Cr Taylor thought he was abstaining against recommendations d - g only. Had Cr Taylor known he was voting for the entire recommendations a - g, he would have voted 'for'. As there is no provision in Standing Orders for a member to change their vote once the resolution has been 'Carried', Cr Taylor's original vote stands.

The meeting closed at 3.07am with a karakia from Cr Naylor.

Confirmed

_____ _____

GROUP MANAGER OPERATIONS CHAIR

Report No.	26-188
Information Only - No Decision Required	

CATCHMENT OPERATIONS PROGRESS REPORT

1. PURPOSE

1.1. This report provides an update on delivery of the Catchment Operations work programme, progress against Annual Plan performance measures, significant projects, strategic work programmes and emerging issues across the biodiversity, biosecurity, freshwater, land management, and river management and flood protection activities of Horizons Regional Council (Horizons).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

2.1. Catchment Operations programmes continue to deliver biodiversity, biosecurity, freshwater, land management and river management outcomes across the region. At present, one Annual Plan target is considered unlikely to be achieved, being the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI) erosion control works target.

2.2. Delivery of the operational work programme has occurred alongside development of the 2027-37 Long-term Plan and 2027-57 Infrastructure Strategy, and reviews of the SLUI, environmental grant programmes and the Regional Pest Management Plan.

2.3. During the reporting period Council and the Integrated Catchment Committee have considered and made decisions on a range of matters including actions for the next Manawatū River Leaders' Accord Action Plan, Room for the River projects, flood resilience work in the Lower Whanganui Scheme (Aramoho), community access at the Arawhata Wetland, the Te Āpiti Statement of Commitment, and additional funding for recovery works in the Pohangina-Ōroua River Scheme.

2.4. Council has also approved additional work programmes and funding for activity during the year, including Wilding Conifer Control, the Ruapehu Flood Resilience Collaboration Agreement, additional Hōkio Scheme works, and activities to address legacy issues within the Makirikiri Scheme.

Annual Plan performance

2.5. Catchment Operations programmes are generally tracking to achieve Annual Plan performance measures. The Catchment Operations Group achieved 47 of 48 applicable non-financial Annual Plan targets in 2025-26, with the SLUI erosion control works target the only target not achieved and is forecast not to be achieved again in 2026-27. Progress against 2026-27 Annual Plan targets is summarised in Table 1 and detailed throughout this report.

Table 1: Summary of progress on Annual Plan targets.

Activity	Total Targets	Achieved	On Track	At Risk / Not Achieved
Biodiversity	5	0	5	0
Biosecurity Animals	5	0	5	0
Biosecurity Plants	4	1	3	0
Land Management	4	0	3	1
Freshwater & Partnerships	10	0	10	0
River Management & Flood Protection	18	4	14	1
Total	46	5	40	1

Programme updates

Biodiversity

2.6. Biodiversity programmes are currently expected to achieve their Annual Plan targets. Work continues across 95 priority habitat sites, eight icon and targeted-rate projects, and 29 contestable-fund projects. The Priority Habitats Programme's Environmental Pressure Management Reporting System is improving visibility of site pressures and will assist prioritisation of future work. Management of Tōtara Reserve continues, including the staged closure of Kahikatea Campground following further erosion and rockfall in July 2026.

Biosecurity

2.7. Biosecurity programmes are currently expected to achieve their Annual Plan targets. Review of the Regional Pest Management Plan has moved into proposal development, including technical assessment of species, engagement with iwi and hapū, and development of a broader biosecurity approach.

2.8. Possum control programmes continue to expand following OSPRI withdrawal from additional areas of the region. The annual rook control programme is underway, with aerial surveys completed and treatment of identified rookeries scheduled to commence during the spring breeding season. Preparedness and monitoring activity also continues for emerging threats such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

2.9. Pest plant programmes continue across exclusion, eradication and containment species. Council approved a significant expansion of the Wilding Conifer Control Programme following increased government co-funding through the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme, increasing Horizons' operational programme from approximately $283,000 to $765,000 for 2026-27. Significant activity during the reporting period included wilding conifer control, old man's beard, Darwin's barberry and woolly nightshade programmes.

Land Management

2.10. SLUI remains a significant focus for Council. The programme delivered 2,309 hectares of erosion-control works in 2025-26. Current allocation levels indicate the 2026-27 target is unlikely to be achieved, with 1,216 hectares allocated against an Annual Plan target of 3,540 hectares as at 30 September 2026. During the year Council considered changes to programme delivery and grant rates, and Horizons applied for further government co-funding at a lower level than under the current arrangements with the funding outcome expected by the time this report is considered. Council is also considering future programme settings through the Long-term Plan process.

2.11. Other land management programmes continue to be delivered, including industry partnerships, environmental grant programmes, farm planning and management of the SLUI forestry rights portfolio.

Freshwater and Partnerships

2.12. Council endorsed Horizons' contribution to the next Manawatū River Leaders' Accord Action Plan and approved community access arrangements at the Arawhata Wetland. Construction of the Arawhata Wetland has resumed following weather-related delays, with the Crown funding agreement extended to March 2027. Demand for freshwater programmes remains strong, with fencing and community grant funding largely allocated for 2026-27, while fish passage works are yet to be identified and delivered.

River Management and Flood Protection

2.13. River Management and Flood Protection programmes continue to deliver maintenance, capital and targeted scheme works across the region. The provisional asset revaluation identified approximately 3,969 river and drainage assets with a replacement value of $1.3 billion. Improved asset condition and defect information is providing more information on

the scale of work required across the network to resolve defects and the number of defects planned to be resolved this financial year.

2.14. Council has selected a Moderate Change approach to renewals through the Infrastructure Strategy process, with further work underway to develop future renewals and capital programmes and improve understanding of future renewal requirements to support Council decision-making through the Long-term Plan process.

2.15. Major projects including Te Pūwaha continue to progress, with construction of the South Mole approximately 64% complete and further Council consideration of He Ara Tuku Rau anticipated later in 2026 or early 2027. Additional Council-approved works are also being delivered through the Hōkio, Pohangina-Ōroua, Ruapehu and Makirikiri Schemes.

2.16. Applications for central government co-funding of future flood resilience projects were unsuccessful during the reporting period. While this does not affect the current capital programme, it will influence future decisions regarding project timing, affordability and funding through the Infrastructure Strategy and Long-term Plan processes.

2.17. A revised reporting format has been trialled for selected sections of this report. The revised format places greater emphasis on Annual Plan performance, significant programme activity, emerging issues and governance matters, while reducing duplication and operational detail. The approach has not yet been applied consistently across all sections. Feedback from Councillors and Committee members on the format, structure and usefulness of the report is welcomed and will inform future reporting.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

a. receives the information contained in Report No. 26-188.

b. agrees that, in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, the matters in this report are not significant, and the appropriate level of engagement is: inform.

4. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

4.1. Council Strategic Priorities

- Building resilience to the impacts of climate change
- A holistic approach, from the mountains to the sea (integrated catchment management)
- Strengthening partnerships with tangata whenua

4.2. Council's Community Outcomes



Our region's communities are vibrant and empowered



Our region's ecosystems are healthy



Our region's communities are resilient to the impact of natural hazards and climate change



Our region's economy is thriving and environmentally sustainable

Our region's relationship with iwi and hapū are respectful and mana-enhancing

4.3. The matters in this report align with the following adopted policies, strategies and plans:

- One Plan
- Long-term Plan
- Annual Plan
- Regional Pest Management Plan
- 30 year Infrastructure Strategy
- Totara Reserve Asset Management Plan
- Asset Management Policy

5. SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

5.1. Council's Significance and Engagement Policy is not triggered by matters discussed in this report and the appropriate level of engagement is inform.

6. FINANCIAL IMPACT

6.1. This report includes updates on a range of financial matters associated with delivery of the Catchment Operations work programme, including government co-funded projects, programme delivery, asset management activities and funding arrangements. While the report discusses a number of financial matters, it does not seek any financial decisions. Detailed financial performance and budget reporting are provided separately through Council's regular financial reporting processes and the Audit and Risk Committee.

7. CLIMATE IMPACT

7.1. This report provides updates on a range of activities with differing climate change impacts and implications. These include activities that contribute to climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation and resilience, and activities that generate operational emissions. The report is provided for information and does not seek any decisions relating to climate change.

8. RISK

8.1. Delivery of the Catchment Operations work programme involves a range of financial, health and safety, environmental, operational, reputational and compliance risks. A number of these risks are discussed throughout this report, including matters relating to programme delivery, funding arrangements, asset management, regulatory compliance and delivery of Council-approved projects.

8.2. More detailed consideration of organisational and programme risks is provided through Council's risk management processes, including Infrastructure Strategy and Long-term Plan work, organisational risk reporting, financial reporting, and health and safety and risk reporting to the Audit and Risk Committee.

9. BIODIVERSITY

Programme overview

The biodiversity programme is part of the Biosecurity and Biodiversity activity of the Long-term Plan and has performance measures to:

- Protect priority representative sites of the region's biodiversity – the priority habitats programme.
- Support multi-agency collaborative biodiversity protection projects – the icon sites and targeted rate projects.
- Support communities to manage their own biodiversity improvement projects – the biodiversity contestable fund.
- Inform and support communities to inspire wide scale action to protect the region's biodiversity.
- Manage Tōtara Reserve Regional Park, including the campground – the Tōtara Reserve programme.

These programmes are overviewed in further detail in the following sections.

9.1. During the reporting period the Horizons Biodiversity Programme Operational Plan 2026-27 was written and published on the Horizons Regional Council Biodiversity page.

Annual Plan targets and progress

9.2. There are five Annual Plan targets for the programme, these targets and progress on them are overviewed in Table 2 below.

9.3. In summary all five targets are expected to be achieved by 30 June 2027.

Table 2: Progress against the Biodiversity programme Annual Plan targets for 2026-27.

Levels of service and performance measures	Target	Allocated	Completed or supported	Target achievement status
Protect/enhance priority habitat remnants				
1. At least one representative site of each of the 30 known and priority ecosystem types in the region are found and protected in the priority habitats active management programme.	>96%	96%	96%	On track
2. The number of sites in the priority habitats programme is sustained or increased.	>80	95	95	On track
Support biodiversity protection and improvement projects at identified biodiversity icon sites and specified targeted rate projects				
3. Support Icon and target rate biodiversity projects.	8	8	8	On track
Support communities to manage their own biodiversity improvement projects				
4. Private individuals, organisations and community groups are supported and enabled to improve and protect biodiversity across the region.	>12	29	11	On track
Tōtara Reserve Regional Park				
5. Annual report on the management of Tōtara Reserve Regional Park for biodiversity and recreational values, including managing the camping facility.	Achieved	1		On track

PRIORITY HABITATS

Background

The priority habitats programme is the non-regulatory programme associated with the biodiversity strategy outlined in the One Plan and Te Mana o Te Taiao, New Zealand's National Biodiversity Strategy's (TMOTT) directive that ecosystems and species are protected, with management ensuring biological threats and pressures are reduced, restored, resilient and connected from mountain tops to ocean depths. The programme has been reviewed over time by Council and through the recent Annual Plan Council allocated further funding to this work programme.

Council's goal for this programme is "*to maintain or restore the full range of the region's priority indigenous ecosystems to a healthy and functioning level*". The approach is to manage habitats, rather than individual endangered species. Each indigenous ecosystem type evolved to contain an intricate complexity of biodiversity, the full range of which is hard to catalogue completely, let alone recreate artificially. Finding and protecting remnants of these rare and endangered indigenous ecosystem types was seen as one of the most effective means of sustaining the region's fullest range of indigenous biodiversity.

The selection of sites for the programme is based on the 72 ecosystem types that have been identified in the region, 59 terrestrial and 13 wetlands. Using a prioritisation methodology that considered: the extent of ecosystem type remaining in the region (types that had suffered greatest loss), those not well represented on public conservation land or in neighbouring regions and that could feasibly be protected, 30 ecosystem types were prioritised for protection in Horizons' priority habitats programme.

To deliver on the programme's goal, the work has three components:

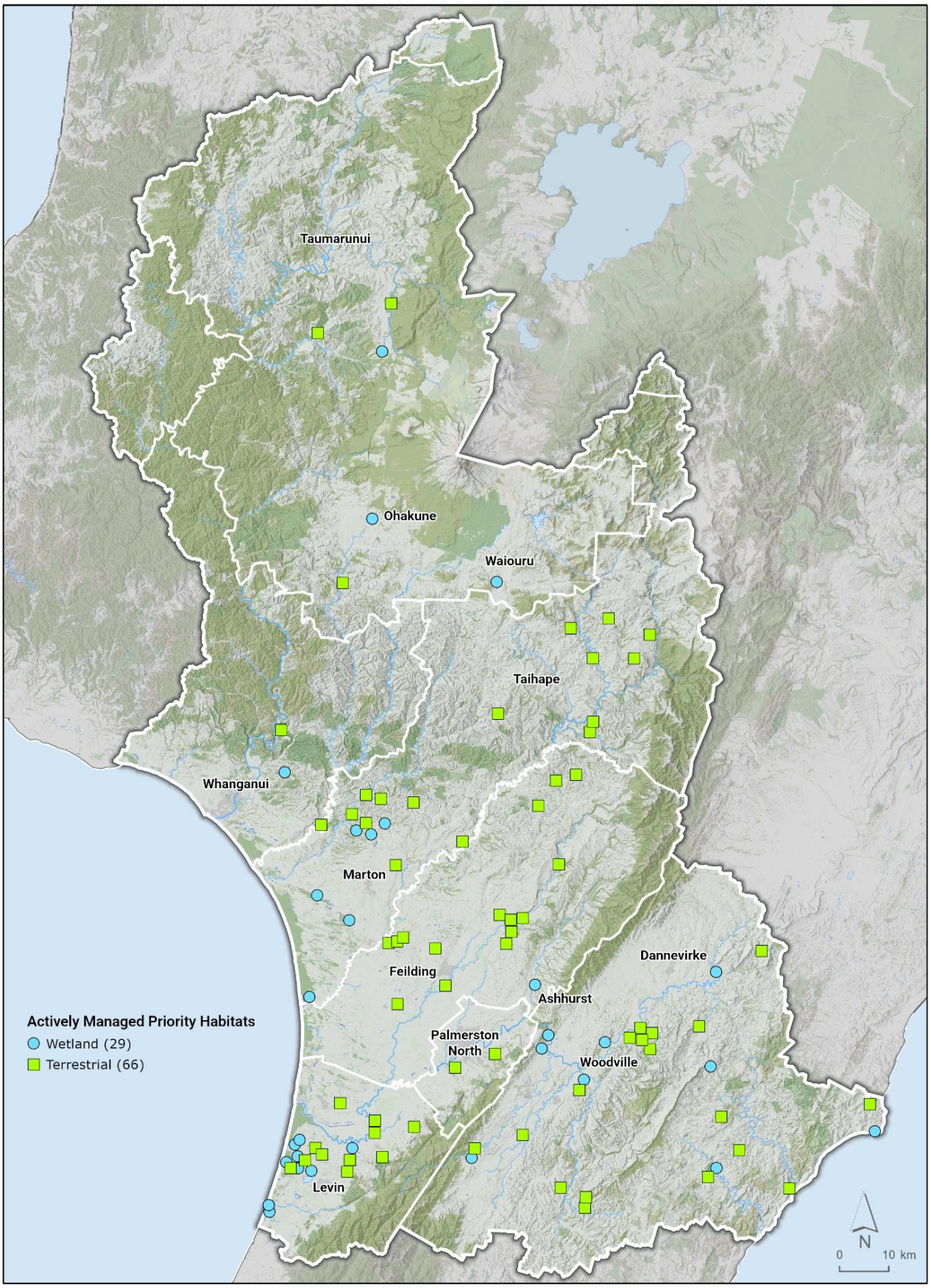
1. Sustaining or increasing the number of sites in the programme to provide protection of at least one representative site of the 30 most threatened ecosystem types prioritised for protection.
2. Active management of key threats to ecosystem health at sites in the programme to align with the pursuit of restoring and maintaining these ecosystems to a healthy and functioning level.
3. Monitoring of sites in the programme to inform management actions and track change over time.

Programme activity

9.4. There were 95 sites counted in the priority habitats programme being actively managed with the priority habitats budget at the start of the 2026-27 year.

9.5. These sites contain representative remnants of 29 of the region's 30 most threatened and rare ecosystem types, which Horizons has identified as priorities for protection. A map showing the distribution of these sites across the region can be found in Map 1.

9.6. Additionally, Tōtara Reserve Regional Park and all six icon sites funded by the other Horizons' biodiversity programmes also contain representative remnants of a number of the 30 priority ecosystem types. Therefore, Horizons is contributing to the ongoing protection of biodiversity at over 102 sites across the region, either directly or through funding support.



Map 1: Location of 95 actively managed Priority Habitat sites across the region in 2026-27.

9.7. The 2026-27 work plan for the managed sites includes 227 management activities (Table 3) across 80 of the 95 sites. Further activities are likely to be scheduled as the year progresses. Details of these activities undertaken during the reporting period can be found in (Table 4).

Table 3: Management activities planned for priority habitats sites during 2026-27.

Activity Type	Scheduled	In progress	Completed	Total
Fencing	7	4	1	**12**
Pest animal control & monitoring	23	18	27	**68**
Pest plant control & monitoring	49	10	5	**63**
Infill planting and plant release	9	9	0	**18**
Species & outcome monitoring	22	5	8	**35**
Rapid ecological assessments	30	1	1	**31**
Total	**140** (62%)	**47** (21%)	**42** (18%)	**227**

9.8. The Environmental Pressure Management Reporting (EPMR) system was developed in 2025–26 by the Horizons' biodiversity team to quantitatively assess management of six environmental pressures at managed sites: ungulate browse, pest plant invasion, possum browse, predation, habitat fragmentation and rabbit/hare browse.

- At the end of each financial year, every site lead assigns a score for each of the six pressures at each of their sites. Scores are broad (0, 25, 50, 75 or 100) and are assigned using prescribed definitions for each, based on the level of pressure present and how well it was managed that year. Site leads use their professional judgement to assess each pressure independently, selecting the score that best matches the condition and management of their site. This scoring provides a consistent assessment without requiring specific quantitative measurements.
- The six pressure scores are combined to provide an overall pressure management score for each site, expressed as a percentage. A pressure management threshold of 55% has been proposed as indicative of adequate management, where ecosystems are likely to be maintained or improve. The priority habitats active management programme aims to progressively increase the number of sites scoring above this threshold.
- Site scores are collated through an internal GIS BioHub dashboard, which presents information in various graph and map forms. Scores can be viewed by individual site or aggregated across the programme by environmental pressure or district to provide a broader view of pressure management. Aggregated scores should be interpreted with caution, as they can mask variation between individual sites.
- The graph in Figure 1 illustrates the individual site scores for 2025-26 and how many of the sites had their environmental pressures managed at or above the threshold.
- While EPMR scores for Tōtara Reserve and the icon sites are also assigned, the graph presented here excludes these to solely focus on priority habitats sites for the purpose of relating pressure management to priority habitat programme funding.
- The EPMR system provides a simple visual snapshot of pressure management across programme sites and enables trends to be tracked over time.

9.9. The capital budget to support the priority habitats programme is being spent on traps, mostly AT220 self-resetting auto-traps.

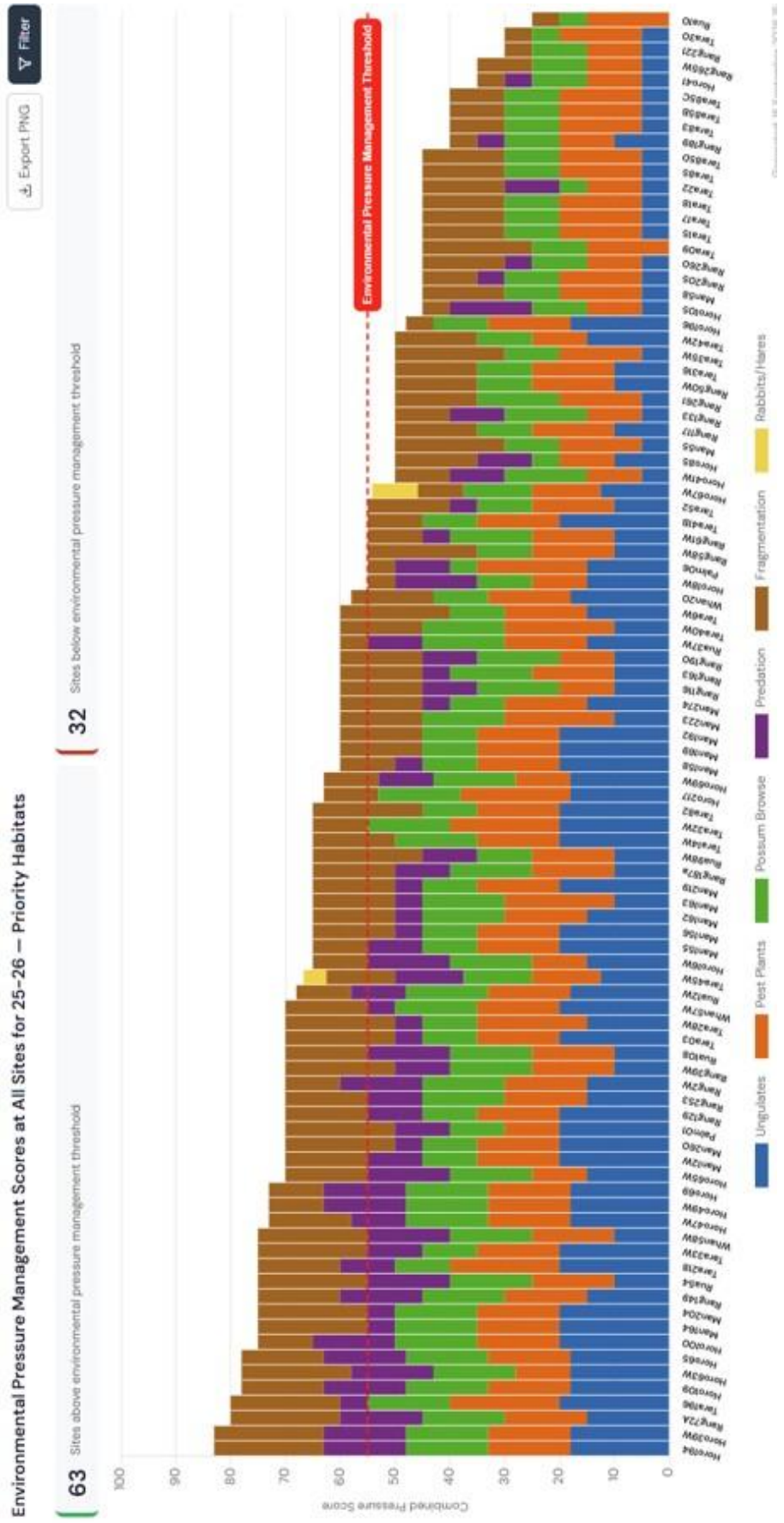


Figure 1: Environmental Pressure Management Reporting system: Graph showing range of Environmental Pressure Management at each site in the programme over 2025-26.

Table 4: Detail of priority habitats programme activity in the first quarter of 2026-27.

Priority habitats site management activities over the reporting period
Work completed over July, August and September included: • Horo16W – Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. Traps were serviced twice: one cat, two rats, seven possums and 40 unspecified rodents were caught in the last three months. A Timms trap was added for additional cat control. • Horo18W – Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. Mudfish monitoring was undertaken but no mudfish were detected. 1,800 plants were planted with iwi around wetland (Figure 3). Traps were serviced twice: one cat, two possums, one weasel and 80 unspecified rodents caught in the last five months. Two Timms traps were added for additional cat control. • Horo39W – Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. Mudfish monitoring was undertaken and were detected. 950 native plants were planted. Traps were serviced twice: three possums, one weasel, one rat and 93 unspecified; from AT220 traps. • Horo41 – Ten Doc200 traps were installed and serviced twice: one rat. REA assessment was undertaken. • Horo41W – Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. Traps were served twice: one hedgehog was caught. Two possums and 11 unspecified rodents were caught by an AT220 self-resetting trap in last five months. Two new AT220 traps were installed. • Horo47W - Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring (Figure 3). Traps were served once: 29 unspecified from AT220 traps. Mudfish fishing was undertaken, none were detected. • Horo49W – Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. An extra AT220 trap and one timms trap were installed. One AT220 trap fixed. Traps serviced once: seven possums, 90 unspecified from AT220 traps. • Horo63W - Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. Traps were served twice: one stoat, one weasel, three ferrets, one hedgehog and 37 unspecified from AT220 traps. • Horo65 – Traps were serviced twice: two hedgehogs. • Horo65W – Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. 650 m of three-wire electric fencing was installed around an unfenced part of the wetland. Infill planting of 150 plants was completed (Figure 2). Traps were serviced three times: one cat, three mice, one stoat, one weasel, two possums and 77 unspecific rodents. • Horo67W – Iwi led weed control day was held. A further day of weed control was undertaken. • Horo69W - A further three Doc200 traps were installed and serviced twice: four rats and three possums. • Horo85 – Traps were serviced twice: one cat, four possums and five rats caught. Deer control was undertaken twice with seven Samba shot. • Horo100 – AT220 self-resetting trap traps were serviced twice: one possum, 65 rodents. • Horo105 – AT220 self-resetting trap was serviced: six possums and 11 unspecified rodents were caught in last five months. • Horo196 – Seven Doc 200 traps were installed and serviced twice: two rats and one weasel. • Man12W – AT220 self-resetting traps were serviced: 28 rats and five possums killed in five months. DOC 250 and Timms traps serviced twice this quarter. • Man55 – The existing perimeter stock fence is to be upgraded to a deer fence. The current fence condition was assessed and an application submitted to the Large Grant Committee which approved the project. Installation scheduled for January 2027. • Man155 – AT220 self-resetting traps were serviced, and three DOC 200 traps checked and serviced monthly: three possums, one hedgehog and 13 rats were caught in this quarter. An audit was also completed of barberry that was controlled in the previous quarter, the chainsaw control had successfully removed all adult plants. • Man156 – AT220 self-resetting trap was checked and serviced: three possums and one rat were caught in two months. • Man158 – Two AT220 self-resetting trap was checked and serviced: two possums, eight rats were caught in two months. • Man219 – Five-yearly Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) was completed (Figure 3). AT220 self-resetting traps were serviced: 39 rats and 14 possums were killed in 12 months. • Man260 – AT220 trap checked: 13 possums and seven rats caught. A second AT220 trap was installed. • Man274 – Two AT220 self-resetting traps were serviced: eight possums and six rats were killed in three months. • Rang2W – Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. Traps checked were three times: one cat, one hedgehog, two rats and three weasels were caught. • Rang39W – Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. Two AT220 self-resetting traps were checked and serviced: three possums and 12 rats/mice were caught in the last quarter. An assessment of current willow abundance was also completed ahead of ongoing summer willow control work. • Rang50W - Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. One AT220 self-resetting trap was installed.

Priority habitats site management activities over the reporting period

- Rang129 – 1250 m of deer fencing was completed! (Figure 3).
- Rang149 - Acoustic recorders were set up for bittern monitoring. A Timms trap for cat control was installed. Five-yearly repeat REA was completed.
- Rang187A – Five AT220 self-resetting traps were serviced: 36 Rats, three possums and one cat were killed in three months.
- Rang253 – Two AT220 self-resetting traps was serviced: 28 Rats and six possums killed in three months.
- Rang260 – Three AT220 self-resetting traps were installed.
- Rua12W – Install of fourth At220 self-resetting trap at site. Three existing AT220s were serviced: 24 rats and two possums were killed in three months.
- Rua37W – Two additional At220 self-resetting traps were installed. Two existing AT220s were serviced: 15 rats and one possum were killed in three months. 207 meters of top-up deer fencing was installed. The landowner planted 250 native plants in the now stock-excluded area. Acoustic recorders for bittern monitoring were set up.
- Rua54 – Two AT220 self-resetting and five Doc200 traps were serviced: 21 rats, one hedgehog and three possums were killed in three months.
- Rua98W – Materials for reticulated system were purchased.
- Tara6W – Five-yearly REA was completed. *Clematis quadribracteolata was* found, last recorded in 2001.
- Tara22 – Materials for deer fence at this new site were paid for, ready for work to start early summer.
- Tara28W – AT220 self-resetting trap was serviced: 21 rats and three possums killed. A second AT220 trap was installed.
- Tara32W – AT220 self-resetting trap was serviced and moved to new location: 21 rats had been killed in the year since install. The first round of broom control for the season was completed.
- Tara33W – AT220 self-resetting traps serviced: 21 rats and four possums were killed. Bait station was filled. First round of weed control for the season was completed.
- Tara52 – AT220 self-resetting trap was serviced: 18 rats and four possums were killed. First round of weed work for the season was completed.
- Tara196 – AT220 self-resetting trap serviced: three rats were cleared from trap but no data as app wouldn't connect. Bait pouch was completely empty.
- Tara218 – AT220 self-resetting trap was serviced: no data as app wouldn't connect but bait pouch empty indicating a lot of activity. A bait station was installed and filled.
- Tara316 – Two AT220 self-resetting traps were installed. First round of weed work for the season was completed. A new colony of *Drymoanthus* epiphytic tree orchids was found (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Priority habitats programme: (Left) Tara316 Drymoanthus orchids, (Right) Horo65W – completed fencing and infill planting.



Figure 3: Priority habitats programme: (Top left) Rang39W acoustic recorders in place for bittern monitoring, (Top right) Rang129 completed deer fence; (Centre) Horo18W planting with Iwi, (Bottom left) Man219 Rapid Ecological Assessment and trap service, (Bottom right) Man155 chainsawed barberry thicket.

BIODIVERSITY: ICON SITES AND TARGETED RATE PROJECTS

Background

The biodiversity partnerships programme has a goal of "*Empowering communities to reconnect with and improve biodiversity*". This aligns with Te Mana o Te Taiao, New Zealand's National Biodiversity Strategy's directive that resourcing and support (related to ecosystem and species protection) enable connected, active guardians of nature and all New Zealanders have the skills, knowledge and capability to be effective.

In the 2026-27 year, this programme includes funding for six icon site projects and two targeted rate projects (Location map can be found in July 2026 report page 64).

Icon sites are larger biodiversity protection projects with multi-agency collaboration that receive Long-term Plan funding along with advice and support from Horizons.

Targeted rate projects are community-driven programmes funded by targeted rates.

Programme activity

9.10. An overview of each of these projects and their activity summaries is provided in the Tables below. They are:

- Bushy Park Tarapuruhi (Table 5).
- Te Āpiti Manawatū (Table 6).
- Kia Whārite Biodiversity project (Table 7).
- Papangaio Te Wharangi Manawatū Estuary (Table 8).
- Pūkaha Mt Bruce (Table 9).
- Southern Ruahine Kiwi (Table 10).
- Rangitīkei Environment Group (Table 11).
- Waitarere Beach project (Table 12).

Table 5: Icon Site Bushy Park Tarapuruhi – Background and activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Project overview	• Bushy Park Tarapuruhi is a predator-proof fenced 89 hectares forest sanctuary and historic homestead just Northwest of Whanganui. The sanctuary supports a number of rare and threatened bird species that have been re-introduced including hihi (stitchbird), tieke (North Island saddleback), toutouwai (North Island robin), popokatea (whitehead) and titipounamu (rifleman). • This forest includes an ecosystem type that is among the thirty rarest and most threatened in the region that Horizons has prioritised for protection. This is the best example of tawa, pukatea, podocarp ecosystem in the country.
Governance	• Bushy Park Tarapuruhi is owned by Forest and Bird with the governance of the sanctuary and homestead jointly overseen by the Bushy Park Trust in partnership with Forest & Bird. • Forest and Bird funds the position of a Forest Sanctuary Manager. • Bushy Park Forest Committee includes representatives from Ngā Rauru, the Bushy Park Trust, Forest and Bird, volunteers, the Department of Conservation (DOC), Horizons and the Forest Sanctuary Manager. The committee meets monthly.
Horizons' role	• Administration of annual funding to Bushy Park Tarapuruhi. • Councillor representation on the Forest Committee. • Provides general ecological advice and support where useful. • Carries out a rapid ecological assessment of the forest every five years to track its ecosystem condition.
Finance	• Horizons provides an annual budget of $52k as a contribution toward the sanctuary's annual biodiversity management that includes fence maintenance, mouse baiting consumables and result monitoring.
Operational update	• Forest sanctuary manager provided workplan for the year and the annual icon site agreement was updated and signed. First instalment of annual grant was paid. • Horizons staff assisted with annual hihi survey.

Table 6: Icon Site Te Āpiti Manawatū – Background and activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Project overview	• Te Āpiti Manawatū project encompasses approximately 2,700 hectares of land including the Scenic Reserves bisected by the Manawatū River. The area has high recreational use from locals and tourists with popular walking tracks, mountain bike trails, parks and river usage. • The project relies on collaboration between the multiple local authorities, DOC, iwi, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency that all have responsibilities and budgets associated with the area and benefit from the economic development that the site brings to the region. • A number of future development projects were identified in a 2022 Masterplan which the governance group works to champion and progress. • The scenic reserve includes ecosystem types that are among the thirty rarest and most threatened in the region that Horizons has prioritised for protection. The wetland in Ferry Reserve is on the Horizons actively managed priority habitat sites.
Governance	• The Te Āpiti ManawatūHok Gorge Governance Group was created in 2016 comprising representatives from key stakeholders; Horizons, DOC, Palmerston North City Council (PNCC), Manawatū District Council (MDC), Tararua District Council (TDC), five iwi and a community representative. This group meets every six months. • The governance group met on 21 August. The next meeting is scheduled for February 2027.
Horizons' role	• Provides councillor representation and chairing of the governance group. • Manages the collaborative project budget and works closely with DOC and contractors to achieve forest health and improved outcomes for biodiversity. Coordinates meetings and reporting for the governance group. • Carries out trap servicing, wasp control and bait station fills and result monitoring in the buffer zones, supported by possum control operations in surrounding the project area. • Assist with marketing, communications and social media presence for the project.
Finance	• Horizons manage an annual budget of $424k on behalf of Te Āpiti Manawatū Project with project partners contributing $81k of this. This funding is primarily used for biodiversity protection works including pest plant and animal control and monitoring in the Southern Scenic Reserve and buffer areas as well as communications and promotion of the project. • Project partners, particularly DOC, also undertake other works that supports the wider Te Āpiti project through their own budgets and work programmes e.g. NZTA have their own budget for pest control in the Northern Scenic Reserve and surrounding private land as part of the offset consent for Te Ahu a Turanga highway.
Operational update	• The Governance Group met on 21 August, preceded by a project group meeting on 31 July. Guided by stakeholder feedback from the June Te Āpiti workshop, members approved a basic review of the Masterplan to be undertaken along with the development of a Masterplan Action Plan to implement it. The governance group also approved a draft Statement of Commitment that was recommended by workshop stakeholders. This was circulated to governance group members for signing and Council has approved Horizons to sign the Statement of Commitment. • The project group met in early September to initiate the Masterplan review. Elements of the Masterplan were confirmed or updated. Programme Leads from DOC, Horizons, PNCC and Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) were allocated to begin collating activities for the Masterplan Action Plan. • DOC-employed Te Āpiti rangers began the first round of bait station fills and trap checks in the Southern Scenic Reserve. All traps across the Te Āpiti project were serviced according to schedule. • Pest plant control contractors completed one third of their planned ground-based control for the third year of their three-year contract. This contract will be re-tendered near the end of the financial year for another two-year period. • Aerial control of wilding pines was completed in steep sections of the gorge by a helicopter contractor. • A hui was held in August between Te Āpiti iwi and Nga Rauru (Bushy Park Tarapuruhi) as part of ongoing tikanga for future toutouwai translocation. • The new Te Āpiti website was launched mid-July. Content will continue to be added to over the year including a page about the governance group.

Table 7: Icon Site Kia Whārite Biodiversity project – Background and activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Project overview	• The Kia Whārite Biodiversity Project is a multi-agency landscape-scale biodiversity protection project spanning over 180,000 hectares that has been running since 2008. It centres on a collaboration between DOC and Horizons and is supported by Ernslaw One Ltd, Iwi, Ngā Whenua Rāhui, QEII Trust and local community groups. • The biodiversity protection work has involved possum, predator and goat control over Public Conservation Land (PCL) managed by DOC and private land managed by Horizons. • Original goals of biodiversity improvement and targets to grow the North Island brown kiwi population by 10% every year and to increase the whio population on the Manganui-o-te-Ao and Rere Tāruke (formerly Retaruke) rivers to 50 pairs. Both targets have been achieved and maintained. • The project area includes ecosystem types that are among the thirty rarest and most threatened in the region that Horizons has prioritised for protection.
Governance	• The project has lacked a formal governance structure. DOC and Horizons are currently building relationships with iwi and key stakeholders with the aim of creating a working group that will ensure collaboration and strategic vision for the project to ensure its continuation.
Horizons' role	• Contributes to the project's goals with the pest plant and possum control operations within the project area. • Administers the Horizons funding for this project and manages the predator trap servicing contracts in Waimarino and Rere Tāruke areas. Provides marketing and promotional support of the project • Works with DOC to coordinate the various organisations and project stakeholders to improve collaboration and project momentum.
Finance	• Horizons manage an annual budget of $169k most of which funds predator trapping services in the Rere Tāruke River and Waimarino Forest sites.
Operational update	• Contracts for 2026-27 are in their second year of a two-year contract. These contracts will be re-tendered near the end of the financial year for another two-year period. • 2,096 DOC200/250 trap services were completed with 565 pest animals killed, including two cats and 36 mustelids. 100 new Doc200 boxes were deployed along the Rere Tāruke River to replace decaying infrastructure (Figure 4). • 10x AT220 self-resetting traps and 10x SA2 traps were installed in Rere Tāruke: three possums and one cat were caught in their first month. • Total whio survey results in 2026 recorded 63 pairs - six more than the Jan 2025 survey. • A hui between HRC, DOC, Ngā Whenua Rāhui and Te Korowai o Wainuiārua was held to discuss operational workplans for the next 12 months and consider the creation of the Kia Whārite Working Group.



Figure 4: Kia Wharite Icon site: Delivery of 100 new Doc200 trap boxes to be deployed in the Rere Tāruke area.

Table 8: Icon Site Papangaio Te Wharangi Manawatū Estuary – Background and activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Project overview	• Papangaio Te Wharangi Manawatū Estuary (PTWME) at Foxton Beach is an area of 558 hectares of high value, internationally recognised biodiversity with Ramsar status. • The Manawatū Estuary area includes ecosystem types that are among the thirty rarest and most threatened in the region that Horizons has prioritised for protection. • The Management Plan initiated seven activity groups overseen by members of MEMT and the community. Dune Protection, Water Quality, Community Engagement, Flora, Pest Plants, Fauna, Pest Animals. Each subgroup is actively implementing their planned actions.
Governance	• The activity in the area is directed by Manawatū Estuary Management Team's (MEMT) Papangaio Te Wharangi Manawatū Estuary Management Plan 2025-2035 (PTWMEMP) and Horowhenua District Council's 2009 Foxton Beach Coastal Reserves Management Plan (currently under review). • The stewardship of this activity is overseen by the MEMT made up of representatives from DOC, Horowhenua District Council (HDC), Horizons, Wildlife Foxton Trust (WFT), the Manawatū Estuary Trust, Foxton Beach Progressive Association Inc, the NZ Four-Wheel Drive Association, Forest and Bird and mana whenua; Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Muaūpoko and Rangitāne o Manawatū.
Horizons' role	• Provides advice, meeting facilitation and funding assistance to the MEMT for pest animal control, weed control and environmental monitoring and education initiatives. • Services 38 predator traps in the Fernbird Flat area.
Finance	• Horizons manage an annual budget of $78k for the project which is primarily used for biodiversity protection works such as pest plant control and traps.
Operational update	• The annual icon site agreement was signed in September by the MEMT chair with the icon site budget mostly planned to support: ongoing pest plant control and planting around Pinewood Road (Figure 5); and, the construction of a plant nursery to grow endangered plants that are not available in nurseries and to build spinifex plant supply. • The wider pest animal trapping network was serviced monthly by community volunteers, in addition to Horizons regional response team's servicing of the Fernbird Flat area. • MEMT met on 18 September with reports received from the seven operational teams and partner agencies. The possibility of a nomination to the Tohu Whenua programme was explored. Actions were being collated on the Manawatū Estuary Trust website. • Wildlife Foxton Trust successfully applied for a three-year DOC grant. This will mostly be spent on: employing part time leads to coordinate the trapping programme, the education programme and administration; surveying Fernbird Flats weed population and undertaking preliminary weed control in areas not covered by the icon site budget. • Horizons supported a Community Environment Day on 26 September, coordinated by Wildlife Foxton Trust, with a weed swap exercise (Figure 5). • MEMT's quarterly newsletter elicited many new volunteers to work in the Estuary. • Fortnightly education and weeding took place on Sundays and Wednesdays. • Other campaign work to protect the dunes and develop the written history and Māori place names was underway.



Figure 5: Manawatū Estuary, Spinifex Planting Day at Foxton and Community Environment Day at Wildlife Foxton Trust.

Table 9: Icon Site Pūkaha Mount Bruce – Background and activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Project overview	• Pūkaha Mount Bruce is a 942 hectares unfenced wildlife sanctuary on public conservation land near Eketāhuna, half in the Greater Wellington Region and half in the Horizons' Region. The sanctuary includes a popular visitor centre, education programmes, retail activities and captive breeding facilities for rare and threatened species including kokako, North Island brown kiwi, takahe, kākā, whio and kākāriki (orange-fronted parakeet). • Pūkaha Forest is a significant remnant of indigenous biodiversity. It includes an ecosystem type that is among the thirty rarest and most threatened in the region that Horizons has prioritised for protection.
Governance	• The sanctuary management is owned and governed by the charitable trust Pūkaha Mount Bruce Board (trading as Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre) that took over the ownership and management of the assets from the National Wildlife Centre Trust, which was disestablished. • The board is made up of up to eight members, including one representative from Rangitāne o Wairarapa and one representative from Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-a-Rua. Both regional councils are active partners supporting the project with funding and staff.
Horizons' role	• Administers the Horizons funding for the project. • Oversees pest plant contractors for old man's beard control in the buffer zone. • Provides technical support and advice to Pūkaha as required. • Services traps in the buffer area around Pūkaha.
Finance	• Horizons manages an annual budget of $95k to support the Pūkaha project. This covers Horizons staff time and contractors for pest plant and pest animal control in the Horizons' Region buffer around Pūkaha, and $42k is provided as a grant to Pūkaha toward their internal biosecurity control activities.
Operational update	• Annual icon site agreement was updated and signed by both parties. The annual work plan was written and accepted and the first half of the Icon site funding was invoiced. • On September 29, biodiversity advisors provided training for Pukaha staff and volunteers on pest plant identification and control techniques. • The Pūkaha Mt Bruce buffer trap network (136 DOC250 traps and 50 timms traps) was checked monthly during this reporting period by Horizons' pest animal team.

Table 10: Icon Site Southern Ruahine Kiwi (SRK) – Background and activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Project overview	• The Southern Ruahine Kiwi (SRK) Project launched in 2022 is a partnership between Environment Network Manawatū's (ENM) Manawatū River Source to Sea Collective and Te Kāuru Eastern Manawatū River Hapū Collective with a vision to reintroduce North Island eastern brown kiwi to the Southern Ruahine Ranges through intensive control of mustelids over 23,000 ha. • Horizons has supported the project with annual grant funding starting in 2024-25 following their successful submission to Council during the Long-term Plan process. • The project area includes ecosystem types that are among the thirty rarest and most threatened in the region that Horizons has prioritised for protection.
Governance	• The SRK Project Trust Board established June 2026 • The SRK Trust Board currently meets every two months.
Horizons' role	• Administering the Annual Plan budget for the project. • Provide technical advice and support for the project and its governance group.
Finance	• Horizons provides $51k annually as a contribution toward Ruahine Kiwi's project costs.
Operational update	• The annual icon site agreement was updated to recognise SRK new charitable trust status. • A work plan outlines actions on a 2026-2034 timeline. Progress is reported against this at each meeting. Goals for 2026-27 include: – Refresh the DOC community access agreement and obtain criteria for initiating kiwi re-introductions. – Activate the SRK Pest Management and Biodiversity Management Plans. – Strengthen collaboration and support across mana whenua, DOC, Save the Kiwi, landowners, community, surrounding predator-control groups, businesses and Council, including funding. – Identify and address project risks and barriers, while maintaining a capable and reliable team working toward a common goal.

Table 11: Targeted rate project Rangitīkei Old Man's Beard – Background and activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Project overview	• The Rangitīkei Old Man's Beard targeted rate project was initiated by the Rangitīkei Environment Group (REG), a community-based non-profit organisation, with support from local landowners that sought financial support from Horizons in 2008 to carry out old man's beard control in the district on behalf of the local community. • This funding was allocated for old man's beard control via a targeted rate mechanism and has gradually increased over the intervening 16 years with adjustments for inflation. • REG prioritises the use of this funding to carry out some control of old man's beard in 13 Rangitīkei public bush reserves. Where they have remaining budget and capacity, REG also does some work in more urban areas and public walkways in response to requests from the public.
Governance	• REG is an independent organisation that employs seven staff with funding from several sources including the Rangitīkei Rivers Catchment Collective and the targeted rate from Horizons. • REG is required to produce an annual report on the work that they achieve with Horizons funding.
Horizons' role	• The biodiversity team establishes an annual agreement with REG and administers their funding as an environmental grant in three instalments, with the final instalment issued upon receipt of the annual report at the end of the financial year.
Finance	• Horizons administer a budget of $107k collected from targeted rates in the Rangitīkei District.
Operational update	• The annual Targeted rate programme agreement was updated and signed in September. • REG provided their work plan which is similar to previous years targeting control of old man's beard in 13 Rangitīkei Reserves. Work is scheduled to begin in October. • A new programme lead for REG has improved GIS marking of work carried out and improved reporting of results.

Table 12: Targeted rate project Waitarere Beach – Background and activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Project overview	• The Waitarere Beach targeted rate project was initiated by the Waitarere Beach Progressive & Ratepayers Association (WBPRA) in 2010 who sought support from Horizons to manage the coastal wattle and other exotics invading the dunes and affecting views and the aesthetic appeal of the beach.
Governance	• The WBPRA advocates on behalf of the residents' concerns. • Horizons' staff collaborate with the WBPRA Chair to establish an annual agreement and work plan to effectively allocate the targeted rate budget to protect both the residents' views and the ecological values of the area.
Horizons' role	• Administering the targeted rate budget. • Maintaining and measuring the planting trial that was initiated in 2023-24. • Overseeing project to revegetate dunes with resilient natives.
Finance	• The targeted rate budget for Waitarere Beach Project is $20k. Used for pest plant control and dune revegetation.
Operational update	• The annual targeted rate programme agreement was updated and signed in September. • The workplan aims to continue the pest plant population reduction. • Small numbers of plants will be added to the native planting area at the southern end of the dunes. • Mulching of coastal wattle successfully trialled last year will be repeated in an additional area this year. • The community received an introduction to pest animal control from Horizons in September and planned to begin a community led trapping programme.

BIODIVERSITY CONTESTABLE FUND

Background

In support of the Biodiversity Partnerships programme goal of "*Empowering communities to reconnect with and improve biodiversity*", Horizons established the Kanorau Koiora Taketake Indigenous Biodiversity Contestable Fund in 2021. This fund provides for community to apply for funding to support their biodiversity protection projects and aligns with Te Mana o te Taiao (TMOTT) directive that resourcing and support (related to ecosystem and species protection) enable connected, active guardians of nature and all New Zealanders have the skills, knowledge and capability to be effective.

The fund is open for applications over a six-week period in April/May each year. Applications must be for grants to support conservation-related activities that have evident community involvement and tangible benefits for indigenous biodiversity. Among a wider list of exclusions, the grant cannot be used to fund wages, commercial or financially profitable activities.

The fund is typically oversubscribed, so applications are assessed for the relative benefits to biodiversity and community involvement that they aspire to achieve. A Councillor panel makes the final allocations, informed by assessment of the projects against the criteria. Biodiversity staff support successful projects to help ensure the funding is used effectively and within the allocated timeframe of one to three years. A report on the 2025-26 projects funded can be found on the Horizons' website.

Over the six years this project has been running 120 different projects have been funded, 34 receiving funding for multiple years. To the end of June 2026 this grant had resulted in 60,860 native plants being planted, 1,759 traps being purchased to catch predators, 1,154 m of fence being installed and over 27,000 volunteer hours being supported, significantly impacting local communities and their environment.

Programme activity

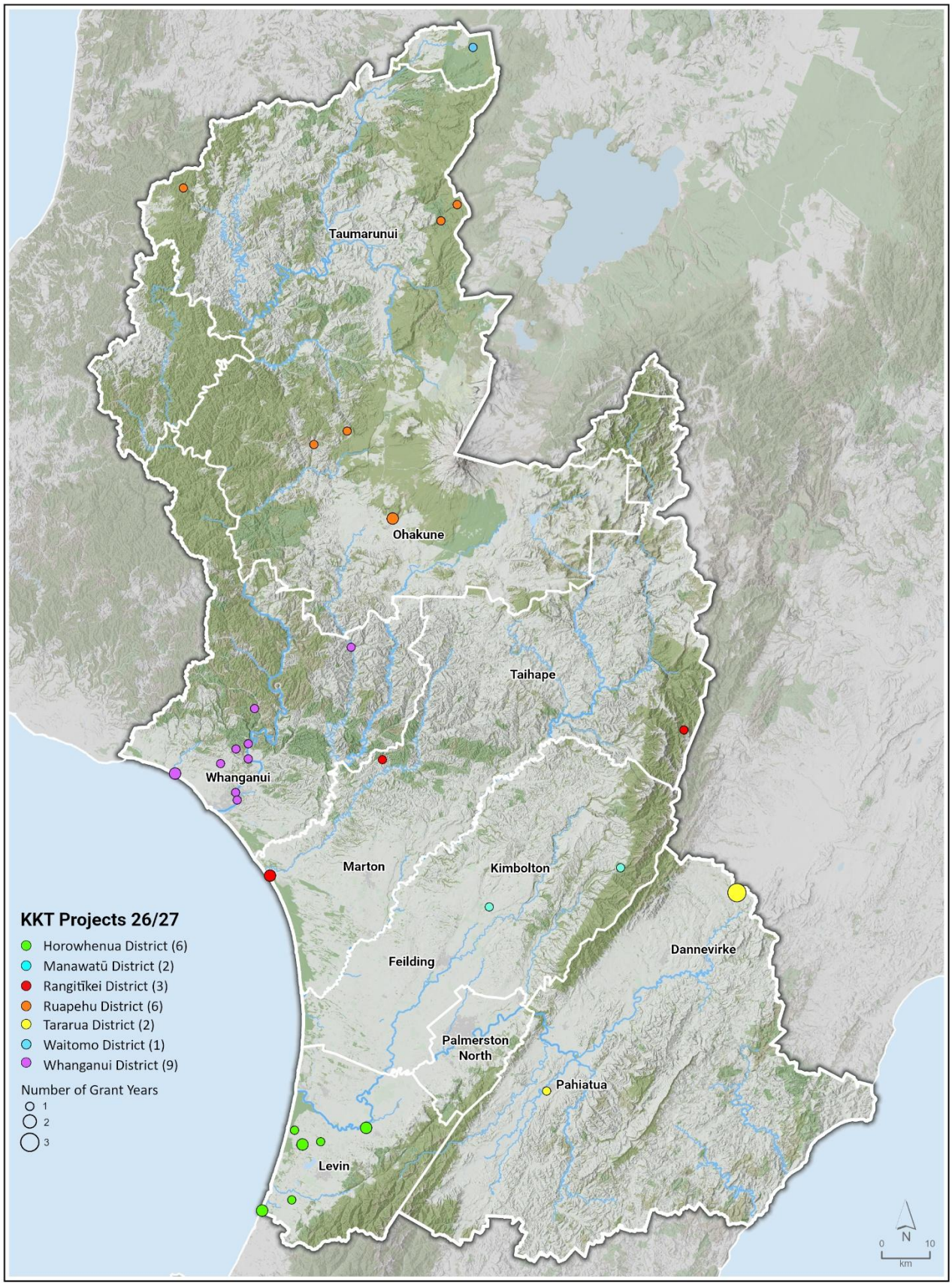
9.11. Twenty-two new projects were successfully granted a total of $314,766 for the 2026-27 year. Seven existing projects continue with their multiyear funding allocated in previous years that totalled $53,896 for a total grant fund of $368,662. The location of these projects can be found in Map 2. Most of these projects are funding animal pest control and planting.

9.12. During the reporting period biodiversity advisors worked with each of the applicants to prepare and sign their funding agreements.

9.13. By the end of the reporting period, four projects had already spent their grants (Table 13). Most of these involved trap purchase for pest animal control. Most of the planting projects will not be undertaken until winter 2027. 'Projects completed' in the table refers to items being purchased and grants claimed. The completed installation and planting of traps purchased, and plants ordered will be reported in the annual report at the end of the financial year.

Table 13: Kanorau Koiora Taketake Indigenous Biodiversity Contestable Fund project activity funded

Project type	Projects funded previous 5 years	Projects funded 2026-27	Projects completed 2026-27
Pest Animal Control	57	12	3
Planting	52	10	0
Pest Plant Control	47	5	0
Fencing	6	0	1
Education	4	1	0
Access management	3	0	0
Research	2	0	0
Bird reintroduction	1	0	0
Habitat Restoration	0	1	0
Total	**172**	**29**	**4**



Map 2: Location and size of projects allocated funding by the Kanorau Koiora Taketake indigenous biodiversity contestable fund for 2026-27.

BIODIVERSITY COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Background

In addition to icon site, targeted rate and contestable fund projects, the biodiversity team provides support to individuals and community groups across the region with advice, education, and advocacy around biodiversity protection to inform and inspire widespread improvements for biodiversity. This work aligns with New Zealand Biodiversity Strategies (TMOTT's) directive that resourcing and support (related to ecosystem and species protection) enable connected, active guardians of nature and all New Zealanders have the skills, knowledge and capability to be effective.

Programme activity

9.14. Recent advice, education and advocacy for biodiversity protection summarised in Table 14.

Table 14: Community support, advice, and education for biodiversity protection during the reporting period.

Biodiversity Community Support activity for the reporting period
• Foxton Futures – Foxton Futures acts as a type of governance for the community and informs and works with HDC. Work is coordinated by activity sub-groups and Horizons' senior biodiversity advisor leads the Environment and Nature group. The other groups include Commercial and Tourism, Infrastructure and Roading, Recreation, Culture and Heritage. These collaborations enable support and avoid duplication. The main group meets monthly and so do each of the activity groups. The Environment and Nature group concentrated on three key programmes: Educational signage around the Foxton wetland, an inanga programme, and exploring how the water quality from stormwater entering Manawatū River can be improved. The inanga programme participants made plans to improve spawning sites and two schools having workshopped inanga protection plan to conduct a citizen science survey of whitebaiters at the end of October.
• Pureora Landscape Collaboration – This project is the exploration of a collaborative landscape-scale conservation initiative across the wider Pureora landscape to identify and connect work programmes between crown entities, local government, community groups and private landowners to protect and enhance the Pureora Forest Park and surrounding area. As part of the discovery phase, a hui was held in Taumarunui during July with community groups, business, and private landowners to identify key values and aspirations they have for Pureoa Forest Park and the surrounding landscape. This hui was one in a series with the same stakeholder types in Waikato with hui for mana whenua/iwi/hapu held prior to this series.
• Ōtauru Stream community planting - In July Horizons biodiversity advisors delivered 500 plants, funded by Mangahao Kayak club, to an area along Ōtauru Stream, Shannon, and assisted Ngati Whakatere, Shannon School and the community to plant them. This work was an extension of Ngāti Whakatere's KKT project from the Te Maire lagoon to Shannon town area. HDC directed the planting programme and will maintain the site.
• Whanganui Region Catchment Collective planting day – Biodiversity advisors helped place 1000 plants in a local wetland that were planted by Owhango and Kaitieke School.
• South Spit Restoration – On 3 September Biodiversity advisors assisted Blueprint Ecology to set up lizard salvage equipment and prepare the translocation site in preparation for the salvage exercise in October before earthworks can begin along the Whanganui River edge as part of the port restoration project. On 9 September the biodiversity and biosecurity plant team advisors met with Te Mata Pūau representatives and Horizons' river management staff to advise on remediation, and restoration works in this area and further along to the South Mole.
• Connecting Conservation e-newsletter – The newsletter was distributed to all KKT applicants past and present plus additional interested parties. The August issue featured stories from Foxton Futures inanga spawning wananga; announcement of the KKT projects awarded funding; the Pikiariki restoration project located in Pureora Forest; and the 18 years of impact achieved by the Kia Whārite Biodiversity Project.
• Whanganui Region Catchment Collective workshop – Biodiversity staff, along with freshwater team staff attended in support of the Enhancing Wetlands workshops provided by Whanganui Regional Catchment Collective (WRCC) to local farmers and landowners in Waimiha and Whanganui.

TŌTARA RESERVE REGIONAL PARK

Background

Tōtara Reserve is Horizons Regional Council's only Regional Park and is in the Pohangina Valley north of Ashhurst (Location map can be found in July 2026 report page 64). The 340 hectares includes ecologically rare habitat remnants, large tracts of indigenous forest, a network of walking tracks, and a campground and picnic spots, all intersected by the Pohangina River and with a rich history of use by local iwi.

The reserve contains a number of rare ecosystem types that are among the thirty rarest and most threatened in the region that Horizons has prioritised for protection.

The management of the reserve was transferred to Horizons in 2012 and shortly after an advisory group was established to oversee and guide management of the reserve. Activity is directed by the Tōtara Reserve Management Plan 2025. Management of Tōtara Reserve involves looking after forest health, campground management, walking track maintenance and community engagement with the park and its unique qualities.

Camp Rangi Woods is managed separately within the Reserve and provides some lease income to the reserve management.

Programme activity

9.15. Activity for Tōtara Reserve Regional Park and its management for the reporting period is overviewed in Table 15. The Tōtara Reserve Regional Park Annual Report 2025-26 that was prepared for the Advisory Group is available on the Horizons website.

9.16. Following damage from Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023, a decision was made to progressively disestablish Kahikatea Campground to reduce the risk of future flood damage. In July this year, around five days after a significant rainfall event, the cliff adjacent to Kahikatea Campground collapsed, blocking the river and jettisoning boulders into the edge of the campground and through the BBQ shelters (Figure 6). In response, the affected area has been planted and the BBQs and shelters are being relocated to Kererū Campground to reduce risk to visitors.

9.17. An increase to camping fees in line with consumer price index inflation was endorsed by the Tōtara Reserve Advisory Board to start from the 2027-28 camping season. Camping income is required to cover at least 30% of the costs associated with campground maintenance. For two people the costs would be: powered site $44.00, non-powered site $25.00, additional campers $8.50 per person.



Figure 6: Tōtara Reserve – cliff collapse and debris in Kahikatea Campground BBQ shelters July 2026.

Table 15: Tōtara Reserve Regional Park Activity for the reporting period.

Area	Comments
Governance	• The Tōtara Reserve Advisory Group membership includes Horizons' Councillors and representatives from iwi, Manawatū District Council, camping community, local residents, Camp Rangi Woods Trust and the Pohangina Catchment Care Group. The advisory group meets every six months. • The Tōtara Reserve Advisory Group met on 11th September 2026. The Advisory Board passed on a big thank you to the operational team, not only for the excellent meeting agenda, information and presentation, but all the work and progress accomplished over the last year at Tōtara Reserve and captured in the 2025-26 Annual Report. • The next advisory group meeting is scheduled for March 2027.
Financial	• Horizons' biodiversity team manages a budget of $712k for Tōtara Reserve Regional Park, which includes approximately $73k contribution from camping income and rental income. About 45% of the budget covers staff time (including for pest control), depreciation, and vehicle recharges. • Besides routine expenses for park management, the following projects and activities were budgeted for this financial year in line with proposed activities from the Tōtara Reserve Management Plan 2025: a new toilet installed at the entrance to the Pettifar Track; Signage in the Fern Walk; relocation of BBQs and shelters to Kererū campground.
Forest health	• 591 bait stations across the reserve were serviced and the trap network was checked monthly by the Horizons regional response team. • A contractor was engaged to periodically cull deer in the reserve, but none were shot during the reporting period. • The pest plant contractors completed control of banana passionfruit and jasmine along roadside corridors. Follow up checks of control completed last year of banana passionfruit and old man's beard showed good efficacy. • A 22 m x 22 m deer excluder plot was established, and traps and tracking tunnels were installed, to monitor regeneration in the absence of deer and rodents. The plot will also be used for educational purposes. • Long tailed pekapeka / bats were detected at Camp Rangi during a student hui. • Staff progressed the development of a Tōtara Reserve Forest Health report and a draft Totora Reserve biodiversity monitoring strategy. This will require peer review before finalising.
Campground	• Pre-season preparation was undertaken ready for the camping season at Tōtara Reserve to start on Thursday 22 October. • Following the significant slip and resulting campground inundation, Kahikatea disestablishment was begun. 400 Native trees were planted in the high rock fall areas, preventing camping close to the slip location. • Planning was underway to construct two new BBQ shelters to house BBQs relocated from Kahikatea campground. The rooves from the old structures will be re-used in the new shelters. • Camp Rangi Woods Trust met at the end of September to discuss signing the new lease document prepared by Horizons.
Tracks	• The task of installing non-slip netting on all track rafts on the Pettifar loop and Fern Walk was completed. • No track maintenance was needed this quarter. Tracks will be checked and cleared before the camping season reopens.
Cultural engagement	• The draft cultural framework continued to be developed in tandem with design development for the Whare.
Community Engagement	• The TRIBE volunteer days were paused through the winter months July to September. Monthly sessions will begin again in October. • A Forgotten Fauna hui was hosted by the Enviroschools staff at Camp Rangi woods with assistance from the biodiversity advisors (Figure 7). Awahou School and Takaro School groups attended the first day and PN Boys High School attended the second. They were introduced to the Tōtara Reserve ngahere, to live (captive) gecko and skinks; detected bats on an acoustic monitor overnight; learned about peripatus and Māori whistle construction. Students were able to make their own bird calls. • The Paererewa Seat project was progressed with designer Carin Wilson engaged to develop a conceptual design. The design team met with Carin at the proposed site close to the Fern Walk entrance. A very exciting design was introduced and discussed. Carin will continue to develop the design. The project group, that includes community members, will extend the ideas to the local community to see if local resources can be sourced for the construction.



Figure 7: Tōtara Reserve (Top) The education hub's new whare and resource room cabinetry; (centre left) Forgotten Fauna hui held at Camp Rangi (Centre right) inspecting banana passionfruit control with the contractor (bottom left) Deer exclosure plot as a monitoring and educational tool (bottom right) planting up part of Kahikatea Campground as part of the staged disestablishment.

10. BIOSECURITY

Background

Horizons has several planning or operational mandates that have regional pest management implications. Key drivers for biosecurity management include protecting the economy and the natural environment and successful biosecurity management is often based on collaborations and partnerships. The planning and statutory background to Horizons biosecurity work is overviewed within Horizons Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP).

In summary, Horizons biosecurity work is via a range of mechanisms driven by the Biosecurity Act (1993), New Zealand's National Biosecurity Strategy (2003), the National Policy Direction (2015), the National Pest Plant Accord (2020) and the Resource Management Act (1991).

Horizons also support other agencies where they lead biosecurity activity, for example the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) who are the lead agency responsible for preventing pests and diseases from entering the country and managing those that are already here.

As a Regional Council, Horizons is responsible under the Biosecurity Act (1993) for providing biosecurity leadership within the Horizons Region. To fulfil this role, we work with mana whenua, communities, central and local government and other key organisations and groups. Horizons biosecurity activity extends beyond the Regional Pest Management Plan and includes non-regulatory collaborations and projects funded via the Long-term Plan and/or Annual Plans.

Horizons established its current RPMP in 2017. This contains 65 species of plants and five species of animals. Horizons actively funds and works on 29 plant species and has established programmes for possum control, rook management and rabbit monitoring. To be established in the RPMP, a species must pass a range of tests within the national legislation including costs and benefits tests and have a funded programme to implement the pest plan objective. As a result, some pests that the community would like managed may not make the pest plan and Council can choose to fund activity another way.

The implementation of the current RPMP is reported alongside the broader biosecurity activity to the Integrated Catchment Committee.

Regional Pest Management Plan Review

10.1. Horizons is required to review its RPMP after 10 years, and Council has approved this review getting underway.

10.2. To recognise that pest management is not solely captured within the RPMP, it has been agreed that Council will develop a strategic approach document in tandem with a review of the RPMP. This document will provide the high-level direction that overarches Horizons regulatory and non-regulatory biosecurity activity. In summary Council may consider the document including:

- The role of Horizons, and others, in biosecurity activity and links to further information.
- Explaining that the RPMP is only one of the tools for biosecurity management.
- The regional vision, strategic goals and actions for biosecurity in the Horizons' Region.
- How the regional Council works with others to operate the regional biosecurity system.
- Describing the regulatory and non-regulatory approaches available.
- Inform readers about how to raise emerging pest management issues with Horizons.

10.3. The review of the RPMP will primarily be reported through to the Strategy and Policy Committee.

Progress through plan forming process

10.4. The plan review has been broken into four phases (Figure 8); it is now in phase three, the proposal development. Phase three builds on the knowledge base, assesses species and approaches, and tests emerging options through targeted engagement. In tandem to the proposal, we will also develop the Biosecurity Strategic Approach and support Council consideration of the RPMP proposal.

10.5. The early-2026 discussion document helped us understand pest management priorities, concerns and possible approaches across the region. This phase brings that feedback together with technical evidence, assessments of benefits and costs (ABCs), legislative requirements and policy development. More specific engagement with iwi and hapū, partners and stakeholders will help build our understanding, identify gaps and test how emerging options could work in practice. It is important to develop a proposal that reflects regional priorities and can be delivered effectively.



Figure 8: Summary of the four phases of the Regional Pest Management Plan review.

Current Activity

10.6. Two experts have been contracted through this reporting period to support staff resourcing levels and provide knowledge and services best provided by externals; peer review, and the field of expertise required.

10.7. Horizons commissioned Land Water People to undertake a first-pass regional screening of vulnerability to marine and estuarine non-indigenous species. The assessment is designed to support regional biosecurity planning and the review of the Regional Pest Management Plan. A regionwide scoping and information gathering process is being undertaken that drew on environmental and spatial information, vessel and activity data, coastal infrastructure distribution, and local operational knowledge. Marine pests are not currently addressed in the RPMP and this study will provide direction on the best interventions if any to be included in the RPMP, the broader Strategic Approach document or other work programmes of Horizons or other more appropriate organisations and groups. The report is expected to be finalized at the end of October with a hui in Whanganui set for 13th November.

10.8. Horizons contracted Lambie Ecology to provide peer review of over 100 technical reports covering plant and animal species; develop and apply a clear method for determining the appropriate level of analysis for each assessment of benefits and costs; and complete

moderate or complex assessments of benefits and costs where Horizons authorises this work. Low-level assessments will be completed internally.

10.9. Engagement with neighbouring regional councils and iwi has begun. Aiming to both share Horizons regions suite of species being considered for assessment and possible addition to management, as well as to seek priority species or programmes where alignment and/or support would provide pan-regional benefit.

10.10. The iwi focused sessions provide introductory information-sharing about the RPMP review and then structure to listen for perspectives and discuss ways for iwi and hapū to contribute to the review and future implementation. Engagement to date highlights the importance of exploring priorities values and areas of agreement or difference on pest management methods.

Next steps and timing

10.11. The immediate phase three work is expected to run from October 2026 to February 2027. This includes both engagement hui and production and external review of species technical reports, determination of the appropriate level of assessment, followed by undertaking the analysis of benefits and costs.

HORIZONS SUPPORT OF NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT

Horizons' biosecurity leadership role requires staff to be involved with other regional Councils and government agencies to prepare for, respond with, or collectively manage pests not currently in our RPMP.

The collective of regional Councils, Ministry for Primary Industries (Biosecurity New Zealand) and DOC have agreed to a 2024 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that provides an overarching framework for the parties to work together on biosecurity matters. It covers readiness, response, transition, and long-term management. The objectives of the MOU are:

1. A collaborative approach to biosecurity readiness and response is delivering tangible benefits for New Zealand and New Zealanders.
2. Relationships and operational issues and opportunities, in planned and reactive work, are addressed in a timely manner including through planning, prioritisation and delivery of joint work plans.
3. Continuous improvement is driven by regular review of work plan outputs to ensure they are having the desired impact, and review and embedding of lessons learned.

Horizons is involved in a number of programmes which are captured by this principles base MOU. A brief overview is provided in the sections below.

Readiness

For pests not yet in New Zealand or not yet established in our region, staff are connected in with government departments, usually Biosecurity New Zealand, Te Ura Kahika (TUK) and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to coordinate preparedness training, connections and planning. Table 16 provides examples of biodiversity readiness activity.

Table 16: Examples of Biosecurity readiness activity.

Biosecurity threat	Comments
Foot and mouth	• A highly contagious disease of cloven-hoofed animals. • Any outbreak creating severe limitations on trade. • Not present in New Zealand. • With a rise in cases in popular tourist destinations occasional readiness exercises are conducted. • Horizons is required to provide staff in a national level response such as foot and mouth. • An exercise in our region was held in mid-November 2025 this involved members of the biosecurity, emergency management and communications teams.
Brown marmorated stink bug	• An insect pest found within many of our trading partners countries. • Devastating impact on horticulture, able to contaminate transport and freight due to its small size. • Individuals are not established in the country. However, individuals have turned up in our region associated with tourism and quickly dealt with given the connections to Biosecurity NZ. • A watching brief is required by staff.
Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)	• Previously known primarily as a seasonal poultry disease, a new strain (H5N1) emerged in 2020 and is now found extensively in wild birds, having spread to all global areas except Oceania, infecting 500+ bird species and 60 mammal species. • HPAI continues to have significant impacts on commercial poultry and wild birds around the world. • There have also been rare human health impacts in some countries and a wide range of animals other than birds have also been impacted. • Regional Councils have a role in coordinating regional responses, amplifying national messaging and consenting disposal of large volumes of infected carcasses. • Local Councils will have a role in protecting public health by removing sick and dead wild birds from public spaces. • Horizons is involved along with the regional sector in a collaborative effort with One Health partners to improve New Zealand's preparedness for a potential incursion of H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). • Horizons is required to resource ongoing meetings, preparedness planning, and stakeholder coordination to ensure messaging and appropriate levels of engagement are consistent across the region. • At the time of writing there have been three positive H5N1 NZ cases discovered in wild birds since mid-July 2026; all in the Wellington region. No detections have been made in commercial poultry.

Responses

Staff have been called up as part of national responses to managing incursions requiring large amounts of sector trained and appropriately qualified and trusted biosecurity staff.

Recent national responses for myrtle rust in 2017 (New Plymouth and Auckland) and prior to that the large Auckland based fruit fly response requiring a number of staff to be deployed acknowledges our role in supporting other regions and the national priorities.

Long-term pest management

Post incursion discovery and subsequent response efforts, occasionally pests are discovered to be well entrenched or of a type that eradication is not feasible. Biosecurity New Zealand will work through a process to transition to long-term management. Though a topic within the MOU, there is no prescribed process. This can create challenges for regions needing to resource pest management often for the protection of other regions. There can also be issues around resourcing through Annual Plans and the lag in considering pests for inclusion in pest plans. Table 17 provides examples of biodiversity long-term pest management activity.

Table 17: Examples of biosecurity long-term pest management activity.

Biosecurity threat	Comments
Sea Spurge	• Sea spurge is an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993 and is considered a serious threat to New Zealand's coastal areas. • First identified in New Zealand in 2012, significant effort was made to eradicate it. • It was discovered in the Horizons Region from 2019 by active community members. • Horizons' staff have proactively worked to survey and control sites alongside MPI, DOC and local community and iwi groups. • Staff now share management of sites with local DOC and iwi groups working to the Aotearoa New Zealand Sea Spurge Management Strategy 2024. • This management strategy is an example of pest management transitioning from an MPI led response aiming for eradication transitioning to a multi-organisation approach recognising the need to manage pests across multiple land tenures.
Velvet leaf	• Velvet leaf is a serious cropping weed that can affect many arable crops. Velvet leaf has been reported as causing up to 70% reduction in crop yields overseas. • Arriving in the country in 2016 through inclusion in pelleted fodder beet seed and planted across dairy and cropping platforms, a large response was carried out nationally to both locate all infected fodder beet paddocks and, if possible, remove all plants. • Discovery and mobilisation were not able to take place prior to seeding events in many areas and with the seed having a longevity of approximately 60 years, many infection zones exist across the country, and small-scale spread has occurred due to product and soil transfer from infected paddocks. • National support for this programme continued for a number of years before fully transitioning to being fully supported by Horizons resources. • Approximately 16 infection zones are present in the Horizons Region and staff make annual contact around paddock cropping decisions and hygiene requirements along with carrying out infield inspections, sometimes with a velvet leaf detector dog team to increase the chances of finding all forms of the plant. • The goals are to extinguish the seedbank through cultivation and early removal of crops to prevent seeding and spread of contaminated soil or material from establishing new infestations.
Didymo and Check Clean Dry (CCD)	• Since 2004 the invasive diatom or algae has been present in the South Island. • Removal from waterways of this along with many freshwater pests is not feasible in the natural environments they invade. • The Check Clean Dry (CCD) behaviour change programme aimed at reinforcing actions able to stop the spread of a range of freshwater pests started in 2005. So far this algae is not present in our region, though a number of freshwater pests are in our lakes and waterways. • Ministry for Primary Industries has been supporting regional Councils with $20,000 annually for freshwater advocate functions. • Since the start of this programme Horizons has run summer or nearly year-long programmes using the MPI and internal resources to fund advocates to engage with waterway users, businesses and community groups around the CCD messaging to protect our waterways and clean equipment between different waterbodies and catchments.

11. BIOSECURITY ANIMALS

Overview

The Biosecurity Animals programme is part of the biosecurity and biodiversity activity of the Long-term Plan and has performance measures to:

- Ensure possum densities are maintained below at threshold in all possum control operations.
- To monitor possum densities.
- To add additional hectare to the programme as OSPRI exit control of the region.
- To treat all known rookeries annually.
- To run an amenity pest control programme.

These projects are overviewed in further detail in the following sections.

Annual Plan targets and progress

11.1. Overall, there are five Annual Plan targets for the programme, these targets and progress on them are overviewed in Table 18 below.

11.2. All targets are considered on track to be achieved by 30 June 2027.

Table 18: Progress against the biosecurity animal's programme Annual Plan targets for 2026-27, 1 July 2026 through to 30 September 2026.

Levels of service and performance measures	Target	Progress update	Target achievement status
6. Possum densities are maintained at/below 10% RTC in all existing and new possum control operations. This is to enhance production, biodiversity, disease protection and amenity values.	<10% RTC	Results from 5 of the planned 40 monitors (Map 4) completed this year range from 0.1% to 2.6% RTC, average 1.4% RTC (+/-0.7%).	On track
7. Monitor possum control densities within the Horizons' possum control programme based on the PCOs that make up the overall possum control area.	>20% of PCOs monitored	3% (5 of 158) PCO monitored (Map 4).	On track
8. All additional hectares released from OSPRI control are included in the PCO programme.	21,079 ha	One of the three new areas is progressing well with bait station setup.	On track
9. All known rookeries are treated annually to reduce crop losses and damage.	95%	Control happens in October and November.	On track
10. Provide an urban/peri-urban animal pest management service to assist ratepayers with specialist advice and equipment. All enquiries responded to within two working days.	100%	170 enquiries have been received, and all were followed up within the agreed time frames.	On track

POSSUMS

Background

The Possum Control Operation (PCO) programme currently, comprises 159 operational areas, and more areas may be added into the programme as OSPRI ceases working in them. Typically, around 90 of these PCOs are worked each year, with about two-thirds worked by the Horizons team and the remainder by contractors. Each PCO is monitored every four to five years using wax tags, with the result converted to a Residual Trap Catch Index (RTC) which is used to measure success and to plan the programme.

The programme was initiated in 2006 and has grown over time as new areas were added to the programme including where OSPRI exited control after declaring areas TB-free.

As the programme has grown over time, the scale of the area to control and diversity of landscape has increased. Further, there are increased areas of land that do not receive control neighbouring the programme. Land use change to forestry has also increased the pressure on the programme, in particular carbon forestry blocks where in some cases farm tracks are no longer maintained making it difficult (or not possible) to service these areas with the traditionally used bait station approach.

Currently each possum control area is treated at least once every two years. The programme uses monitoring information to inform the annual operational plan. Some areas or identified hotspots due to habitat or adjacent land not under management, will receive treatment more than once per year, however the majority receive a single treatment.

Ongoing response to OSPRI exit

The Long-term Plan target of working towards regional coverage of rateable land possum habitat after OSPRI programme withdrawal to hold the possum population under a Residual Trap Catch Index (RTCI) of 10% will require more investment to achieve. Along with this, there is a growing need for adopt aerial control for landcover that is not suited to our bait station network. Aerial control operations would complement neighbouring partner work e.g. the DOC and enable control on land currently rated for possum control but due to topography and landcover, not suitable for control via bait stations.

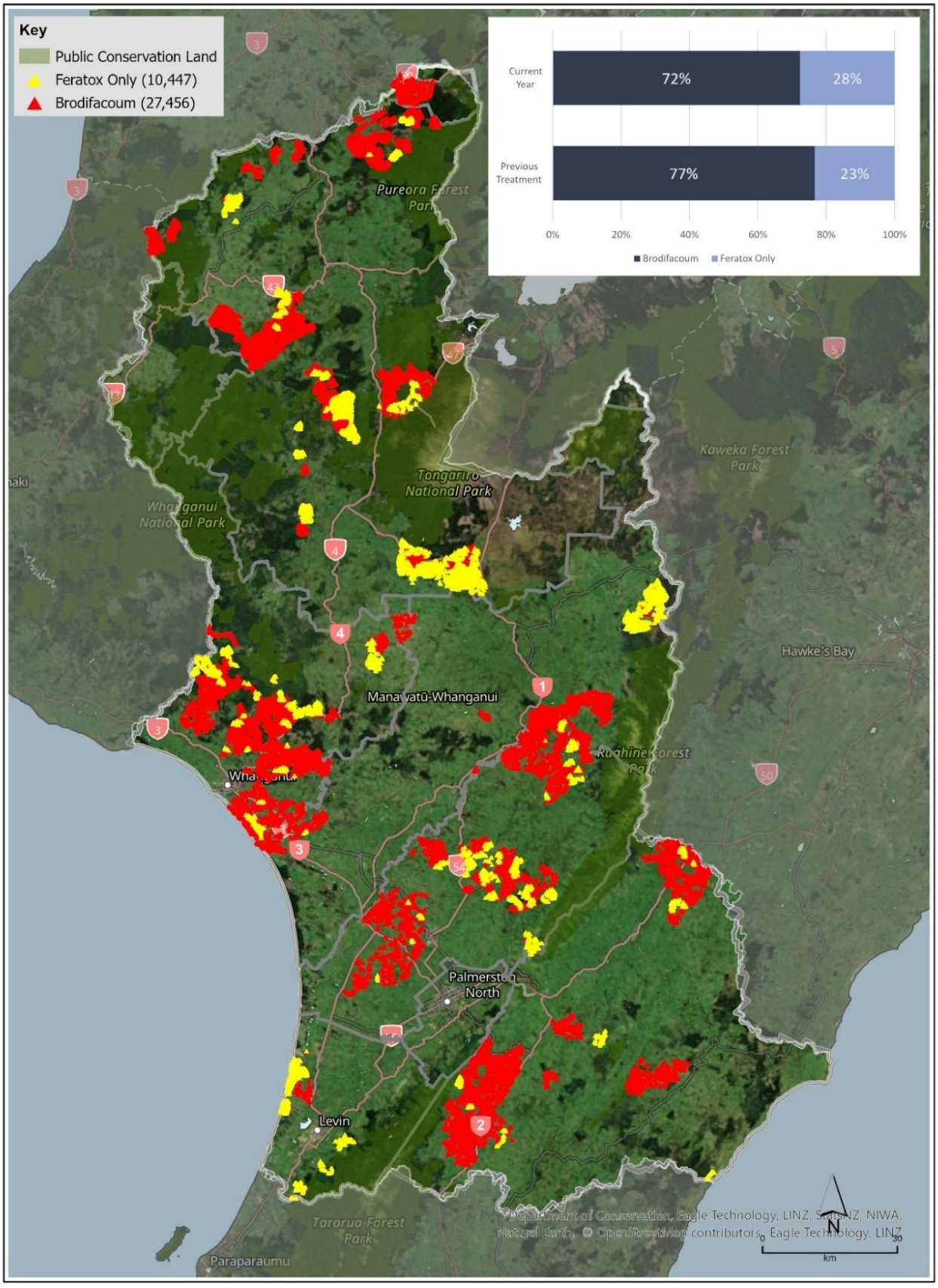
Current estimates of the costs for a fully sized PCO programme with both bait stations and complimentary aerial toxin delivery is estimated to require an increase of $550k (14%) of the current programme.

Programme activity

Progress - 1 July to 30 September 2026

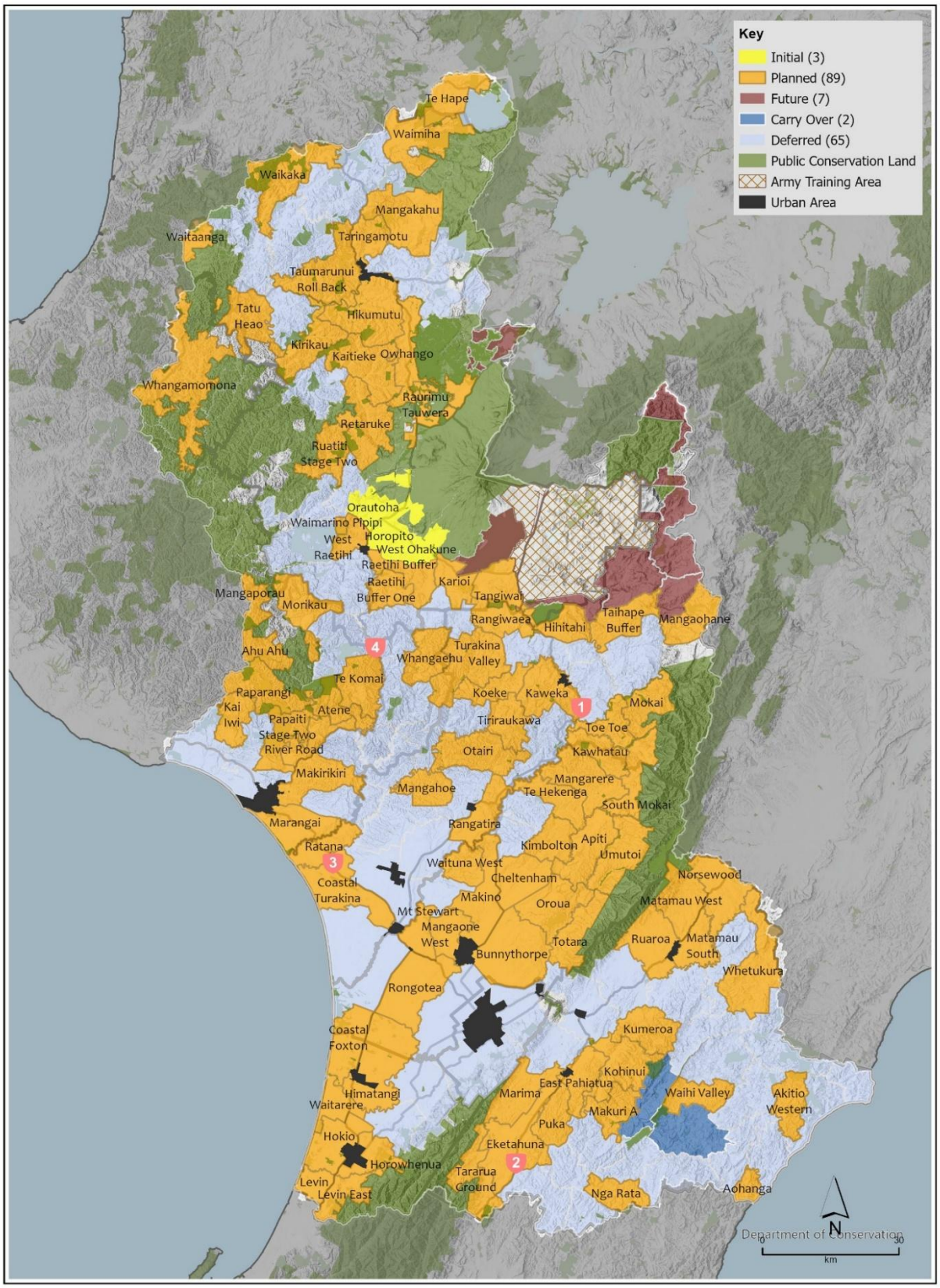
11.3. In 2026-27 the PCO programme:

- Of the 92 operational areas, three PCO will be the new ex-OSPRI areas of Horopito, Orautoha and West Ohakune, bringing the programme to 159 PCOs by the end of June 2027 (Map 4).
- Plan to control possums using an estimated 118,150 bait stations to be refilled or initial setup and filled across an area of 891,830 ha (Map 5).
- As of 30 September 2026: 14% of the planned PCO's (13 of 92) have been completed, being approximately 116,469 ha (13%) of the total planned 891,830 ha. 36,583 (31%) of the planned 118,150 bait stations have been filled.
- There are currently 32 PCOs underway with progress working around farming operations associated with this time of year, including the lambing and docking season.
- Five monitors (13%) of the planned 40 PCOs were undertaken in this period (Map 6). The five monitor results ranged from 0.1% to 2.6% RTC, average 1.4% RTC (+/-0.7%).
- One of the three new PCO is well underway with 2,680 bait stations installed covering approximately 6,900 ha (33%) of the total planned 21,067 hectares (Map 7).
- With increasingly high deer populations across most of our region, occupiers are more commonly offsetting the cost of hunting/culling by selling venison to commercial processing plants. Restrictions relating to carcass harvest from areas within 2km and no less than three years post brodifacoum use in bait stations has resulted in an increase in the number of farms requesting pre-feed and feratox rather than brodifacoum and feratox. Close to 30% of the bait station network does not have brodifacoum used (Map 3).



VTA Use Comparison July 1st - September 30th 2026 Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 15/10/2026

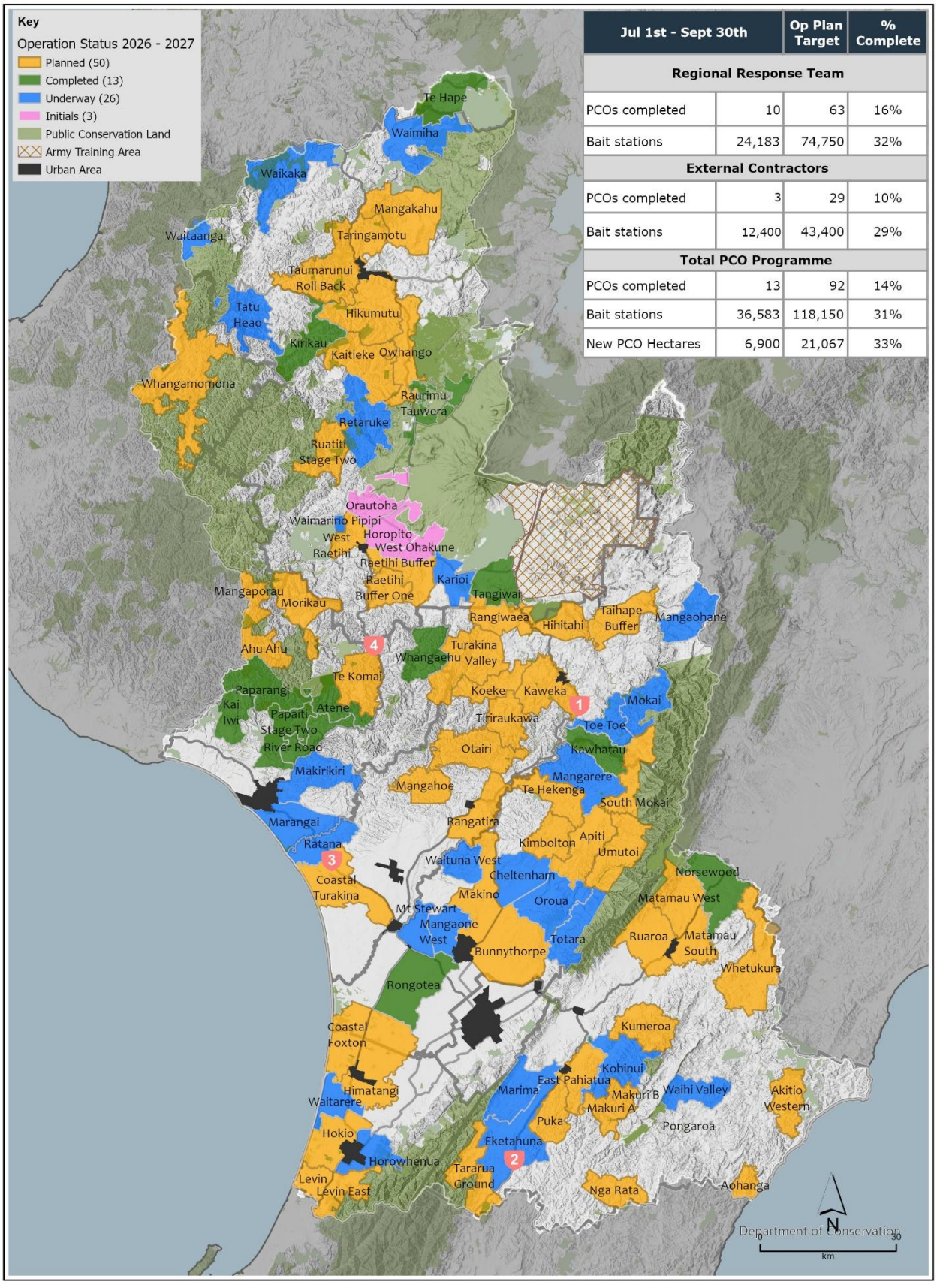
Map 3: Comparison of bait station toxin between the last two years.



Possum Control Operations July 2026 - June 2027

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 9/10/2026

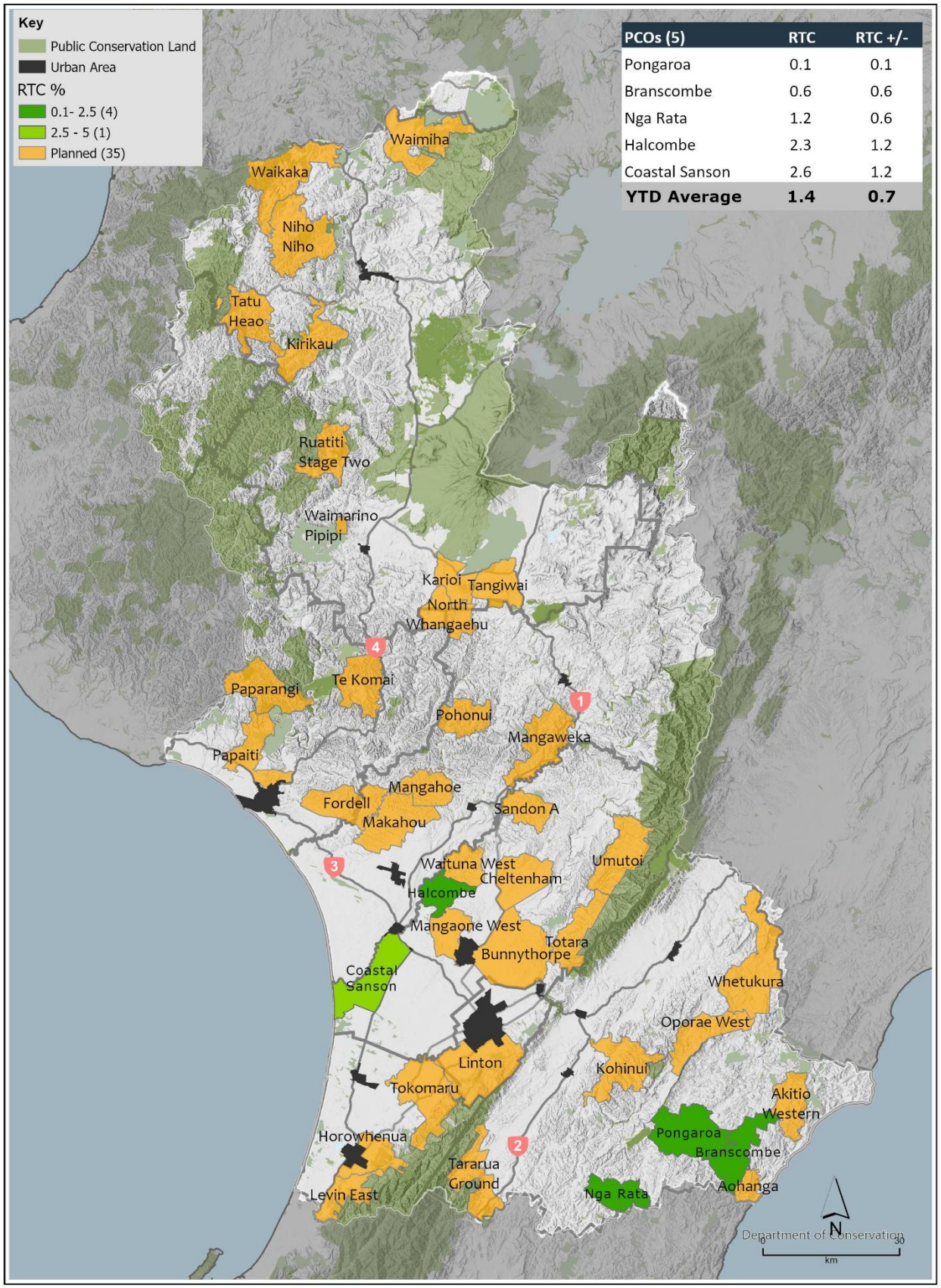
Map 4: Possum control operation programme 2026-2027.



PCO Status July 1st - September 30th 2026

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 9/10/2026

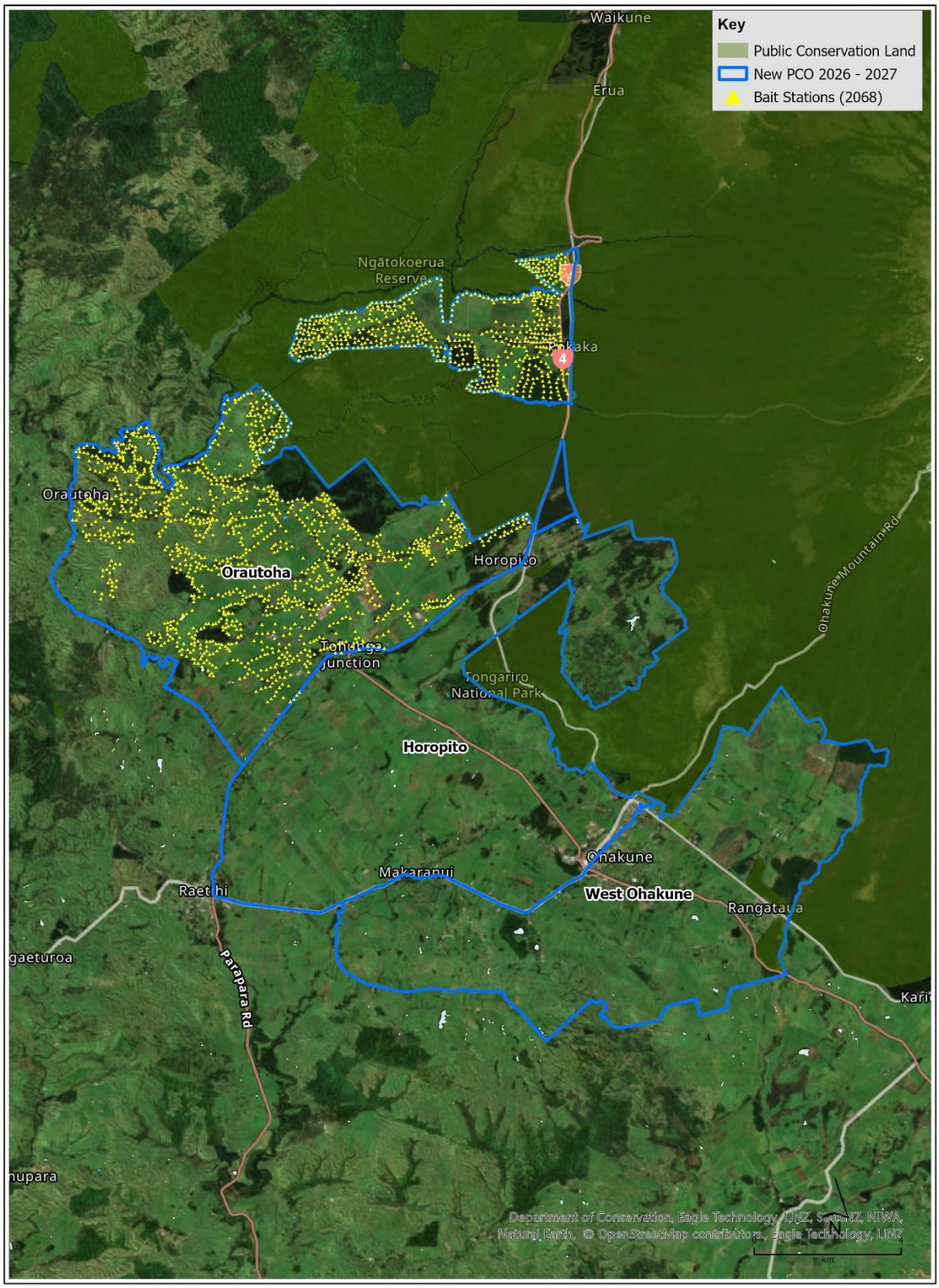
Map 5: Possum control operation status on 30 September 2026.



Monitoring Results July 1st - September 30th 2026

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 9/10/2026

Map 6: Possum control operation monitor results year to date.



New PCO Status July 1st - September 30th 2026

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 12/10/2026

Map 7: New PCO progress Year to Date.

POSSUM CONTROL AND BOVINE TB RISK ACROSS THE KAIMANAWA–KAWEKA BOUNDARY AREA

11.4. A short paper was prepared for the Chairs of Horizons and Hawkes Bay Regional Councils to provide background and a description of the current and planned operations targeting possum control in and around the Kaimanawa-Kaweka Forest Parks. The paper is to be used for engagement with the Minister of Conservation to highlight the ongoing risk to bovine tuberculosis (TB) control programmes; and provided an overview of responsibilities, control coverage and the risk posed by untreated possum populations across the Horizons and Hawke's Bay regions and public conservation land.

Executive overview

11.5. The Kaimanawa–Kaweka ranges from a large, rugged landscape spanning the Horizons and Hawke's Bay regions and substantial areas of public conservation land administered by DOC. Possum management within and around this landscape is delivered for different purposes and by different parties: OSPRI's TBfree programme controls possums to eradicate TB from wildlife to protect both cattle and deer and the international trade associated with them; regional councils manage possums for production and biodiversity outcomes under their regional pest management frameworks; DOC undertakes predator control primarily to protect indigenous species and ecosystems; and landowners carry responsibilities in some programme areas.

11.6. The central management concern is not simply whether possum control occurs somewhere in the wider ranges, but whether control is spatially continuous, sufficiently intensive and sustained for long enough to interrupt TB transmission. OSPRI advises that TB can be expected to disappear from wildlife when possums are reduced to a low and even density—about one possum per 10 hectares—for at least five years. Where untreated or inconsistently treated habitat remains adjacent to controlled land, surviving possum populations may continue to maintain infection and provide a source of reinvasion. The proposition that TB is entrenched in currently uncontrolled parts of the Kaimanawa–Kaweka landscape should therefore be treated as a credible working hypothesis, but one requiring confirmation through geospatial control histories, possum-density monitoring and wildlife TB surveillance. Current and planned operations are shown in Map 8.

Current management setting - OSPRI / TBfree

11.7. OSPRI leads wildlife-vector management for bovine TB. Its programme uses ground control, aerial control where terrain makes ground methods impractical, and surveillance of possums and other wildlife. Work is organised through TB Management Areas and reviewed annually. Control and surveillance boundaries may change as evidence and eradication confidence develop. In September 2026, OSPRI's published national programme included planned or recent aerial work in Hawke's Bay, including Poronui and Waikoau, but the public information reviewed here does not by itself establish complete coverage across the Kaimanawa–Kaweka boundary.

Horizons Regional Council

11.8. Horizons manages possums under its regional biosecurity functions to protect agricultural production, property values and biodiversity. Horizons possum control has its history in maintaining the gains of the former Animal Health Board on TB-related control. Regional control, however, is not necessarily designed to meet OSPRI's disease-eradication specifications or timelines unless programmes are explicitly aligned.

11.9. The Possum Control Operation (PCO) programme currently, comprises 159 operational areas, and more areas may be added into the programme as OSPRI ceases working in them. Typically, around 90 of these PCOs are worked each year with over 965,341 ha of work completed in the 2025-26 year. Approximately two-thirds are worked by the Horizons team and the remainder by contractors. Each PCO is monitored every four to five years using wax tags, with the result converted to a Residual Trap Catch Index (RTC) which is used to measure success and to plan the programme.

11.10. The programme was initiated in 2006 and has grown over time as new areas were added to the programme including where OSPRI exited control after declaring areas TB-free. As the programme has grown over time, the scale of the area to control and diversity of landscape has increased. Further, there are increased areas of land that do not receive control neighbouring the programme. Land use change to forestry has also increased the pressure on the programme, in particular carbon forestry blocks where in some cases farm tracks are no longer maintained making it difficult (or not possible) to service these areas with the traditionally used bait station approach.

11.11. Currently each possum control area is treated at least once every two years. The programme uses monitoring information to inform the annual operational plan. Some areas or identified hotspots due to habitat or adjacent land not under management, will receive treatment more than once per year, however the majority receive a single treatment.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council

11.12. Hawkes Bay Regional Council has a Possum Control Area programme designed to protect biodiversity and primary production values. This programme was initiated in 2000 due to community concerns of Tb spreading across the region. The programme has moved along since then and now has a big emphasis on the biodiversity outcomes achieved and maintaining the investment made by OSPRI in reducing possums down to low levels.

11.13. The region is divided into 128 Possum Control Areas (PCA) covering 772,900ha. Land occupiers within the PCA programme are responsible maintaining possum abundance at or below 4% RTC. Each PCA is monitored for possum densities on a three-year cycle. If a landowner breaches the required threshold of 4% RTC, enforcement action can be undertaken. The monitoring programme measures possum abundance at a property level and currently averages 1.3% across the entire PCA area. OSPRI is currently operating within part of this area due to the Tb outbreak and is managing possums within this area.

11.14. In areas where the PCA programme bounds public conservation land, HBRC have boundary control contracts in place where the landowner contributes $1/ha and HBRC cover the balance. This is to acknowledge the burden of unmanaged land adjacent to these areas. These boundary control contracts cover the majority of the eastern side of the Ruahine Forest Park where it adjoins farmland.

Department of Conservation

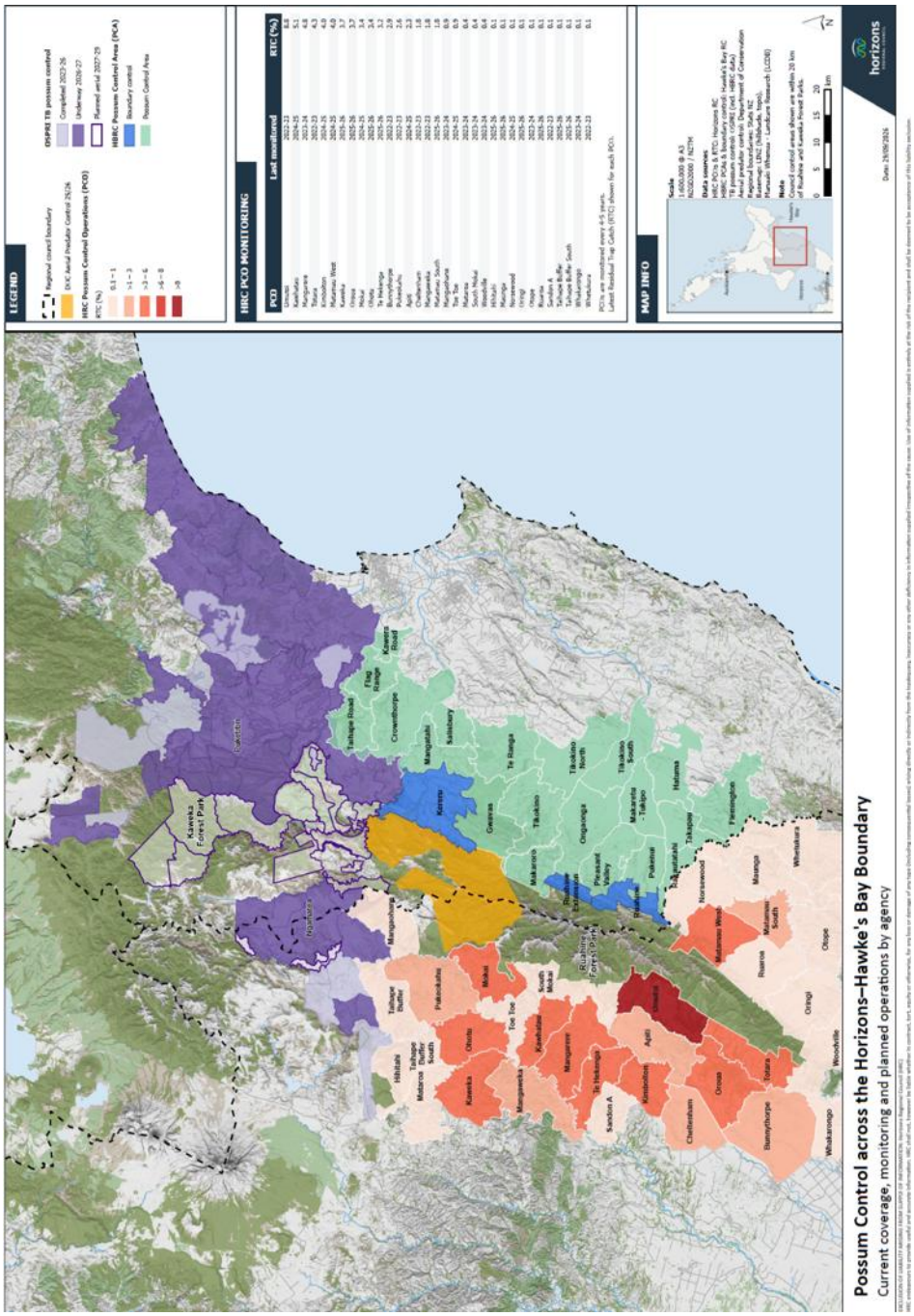
11.15. DOC's predator-control operations on public conservation land are primarily designed to protect native wildlife and forests. Aerial 1080 can suppress possums over large, inaccessible areas and may complement TB control, but biodiversity operations may differ from TBfree work in timing, treatment boundaries, target densities, monitoring and follow-up. A DOC operation should therefore not automatically be counted as equivalent TB-vector control without confirming its specifications and results.

Summary

11.16. OSPRI is actively responding to TB risk and undertaking vector control in parts of Hawke's Bay; Horizons and Hawke's Bay Regional Council have broader possum-management roles; and DOC controls possums where biodiversity priorities justify operations. There are increasing concerns that untreated habitat should be viewed as a potential reservoir and reinvasion source rather than assumed to be low risk. Incomplete coverage within the wider landscape will perpetuate the entrenched TB infected vectors in wildlife; possums and probably ungulates.

Sources consulted

11.17. Staff from the following organisations contributed to this document and map: Horizons Regional Council; OSPRI; Hawke's Bay Regional Council; and DOC.



Map 8: Possum control across the Horizons-Hawkes Bay Boundary.

ROOKS

Background

Rooks are listed as an eradication species in the RPMP 2017-37. Members of the crow family and rooks can cause significant economic damage to farms through localised damage to crops. The RPMP objective for rook control is "*over the duration of the plan (2017-37), eradicate breeding rookeries and progressively contain or reduce rooks, across the region to reduce adverse effects on economic well-being*".

The aims for the programme are:

- Progressive reduction of known active rookeries on rateable land within the region to fewer than 50 active rookeries within the first 10-year period to 2027.
- Reduce breeding rookeries in the region to zero levels by 2037.
- Reduce rooks hatched from rookeries located in the region to zero levels by 2037.

The number of active rookeries fell below the target of 50 during the 2025 season with 31 active rookeries treated compared to 43 the previous year. Also, the number of active nests decreased from 167 to 94.

Rook control has traditionally used a single baiting of nests during the breeding season, following ground surveillance and a surveillance flight to locate active rookeries. Shooting is not part of the programme or recommended as it tends to disperse the population, making it more difficult to manage. Ground control using baiting is also utilised and can be very effective, however it can also be difficult to effectively deliver when there are significant potential food sources available to the birds. In 2020-21 the programme was changed in recognition that rooks can successfully re-nest after an initial nest is disturbed. The programme now completes several flights per year.

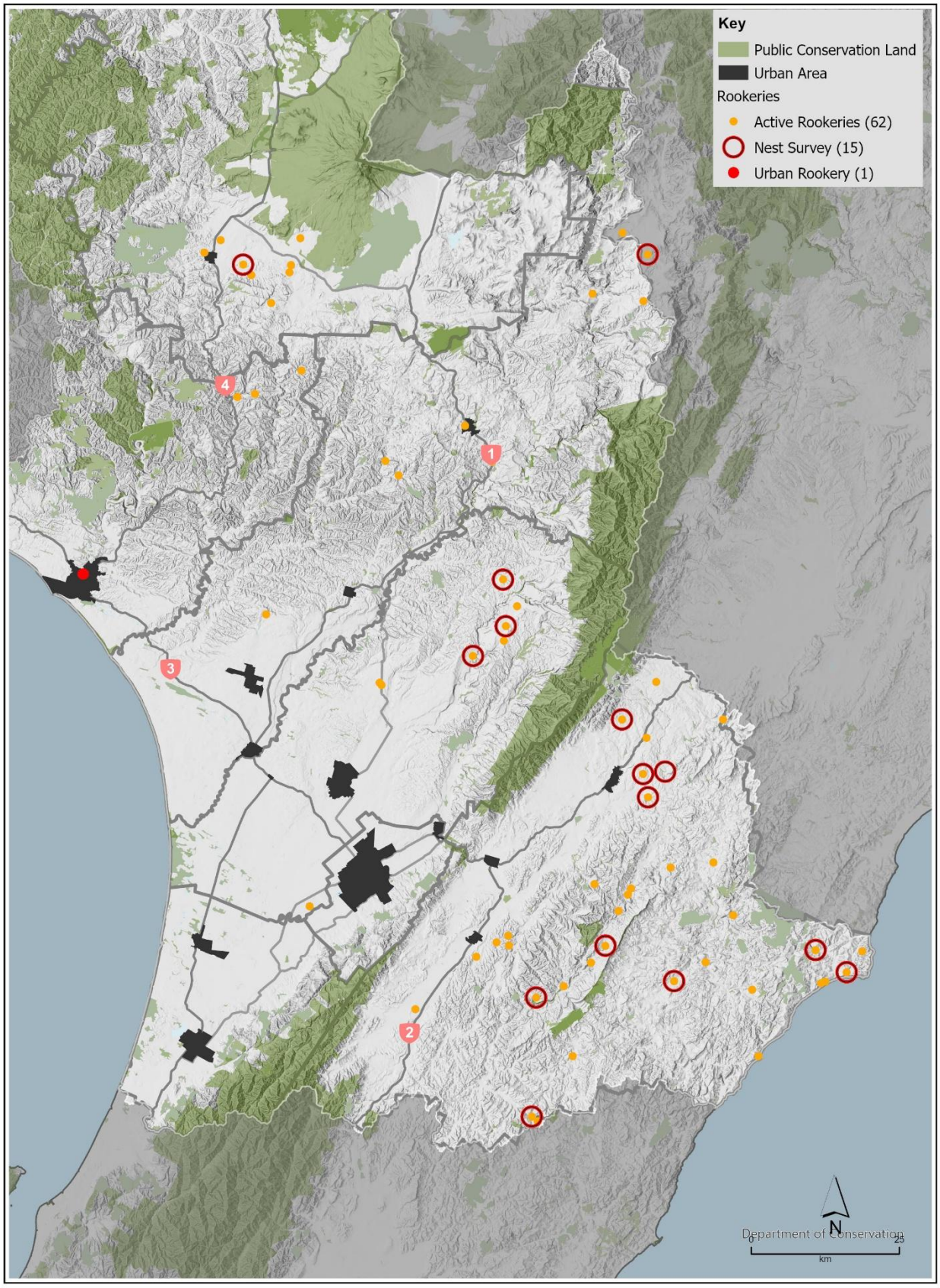
Programme activity

11.19. Advertising in newspapers and social media occurred in early September. A good response was received and as a result eight new rookeries were located. One new rookery is in Whanganui city and due to its location, the team is looking at using a drone to treat. If this is not possible the nest will be destroyed using a professional arborist.

11.20. During September ground assessments were conducted at sites where rookeries have been inactive for two seasons.

11.21. A nest development survey was also carried out in September, 15 rookeries (Map 9) across the region were aerially surveyed. The first aerial treatment is planned to start second week of October with 62 rookeries to flown down from 86 the previous year.

11.22. Results from the control work will be reported at the next meeting.



Map 9: Aerial rook survey September.

AMENITY PEST PROGRAMME

Background

Horizons Amenity Pests Programme fills a niche in the biosecurity programme for responding to animal pest enquiries for species outside the RPMP designated species. It also responds to enquiries about the pest plan species in peri-urban and urban environments, where the major control programmes focus on larger blocks of land (>4 ha).

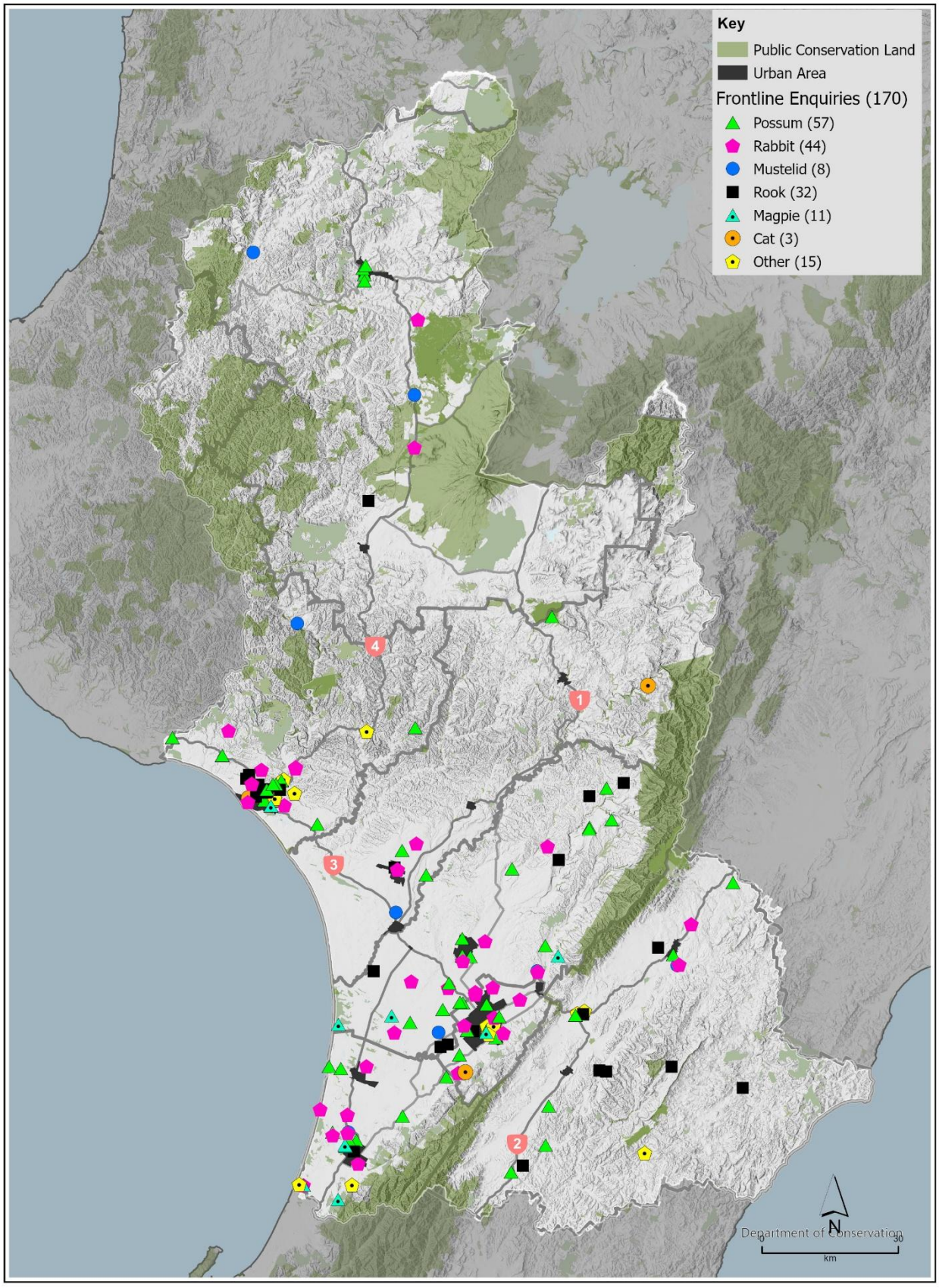
Programme activity

11.23. The amenity pest programme responded to 170 enquiries from 1 July 2026 to 30 September 2026. Of those, the highest number of calls received were about possums (57), followed by rabbits (44) and rooks (32).

11.24. Other species where staff provided advice and solutions included:

- Magpies – loan traps/advice are given and the person reporting deals with the birds from there. Magpies are in full swing of their breeding season at this time of the year and can become quite territorial, swooping at the unexpected adult or child.
- Mustelids – loan traps/advice are given and the person reporting deals with the animal from there.
- Cats - mostly feral or strays. Cage traps are supplied and the person reporting deals with the animal from there.
- Misc – pigeons, goats, feral pigs, deer, rats, mice, pukeko, ducks, and wasps. Ducks and other gamebirds are passed onto Fish and Game.

11.25. All landowners making enquiries were contacted within the prescribed timeframe and provided with advice and, in some cases, equipment such as traps and small amounts of toxins to help them deal with their pest issues. The distribution of enquiries across the region for the year is shown in Map 10.



Amenity Pest Enquiries July 1st to September 30th 2026 Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 9/10/2026

Map 10: Amenity pest enquiry distribution across the region over the period 1 July 2026 to 30 September 2026.

WALLABY SURVEILLANCE

Background

The RPMP has wallabies listed in the "exclusion programme" as they have the potential to cause adverse effects to both productive capacity and environmental values in the region. While wallabies are present in New Zealand, currently there are no known populations established in the region. During the coming year, Horizons Biosecurity personnel will investigate any reported wallaby sightings by inspecting likely habitat in and around the location of the sighting and may also involve using a contractor with an accredited wallaby detection dog. The results of inspections will be reported to MPI. Should any of the inspections subsequently confirm the presence of wallabies, Horizons would work closely with MPI to determine the extent of the population and initiate control work.

Programme activity

11.26. In the year to 30 September 2026, one sighting has been reported to Ministry of Primary Industries 'report wallaby's' website in late September. The sighting on the outskirts of Ohakune has been followed up by our pest animal team and was likely a hare. Noting hares are present on the property.

11.27. The 'Tipu Mātoro Aotearoa New Zealand wallaby strategy' is currently being reviewed. In October, the draft strategy will be considered by the Tipu Mātoro Governance Group. Once agreed, the strategy will be finalised ahead of its expected public release in February 2027.

NON RPMP WORK

Biodiversity Support Animal Pest Control

11.28. Horizons staff have carried out 1,524 trap checks at selected priority habitat and icon sites with the catches over the period from 1 July 2026 to 30 September 2026. The catches are shown in Table 19.

11.29. Tōtara Reserve rat control was last carried out in May the August monitor returned a result of 2% Tracking Tunnel Index (TTI). This is another excellent result with another round of baiting scheduled in October to coincide with nesting season

Table 19: Trapping results at various biodiversity sites in 2026-27 as at 31 September 2026.

Operation	Trap Numbers	Cat	Ferret	Hedgehog	Possum	Rat	Stoat	Weasel	Total
Blake's Bush	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Broadlands	16	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	**1**
Christie's Lake	33	0	0	2	0	11	1	0	**14**
Manawatū Estuary	38	0	0	0	0	5	2	0	**7**
McErlean	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Pukaha Buffer	186	0	2	8	0	49	4	4	**67**
Te Āpiti Buffer South	172	0	0	2	0	17	1	7	**27**
Tōtara Reserve	156	1	0	0	0	6	1	1	**9**
FW Horowhenua Wetland	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Perawitis Wetland	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total	**646**	**1**	**2**	**12**	**0**	**89**	**9**	**12**	**125**

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

Background

The strain (H5N1) emerged in 2020 and is now found extensively around the globe infecting 500+ bird species and 60 mammal species. Not yet present in New Zealand, or the South Pacific HPAI has now been detected in Australia. Regional Councils have a role in coordinating regional responses, amplifying national messaging and managing consenting of disposal of large volumes of infected carcasses. Horizons is involved along with the regional sector in a collaborative effort with One Health partners to improve New Zealand's preparedness for a potential incursion of H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

Local Councils will have a role in protecting public health by removing sick and dead wild birds from some public spaces.

Programme activity

11.30. Horizons is involved along with the regional sector in a collaborative effort with One Health partners to improve New Zealand's preparedness for a potential incursion of H5N1 HPAI.

11.31. The regional team leads meet monthly with MPI and their contractors. There will be an increasing need to provide updates to wider Horizons staff as H5N1 spreads.

11.32. New Zealand has had no further detections of H5 bird flu since 21st August and there have been no detections in poultry.

11.33. In September, Horizons and our local territorial authorities provided feedback to MPI on current status of preparedness, with the possibility of further government funding to help.

11.34. There have been national workshops on the use of onsite composting of birds as opposed to burial. This is being explored as the best option for disposing of large numbers of birds, particularly poultry, based on international experience. The policy team is working on how this could be undertaken in our region under current regulations.

12. BIOSECURITY PLANTS

Overview

The biosecurity plants programme includes activity to implement the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) 2017-37 and other pest plant programmes included in the annual Operational Plan (All Publications - Pest Plants).
The programme is part of the biosecurity and biodiversity activity of the Long-term Plan and has performance measures to:

- Respond to incursions of high-risk pest species.
- Reduce the risk of pest plants spreading from sites Horizons manages within the RPMP programmes.
- Support biocontrol programmes.
- Monitor and reporting on RPMP programmes to meet Biosecurity Act requirements.

The RPMP includes 66 species of pest plants with species in the exclusion, eradication and progressive containment categories. Horizons funds and coordinates pest plant control across the region for 18 species and a further 11 species inside individually managed zones.

Reporting for the biosecurity plants programme is built around the various categories of plants identified in the RPMP.

Annual Plan targets and progress

12.1. The biosecurity plants programme has four Annual Plan targets (Table 20). All four were met last financial year, although the target to increase Horizons-managed sites at zero-level status was only narrowly achieved. Analysis showed that successful surveillance can reduce the reported zero-level result because newly identified sites often contain adult plants. In contrast, sites managed for more than two years typically have low plant abundance and are at, or close to, zero-level status.

12.2. The production of the annual operational plan and monitoring report for the previous years activity is produced prior to November as per Biosecurity Act requirements. The report is available on the Horizons' website.

Table 20: Progress against the biosecurity plants Annual Plan targets for 2026-27, 1 July through 30 September.

Levels of service and performance measures	Target 2026-27	Progress update	Progress status
We prevent establishment of high-risk pest plant species			
10. Response plans are enacted within their specified time frames.	Number of response plans enacted within specified time frames (100%).	None required YTD.	On track
We effectively reduce the risk of pest plants spreading from sites Horizons manages within RPMP programmes			
11. The overall zero-level status of Horizons-managed sites increases on a yearly basis. Please note: 86% is recorded as the baseline in the LTP 2024-34. However, this is an error; the 2022-23 baseline was 79%.	The overall zero-level status of Horizons-managed sites increases on a yearly basis.	Species worked on include blue passionflower, boneseed, cathedral bells, contorta pine, Darwin's barberry, knotweed, old man's beard, Scots pine, and woolly nightshade.	On track
We contribute to the management of widespread pest plant species using natural methods.			
12. Financially support the National Biocontrol Collective Programme and report annually to Council on this programme and Horizons' other biocontrol activity.	Financial support provided and Annual Report delivered to Council.	Financial support to be provided and annual report to be supplied in May 2027.	On track
We monitor our RPMP programmes according to Biosecurity Act requirements.			
13. Submit an annual monitoring report.	Achieved.	Complete.	Achieved. Completed for 25/26; submitted. Website link

REGIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITY

Background

The Horizons RPMP manages pests according to the following pest management designations:

- Exclusion; by preventing establishment, for pests not currently known of in the region but that are in nearby or potentially could arrive through risk pathways.
- Eradication; in the short-to-medium term infestations of the subject are reduced to 'zero-levels'.
- Progressive containment-mapped; rolling back infestations to contain or reduce geographic distribution.

Progressive containment-unmapped; managing externalities, reduces a pest's impact and spread to other properties.

These designations have objectives, aims, principal measures, monitoring of activity and rules to support the aims. The principal measures create programmes of work funded by rates or outworked by occupiers to achieve the objectives and aims. Each subject required its designation and associated programme of works to be tested against Section 74(d) of the Biosecurity Act (1993) which requires, for each subject of the plan, there is likely to be adequate funding for the implementation of the plan for the shorter of its proposed duration and five years.

The Species Management Unit (SMU) reporting which began in 25/26 has been developed to further transparency of progress for planned work for the exclusion, eradication and progressive containment-mapped activity.

The reporting builds on a species management prioritisation exercise undertaken to inform operational planning for Horizons activity in currently managed areas. For each species, the region was divided into management units. Staff used information on absence/presence of the plant, abundance, at-risk habitat and an internally developed prioritisation tool to define the SMUs into the following categories:

- Planned – work will be undertaken this financial year (financial year).
- In progress – work currently happening.
- Completed – work completed for this financial year.
- Deferred – work not planned for this financial year but is in subsequent financial years.
- No planned work – no work planned in this SMU due to funding/resource constraints or RPMP targets being unattainable.

Programme activity

The yearly summary of activity by SMUs is displayed in Table 21 to inform Council of the progress of planned work for species in the exclusion, eradication and progressive containment mapped designations. At year to date, 163 SMUs are planned for this financial year

Table 21: Species Management Units, totals for financial year 2026-27.

SMU Status	Exclusion (11 species)	Eradication (18 species)	Progressive Containment Mapped (11 species)	Total	Percentage of Total
Total SMUs	2	93	96	**191**	**100%**
Planned (26/27)	**2**	**91**	**70**	**163**	**85%**
Not started	2	74	57	**133**	**82%**
In Progress	0	15	11	**26**	**16%**
Completed	**0**	**2**	**2**	**4**	**2%**
Deferred	*0*	*1*	3	**4**	**2% (of 191)**
No Planned Work	0	1	23	**24**	**13% (of 191)**

Species Management Units

12.3. Species Management Units (SMU) package species work programmes Horizons manages into prioritised areas that enable assessment against objectives for current and future reporting. SMUs are defined by:

- Geography - If sites are far away from each other, then we would allocate them to separate SMUs. If the sites are quite close and the outcome of one site is directly influenced by another, they will likely be in the same SMU.
- At risk-habitat - If the species impacts a specific habitat, that habitat would be used to define the SMU. An example of this is the old man's beard SMUs around the Ruahines.
- Knowns/Unknowns - How much is known or unknown about the area? If there is a species that remains with less known about is full potential distribution, this could be determined as a SMU.
- Natural barriers - Using major rivers, mountain ranges, or catchments.
- Landowners - If there are landowners that own large parcels, these may be worked as their own or multiple large parcels may be combined to create an SMU.

12.4. The four deferrals noted in Table 21 are SMUs worked on a biannual basis. They included well managed units of *Pinus contorta*, and one woolly nightshade unit in Horowhenua.

12.5. The 24 'No planned work' management units are not in the current or near-term work plan. These have been excluded because effective management would be achievable only if additional funding or resources were available or, management is not considered feasible due to control being ineffective due to infestation location and/or size, even if additional funding or resources were available.

EXCLUSION PLANTS

Background

Council's goal for the exclusion programme is to search for and prevent the establishment of pests which are present in New Zealand but not yet established in the region.

As part of the current review of the RPMP an evaluation was completed in 2024 to assess the progress towards the targets of the RPMP. The evaluation used a traffic light system to measure the progress of the individual species against pest plan objectives.

There are 11 exclusion species in the RPMP and Horizons supports work on five of these species. A combination of factors including, lack of control tools, pathways well managed by MPI and low risk of spread to the region, have led to the six species not being worked on. Details for each individual species is detailed in Table 22. If they were found in the region, Horizons would respond via completing a response plan and control if feasible. In summary for the exclusion species:

4 of the 11 (36%) were considered on track to achieve the RPMP objectives.

1 of the 11 (9%) is considered possible pending investigation.

6 of the 11 (55%) were considered unlikely to achieve the RPMP objectives.

Table 22: Exclusion species, 2024 evaluation report, 11 species.

Progress on RPMP Objectives	Species
On track to achieve RPMP objectives.	Californian bulrush, Chilean needle grass, Noogoora bur, saffron thistle.
Objectives might not be achieved as stated but may be over a longer term.	Sweet pittosporum.
RPMP objectives unlikely to be achieved within the period based on current trends.	Humped bladderwort, heath rush, Manchurian wild rice, *Phragmites australis*, *Sagittaria platyphylla*, Tussock hawkweed.

Programme activity

12.6. Activity over the reporting period on these species is overviewed in Table 23.

12.7. The primary activity was on phragmites australis.

Table 23: Exclusion programme activity 2026-27.

Species	Exclusion Programme in 2026-27
Species Horizons supports management 1. Californian bulrush 2. Chilean needle grass 3. Noogoora bur 4. Saffron thistle 5. Sagittaria platyphylla 6. Sweet pittosporum	***Phragmites australis*** • In August 2026, an iNaturalist record identified *Phragmites australis* along the Whanganui River at Jerusalem. Staff collected a sample from the site for identification by the Bioeconomy Science Institute. The sample was confirmed as *Arundo donax*, a similar-looking species.
Species Horizons no longer supports 7. Humped bladderwort 8. Heath Rush 9. Manchurian wild rice 10. Phragmites australis 11. Tussock hawkweed	**Humped bladderwort -** No control tools available. **Heath rush -** Difficult to identify, most likely to be discovered on DOC land due to current distribution nationally and associated pathways. **Manchurian wild rice -** Managed by MPI, sites well managed and very low risk of spread to the region. **Phragmites australis -** Managed by MPI, only site nearby is in Hawkes Bay and well managed. Very low risk of spread to the region. **Tussock hawkweed -** Most likely to be discovered on DOC land due to current distribution nationally and associated pathways.

ERADICATION PESTS

Background

Council's goal for the eradication programme is reducing infestation levels of the named pests to zero levels. These pest plants are highly transformative of habitats once established and are mostly at low population levels across the region, which makes them better targets for eradication.

There are 18 eradication species, and Horizons supports work on all of these.

The evaluation to assess the progress towards the targets of the RPMP reported for the eradication species (Table 24):

- 8 of the 18 (44%) were considered on track to achieve the RPMP objectives.
- 6 of the 18 (33%) were considered unlikely to achieve the RPMP objectives but may do in the longer term.
- 4 of the 18 (22%) were considered unlikely to achieve the RPMP objectives.

Table 24: Eradication species 2024 evaluation report, 18 species.

Progress on RPMP Objectives	Species
On track to achieve RPMP objectives.	Alligator weed, arrowhead, Chilean rhubarb, Chinese pennisetum, climbing alstromeria, knotweed, nassella tussock, Queensland poplar and Mexican feather grass.
Objectives might not be achieved at stated but may be over a longer term.	African feather grass, blue passionflower, climbing spindleberry, Himalayan balsam, rum cherry, spartina.
RPMP objectives unlikely to be achieved within the period based on current trends.	Cathedral bells, purple loosestrife, Senegal tea, woolly nightshade.

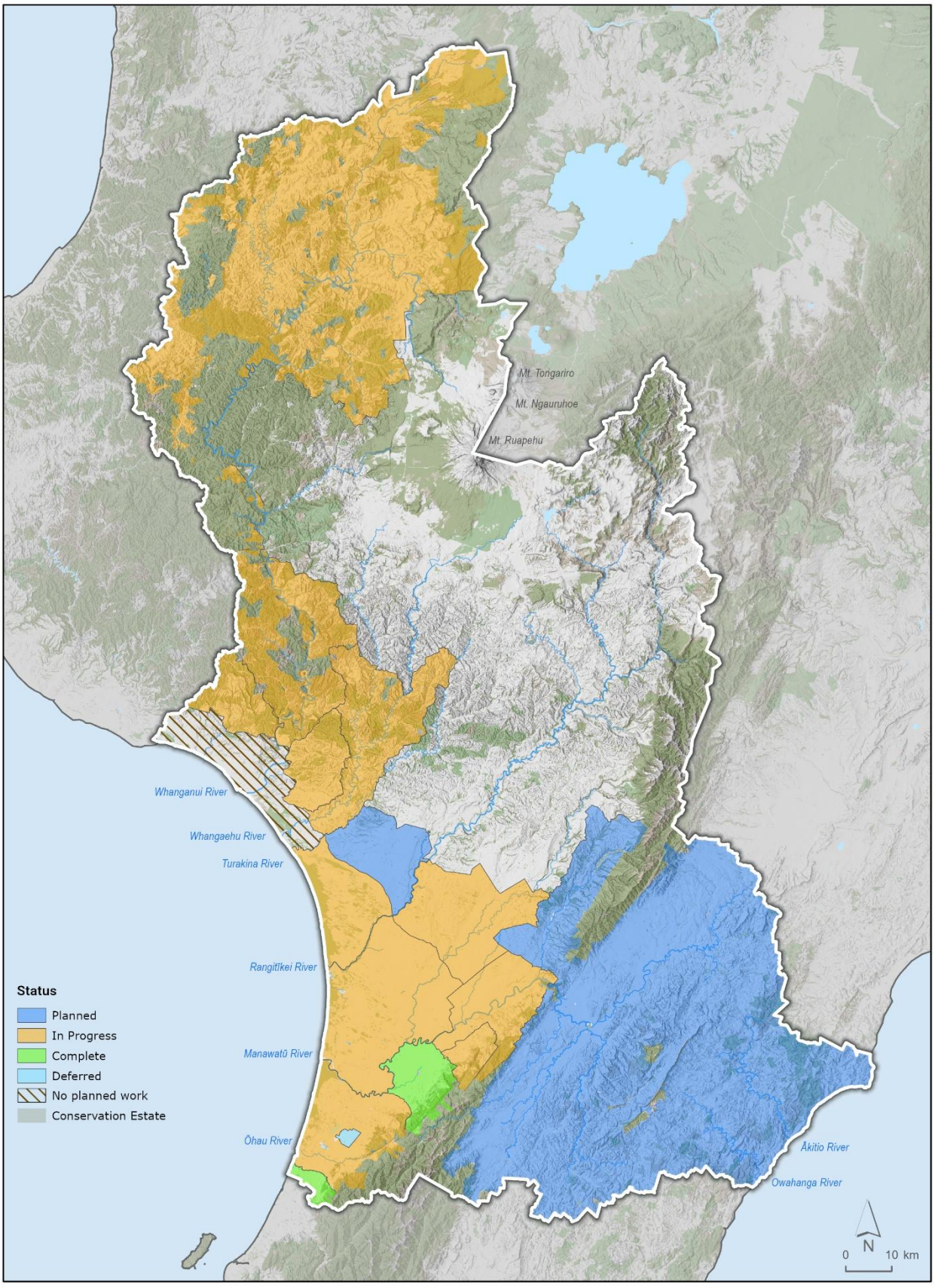
12.8

Programme activity

12.9. Activity over the financial year on these species is overviewed in Table 25. The primary activity was on; blue passionflower, cathedral bells, knotweed and woolly nightshade.

Table 25: Eradication programme activity in 2026-27.

Species	Eradication Programme in 2026-27
12. African feather grass 13. Alligator weed 14. Arrowhead 15. Blue passionflower 16. Cathedral bells 17. Chilean rhubarb 18. Chinese pennisetum 19. Climbing alstromeria 20. Climbing spindleberry 21. Himalayan balsam 22. Knotweed 23. Nassella tussock and Mexican feather grass 24. Purple loosestrife 25. Rum cherry 26. Senegal tea 27. Spartina 28. Queensland poplar 29. Woolly nightshade	**Blue passion flower** • Sites in Tokomaru were controlled, with no adult plants found this season. • This is predominantly an urban weed species, occurring in gardens and green spaces. • Four SMUs are planned for this financial year, with one currently in progress. **Cathedral bells** • A new site was discovered and controlled in Rongotea in July. • Control was completed on 80 adult plants and 322 juvenile plants and seedlings. • Six SMUs are planned for this financial year, with one currently in progress. **Knotweed** • Sites in Ongarue and the southern Ruapehu District were controlled. • All Ongarue sites were clear, while only one small plant was found at the southern Ruapehu site during checks in September. • Three SMUs are planned for this financial year, with two currently in progress. **Woolly nightshade** • Sites were controlled in Horowhenua, Palmerston North, Manawatū, Whanganui and the northern Ruapehu District. • Control is undertaken during winter because woolly nightshade is evergreen, while most other species managed by Horizons are dormant at this time. • Contractors will undertake control at larger sites in Whanganui and Horowhenua. Drone spraying is also planned at Scotts Road, behind Linton, where tall scrub makes plants difficult to locate and ground-based control impractical. • There are 17 SMUs across the region. Work is planned for 15, one is deferred until next year (Levin urban), and one has no planned work because of funding constraints (Whanganui urban and coastal area) (Map 11).



Map 11: Woolly nightshade SMU progress map financial year 2026-27.

PROGRESSIVE CONTAINMENT-MAPPED PESTS

Background

Council's goal for the progressive containment-mapped programme is to contain and then reduce the geographic distribution of the named pest over time. These species were selected for their capacity to significantly transform ecosystems and environmental values. Their distribution, being abundant in some areas and sparse in others, informed the strategic focus on containing their spread and protecting high-value areas where management efforts are most effective.

There are 11 progressive containment-mapped species and Horizons supports work on all of these.

The evaluation to assess the progress towards the targets of the RPMP reported for the progressive containment-mapped species (Table 26):

- 4 of the 11 (36%) were considered on track to achieve the RPMP objectives.
- 4 of the 11 (36%) were considered unlikely to achieve the RPMP objectives but may do in the longer term.
- 3 of the 11 (27%) were considered unlikely to achieve the RPMP objectives.

Table 26: Progressive containment mapped evaluation.

Progress on RPMP Objectives	Species
On track to achieve RPMP objectives.	Grey willow, contorta pine, dwarf mountain pine, mountain pine.
Objectives might not be achieved as stated but may be over a longer term.	Banana passionfruit, Darwin's barberry, moth plant, Scots pine.
RPMP objectives unlikely to be achieved within the period based on current trends.	Boneseed, evergreen buckthorn, old man's beard.

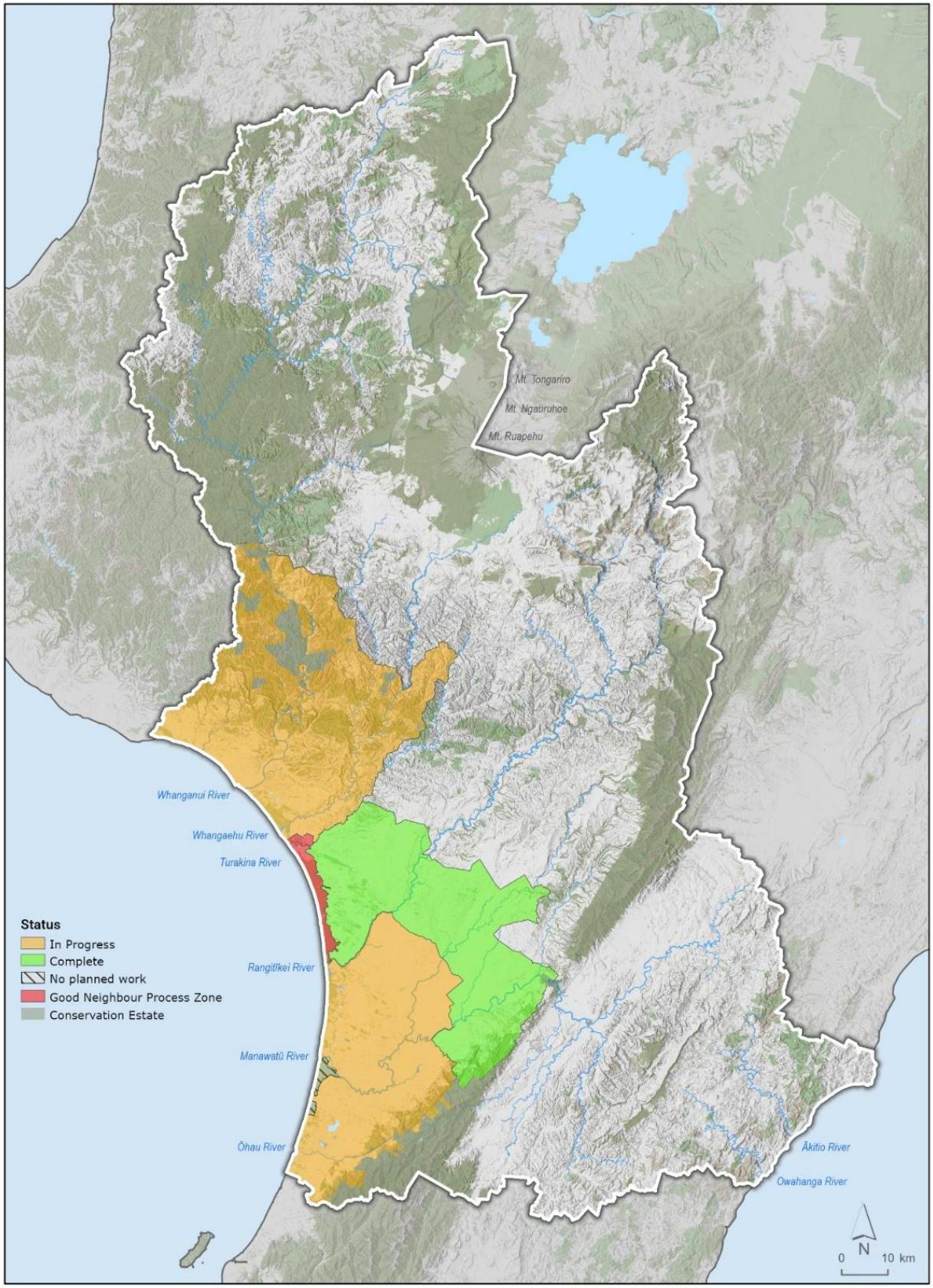
12.10.

Programme activity

12.11. Activity over the reporting period on these species is overviewed in Table 27. The primary activity was on boneseed, contorta pine, Darwin's barberry, old man's beard and Scots pine.

Table 27: Progressive containment-mapped programme in 2026-27.

Species	Progressive Containment-Mapped Programme in 2026-27
30. Banana passionfruit 31. Boneseed 32. Contorta pine 33. Darwin's barberry 34. Dwarf mountain pine 35. Evergreen buckthorn 36. Grey willow 37. Mountain pine 38. Moth plant 39. Old man's beard (OMB) 40. Scot's pine	**Boneseed** • Sites were controlled in Horowhenua, Ashhurst and Whanganui. • New sites have been identified in urban areas, including Foxton and Himatangi Beaches. In many cases, plants only become visible when growth extends above fences in urban areas. • Three SMUs have planned work this financial year: two are in progress and one is complete. One additional SMU has no planned work because of funding constraints (Map 12). **Darwin's barberry** • Sites were controlled in the Tararua and Ruapehu Districts. • Staff have observed that not all adult plants flower every year. Increased vigilance is therefore required to identify larger non-flowering plants growing within scrub. • Contractors controlled a large site near Raetihi where numerous adult plants were found. • A delimiting survey is planned for October in the Ruatiti area following reports of Darwin's barberry. • Eight SMUs have planned work this season: two have not started, five are in progress and one is complete. A further six SMUs have no planned work because of funding constraints. **Old man's beard** • Sites were controlled in the Ruapehu District. • Funding has been secured from DOC for the Ruahine Joint Project, which is entering its fourth year. • Procurement is underway for helicopter services for the project, and contracts have been signed for ground control to begin in December.



Boneseed October 2026

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 8/10/2026

Map 12: Boneseed SMU progress map financial year 2026-27.

PROGRESSIVE CONTAINMENT-UNMAPPED

Background

Council's goal for the progressive containment-unmapped programme is a mix of sustained control and preventing establishment in new areas to reduce species' impact and spread to clear properties. There are 15 progressive containment-unmapped species, and Horizons' activity on these species includes reactive work to respond to good neighbour rule enquiries/complaints and proactive work through the use of Approved Management Plans (AMP). These species are generally widespread across the region but have high public support for Council providing assistance to landowners to protect land that is clear or being kept cleared of these pests. The species in this category, and results for the 2024-25 year, are overviewed in Table 28.

The RPMP requires that Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs), roading authorities, and KiwiRail enter into AMPs under rules 5.8.2, 5.12.4, and 5.14.3, in respect of certain eradication and progressive containment pests. All of those rules require that pests be managed "*in accordance with*" the relevant AMP.

The RPMP also requires a report provided to Horizons on the outcome of the plan by 31 July for the previous calendar year (or within a time period as negotiated with an Authorised Person).

AMPs are produced early in the new financial year, with some including the required report of the previous years work along with the years action plan by species and locations to be addressed.

Programme activity

12.12. The progressive containment un-mapped species are managed by good neighbour and clear land rules. The rules require landowners to keep their boundary clear of these species to prevent them from impacting neighbouring properties clear or being kept clear, and in the case of clear land rules, control the entire infestation on a property if it is below a threshold infestation size, with the goal to prevent establishment or an intractable infestation.

12.13. Staff respond to complaints or notifications when received in the field or via Horizons request for service systems. Activity over the reporting period is shown in Table 28.

Table 28: Progressive containment-unmapped programme in 2026-27.

Species	Progressive Containment-Unmapped Programme in 2026-27
41. Australian sedge 42. Blackberry 43. Broom species (exotic) 44. Eelgrass 45. Egeria 46. Field horsetail 47. Gorse 48. Hornwort 49. Lagarosiphon 50. Nodding thistle 51. Reed sweet grass 52. Tutsan 53. Variegated thistle 54. Yellow bristlegrass 55. Yellow ragwort	There have been a no good neighbour rule responses over the period 1 July to 30 September.

Description	Reporting Period 1	2	3	4	2026-27 Year to Date Totals
Boundary complaints received and actioned outside of compliance.	0	0	0	0	0
Required to clear (RTCs) issued.	0	0	0	0	0
Notices of direction (NODs) issued.	0	0	0	0	0
Notices resolved in this period.	0	0	0	0	0
Notices resolved Year to Date	0	0	0	0	0

12.14. All rail, roading and territorial local authorities are required to submit a management plan for each financial year, as well as a report for the previous year's activity by end of July. The current status of each organisations plan and report is shown in Table 29.

12.15. Further information has been requested from Palmerston North City, Manawatū and Tararua District Councils and the New Zealand Transport Agency to fully capture their planned work for 2026–27 and confirm that it meets approved management plan obligations.

Table 29: Approved Management Plan status in the 2026-27 year as at 30 September

Crown Agency/TLA	2025-26 AMP report	2026-27 Plan	Further information required?
Horowhenua District Council	Received	Received	No
Tararua District Council	Received	Received	Yes
Palmerston North City Council	Received	Not received	Yes
Manawatū District Council	Received	Received from Parks not roading	Yes
Rangitīkei District Council	Received	Received	No
Whanganui District Council	Received	Received	No
Ruapehu District Council	Received	Received	No
New Zealand Transport Agency	Received	Received	Yes
Kiwirail	Received	Received	No

BIOCONTROL

12.16. The biological control programme aims to assist the development of insects and diseases to control a wide range of pest plants by restoring balance and suppression rather than total removal. We do this by releasing, distributing and monitoring the establishment and impact of those agents within the region. Work involving the targets in this category through the 2026-27 year is overviewed in Table 30.

12.17. The National Biocontrol Collective (NBC) is the group of regional councils, unitary authorities, and DOC which agrees to fund weed biocontrol research and bioagent solutions. All members contribute funding to the programs that are undertaken by Bioeconomy Science Institute (BSI) on behalf of the Collective. Horizons contribute $30k and is the lead agency in the NBC for the Sydney golden wattle and old man's beard programmes.

Old man's beard

12.18. A significant biocontrol project has been underway since 2020, involving the release of two agents for old man's beard: the gall mite and the sawfly. These agents were first released in the region in 2020 and 2023, respectively. The locations where the old man's beard gall mite and sawfly have been released is shown in Map 13. The gall mite has spread rapidly because of its high reproductive rate and wind dispersal. All monitoring sites, shown in blue, have indicated the presence of gall mites. Sawflies disperse more slowly, and releases will continue this financial year, with four scheduled for early next year in Palmerston North and Whanganui.

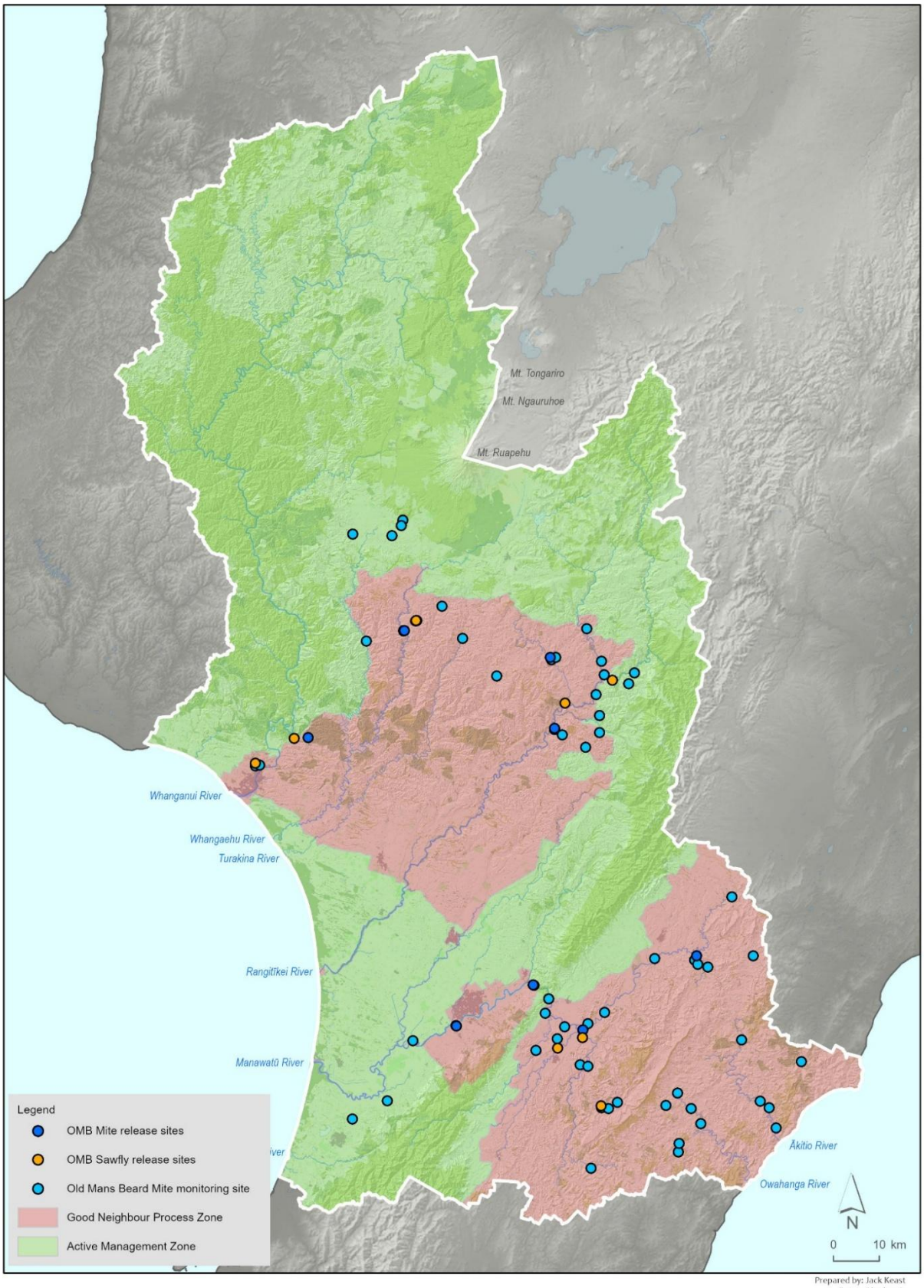
12.19. Releases have focused on good neighbour zones where old man's beard is entrenched, and Horizons does not undertake active management. In most areas of the active management zone, Horizons continues to control infestations using traditional methods as infestation levels are relatively manageable.

Table 30: Summary of the biological control programme in 2026-27.

Species	Biological Control Programme in 2026-27
Horizons projects 1. Broom gall mite 2. Purple loosestrife agents 3. Sydney golden wattle gall wasp **NBC Projects** 4. Old man's beard gall mite 5. Old man's beard sawfly 6. Sydney golden wattle 7. Green thistle beetle 8. Ragwort plume moth 9. *Tradescantia* leaf spot fungus 10. *Tradescantia* beetles 11. Broom gall mite 12. Darwin's barberry rust 13. Chilean flame creeper beetle 14. Yellow flag iris flea beetle	**Purple loosestrife agents** • Staff completed two root weevil releases at Kohuturoa Marae in September, following the initial release in April this year. • Because the root weevils are breeding prolifically in the laboratory, releases are scheduled every two weeks throughout the season, with additional sites identified to receive them. • Several release techniques are being trialled to determine which best supports establishment. **Broom gall mite** • The agent has successfully established at Rangataua following several years of repeated attempts at higher altitudes, despite the abundance of suitable plant material. Staff will continue to monitor its spread in the southern Ruapehu District. **Sydney golden wattle gall wasp** • There is evidence that galls are establishing at Waikawa Beach after material was transferred from the established Waitārere site. • Staff assisted BSI with a drone survey of flowering Sydney golden wattle in the Castlecliff dunes (Figure 9). • Subsequent drone surveys will help assess the effect of gall establishment on flowering and the resulting reduction in seed pod production.



Figure 9: BSI staff taking drone imagery of Sydney golden wattle; Whanganui.



Map 13: Old man's beard biocontrol across the region as at September 2026.

AWARENESS AND COLLABORATION

12.20. The awareness programme aims to alert the community to the issues, threats, and solutions for pest plant management to ensure region-wide best practices. This includes responding to enquiries from the community, an Annual Plan target and undertaking collaborative projects. Progress and activity in the 2026-27 year are overviewed in Table 31.

Table 31: Summary of the pest plant awareness programme in 2026-27 year to date.

Awareness Programmes	Awareness Programme for 2026-27 year to date
Field days, species specific awareness programmes, best practice information provision, media articles, enquiry response, freshwater pest awareness via the Check Clean Dry programme.	**Old Man's Beard Ruahine Project** • Three public meetings were held in Mangaweka, Pohangina, and Āpiti to provide updates on the Ruahine Old Man's Beard Project, including where control work is being undertaken, progress made to date, and future priorities. • Attendance was generally good across all meetings, with strong interest from landowners in the project. Several attendees also expressed interest in the potential use of biocontrol agents for managing established old man's beard infestations in difficult-to-control areas. **Weed Swap Day** • Staff assisted the biodiversity team with a weed swap event at Foxton Beach and supported local students with the removal of *Phragmites karka* at Kuku Beach. • The weed swap event resulted in the identification of several previously unrecorded boneseed infestations and provided a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of ongoing sea spurge and moth plant management programmes.

NATIONAL WILDING CONIFER CONTROL PROGRAMME

Background

Horizons has long been an instigator, supporter and regulator in the control of pest conifers. Having rules and programmes to remove *Pinus contorta* from the central plateau through RPMPs and facilitating groups such as the Central North Island Wilding Conifer Group, previously called the Pinus Contorta Coordinating Committee (1982).

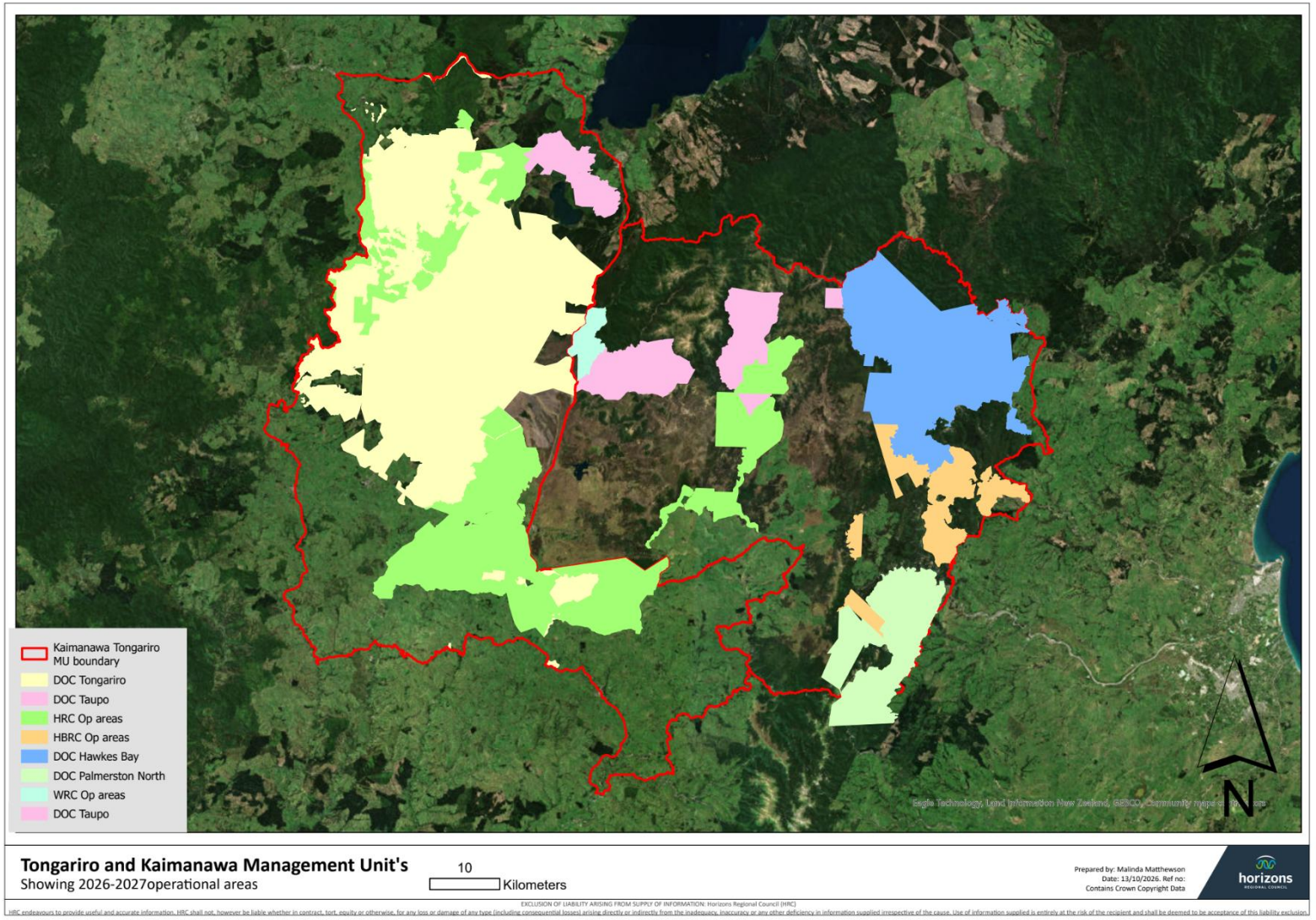
Horizons is also the Chair and Fund holder of the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme (national programme) for the Central North Island Regional Coordination Group.

The national programme was established in 2016 and is administered by the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI). The national programme delivers on the National Wilding Conifer Management Strategy (2015–2030) and at inception was supported by government funding of $16M over four years for the control of wilding conifers across the country. The programme has now been provisioned with a baseline of $10M, and due to Jobs for Nature support (2020-2024) has received in the order of $170M nationally. Budget26 has increased The programme's strength is the ability to fund, plan and align work across a vast landscape and many organisations.

National Programme 2026-27

12.21. The national programme Central North Island Regional Coordinating Group coordinates activity across the three DOC areas, and three regional Councils of the central region to ensure the national programme contracting, planning, health and safety, operational delivery and financials are accounted for. Council received an item and made approvals in relation to the increased government co-funding in June 2026.

12.22. The two management units in the Central North Island region are the Tongariro and Kaimanawa., as shown in Map 14. The budget Horizons has been contracted to manage in 26/27 is $1,887,000. This includes $1,691,000 from the MPI/DOC IVL sourced funding and $196,000 from CNI partners. Horizons full programme of work across the Kaimanawa and Tongariro Management Units, is $765,000, of which $100,000 is from Horizons rates. Contractors have been engaged for the 2026/27 work programme.



Map 14: Map of 2026/27 national programme works in the Tongariro and Kaimanawa Management Units.

13. LAND MANAGEMENT

Programme Overview

13.1. Land Management supports catchment resilience, erosion control, water quality improvement and sustainable land use across the region. Key programmes include the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI), forestry management, environmental grant programmes, Whanganui Catchment Strategy delivery, soil health monitoring, industry partnerships and nursery operations.

13.2. These programmes combine Council funding, landowner investment, community participation and, in some cases, central government co-funding to deliver environmental, economic and resilience outcomes. Delivery is influenced by seasonal conditions, landowner demand, government policy settings and external funding arrangements.

Land Management Summary

- The smaller Land Management programmes are generally tracking to Annual Plan expectations, with farm mapping, environmental grant programmes, industry partnerships and nursery operations progressing largely as planned.
- The principal issue remains delivery of SLUI, with current work allocations remaining below levels typically required to achieve Annual Plan and Hill Country Erosion Fund contract targets.
- Lower allocation levels are also expected to result in grant expenditure below current programme budgets. Current allocation levels are also expected to affect programme expenditure and utilisation of available co-funding.
- Council responded during 2026 by increasing selected grant rates and caps, while retaining the approved overallocation mechanisms using reserves to support programme delivery and uptake.
- Horizons applied in April for continued MPI co-funding of SLUI beyond June 2027. The funding outcome had not been publicly announced at the time this report was prepared.
- Future SLUI funding, reserve utilisation and programme scale are currently being considered through the 2027-37 Long-term Plan process. An item has been prepared for Council's consideration in late October.

Annual Plan Performance

13.3. Progress against the 2026/27 Land Management Annual Plan performance measures is summarised in Table 32. The measures reflect a mix of programme delivery, grant funding, industry engagement and nursery production activities. The Sustainable Land Use Initiative works programme remains the most significant performance challenge and is discussed further later in this chapter.

Table 32: Progress against Land Management Annual Plan performance measures, 1 July to 30 September 2026.

Performance Measure	Target	Allocated	Completed	Percentage of target completed	Forecast year-end position
Sustainable Land Use Initiative					
14. Hectares of erosion control works completed.	3,540 ha	1,216 ha	34 ha	1%	Will not achieve target
Hectares of new land mapped (Contract not Annual Plan).	10,000 ha	-	-	-	On track
Regional and Coast, and Whanganui					
15. Number of grants for works completed.	50	48	9	18%	On track
16. Support industry initiatives that promote sustainable land use.	5	-	4	80%	On track
Horizons willow and poplar programme					
17. Number of poles made available for erosion control programmes.	30,000	33,069*	-	110%	On track*

*Final nursery numbers remain subject to confirmation.

Seasonal conditions update

13.4. During late winter and early spring, conditions across the region were generally favourable for programme delivery. Northern, western and central parts of the region experienced slightly drier than normal conditions, while eastern areas experienced conditions closer to seasonal norms, including periods of wind and rainfall.

13.5. Conditions remained suitable for planting and erosion-control works through September. Poplar and willow poles established well, and staff continued providing advice to landowners on pole planting techniques to improve survival rates should drier conditions develop over summer.

13.6. Relatively dry conditions have supported ongoing delivery of fencing and erosion-control works, with contractors continuing to complete projects initiated during winter. Most landowners remain aware of the potential for a drier-than-normal summer.

Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI)

Programme overview

13.7. SLUI is Horizons' primary hill-country erosion control programme. Established following the 2004 storm events, the programme supports landowners to reduce erosion, improve catchment resilience, decrease sediment delivery to waterways and promote sustainable land use.

13.8. SLUI is delivered through a partnership model involving Horizons, participating landowners and central government. Historically, total programme expenditure has been reported to be funded by approximately 43% Horizons, 35% landowners and 22% central government.

13.9. Since commencement in 2006, the programme has completed more than 65,000 hectares of erosion control works and mapped more than 700,000 hectares of farmland. Excluding the programme establishment period, annual delivery has generally ranged between approximately 2,000 and 4,000 hectares per year (Table 33).

Table 33: Summary of SLUI programme delivery to June 2026.

Measure	Result
Farms engaged	Approximately 1,000 ha
Land mapped	More than 700,000 ha
Erosion control works completed	More than 65,000 ha
Claims completed	More than 6,700 ha
Average annual works delivery	Approximately 3,200 ha
Total programme investment	Approximately $141M

13.10. SLUI remains one of New Zealand's largest erosion control programmes and continues to play a significant role in improving resilience to severe weather events, reducing erosion and supporting water quality outcomes across the region.

SLUI Farm Mapping

13.11. As at 30 September 2026, 467 hectares of farm mapping had been completed, 3,861 hectares were allocated or in progress, and a further 4,146 hectares were proposed (Figure 10). Combined, these categories represent 8,474 hectares of potential mapping activity against the current Hill Country Erosion Fund contract target of 10,000 hectares.

13.12. While completed hectares remain below the annual target at this stage of the year, this is not unusual. Mapping activity is typically lower during winter and early spring as many landowners prefer to avoid on-farm visits during lambing, with a significant proportion of annual mapping generally completed during the second half of the financial year.

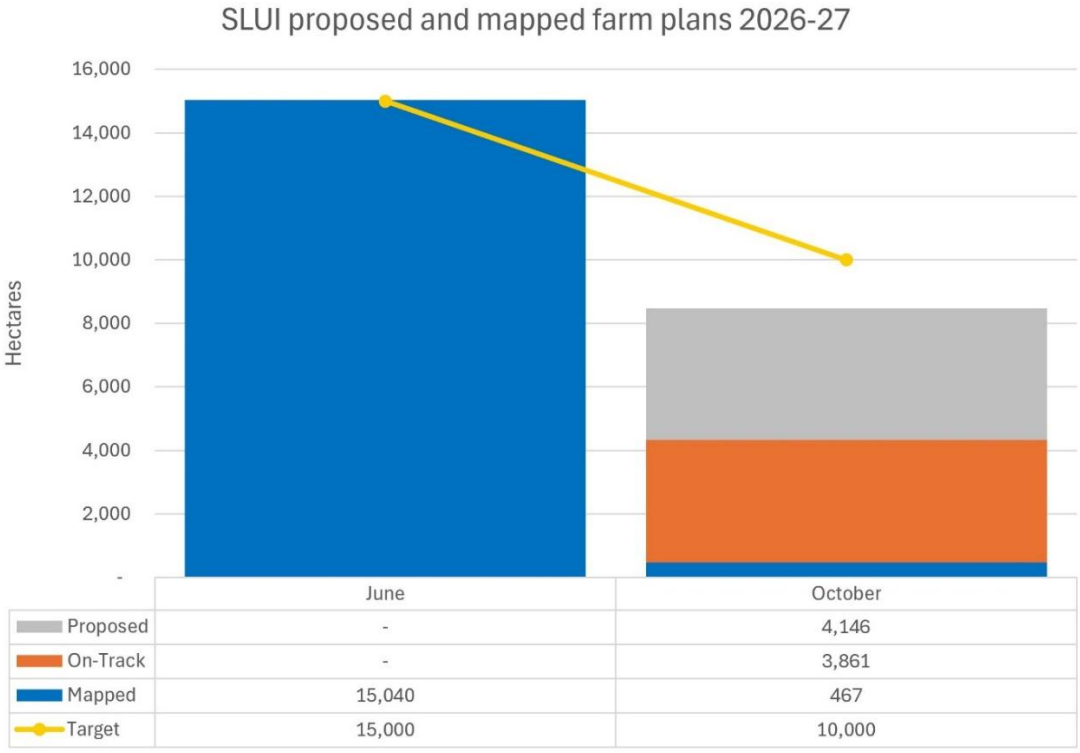
13.13. Farm mapping is undertaken through Erosion and Sediment Control Plans (ESCPs) and extensions to existing Whole Farm Plans. Mapping work is carried out by both external

contractors and Horizons staff, with the internal programme also supporting development and training of Land Management staff.

13.14. Staff continue to follow up landowners who have expressed an interest in farm planning, with additional mapping work expected to be allocated over coming months. During the reporting period, staff also delivered plans completed in the previous year. Of the 35 plans completed, six were extensions to existing plans and 29 were new plans. Twelve plans have subsequently been delivered to landowners, with six already progressing to a works programme.

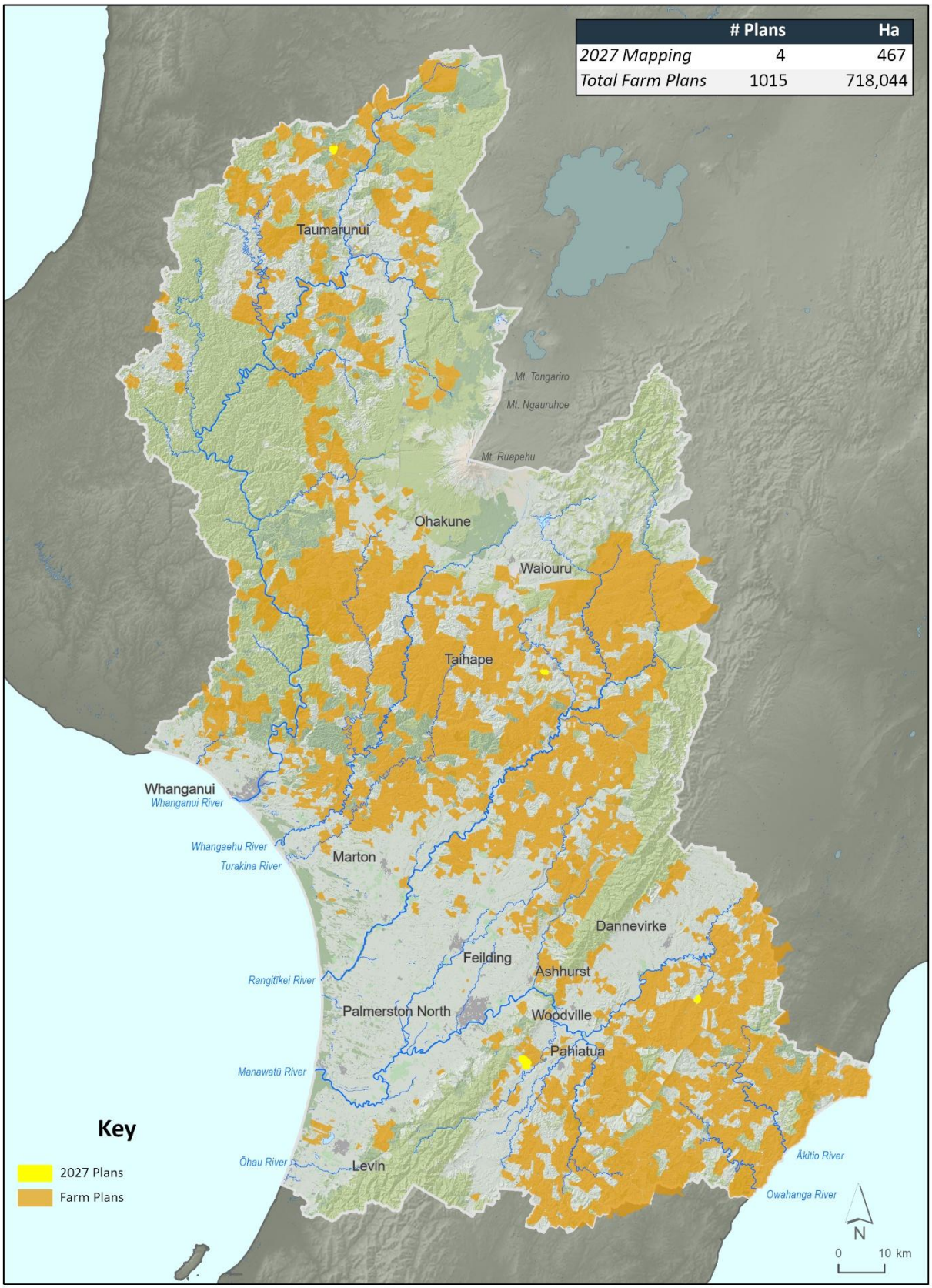
13.15. The distribution of farm plans completed during the reporting period is shown in Map 15. The spread of activity reflects ongoing demand for farm planning and erosion control advice across the region.

13.16. Farm mapping remains an important component of the future programme. The application submitted to the Ministry for Primary Industries for the 2027-31 funding period includes a target of 7,500 hectares of farm mapping per annum, reflecting the ongoing need to identify future erosion control opportunities and maintain a pipeline of future works.



	June	October
Proposed	-	4,146
On-Track	-	3,861
Mapped	15,040	467
Target	15,000	10,000

Figure 10: SLUI programme proposed and mapped farm plans for 2026-27. The target (yellow) is 10,000 ha this year. The mapping work completed (blue) is 467 ha, on track (orange) is 3,861 ha and includes work allocated to mappers or work yet to allocate, and the proposed (grey) is work where farmers have the paperwork with them and is not yet returned. Combined these categories currently indicate 8,474 ha of mapping this year, so there is more work to allocate.



SLUI Plans mapped to date

Map prepared by W McKay, Catchment Operations Group on 2/10/2026

Map 15: Location of farm plans and works completed life to date as a part of the SLUI programme, with 2026-27 plans mapped in yellow.

SLUI Erosion Control Works

13.17. The 2026/27 Annual Plan target is 3,540 hectares of erosion-control works completed, while the current Hill Country Erosion Fund (HCE) contract target is 3,635 hectares. For context, 2,309 hectares of erosion-control works were completed during 2025/26 at a grant cost of approximately $1.7 million.

13.18. The current Annual Plan and HCE contract targets were established earlier in the life of the programme and are now higher than recent delivery levels. Horizons is discussing current contract delivery and future target expectations with the MPI as part of ongoing contract and funding discussions.

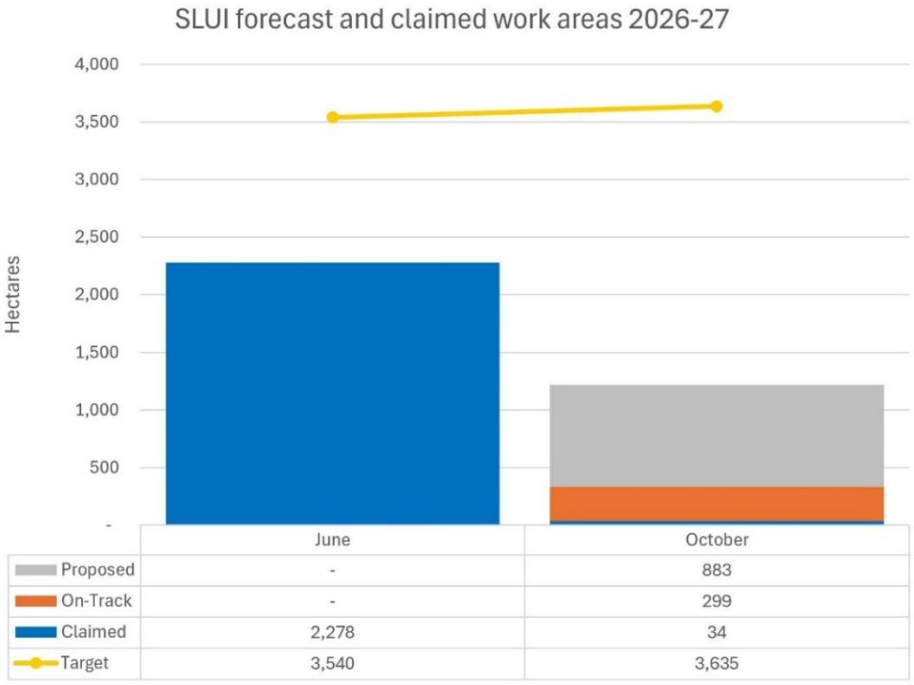
13.19. As at 30 September 2026, 1,216 hectares of erosion-control works had been allocated and 34 hectares completed (Figure 11). Allocation levels are significantly below the same time in the previous two years, when 2,331 hectares (October 2024) and 2,289 hectares (October 2025) had been allocated.

13.20. Current allocation levels indicate the Annual Plan and HCE contract targets are unlikely to be achieved. However, three larger projects remain under negotiation and staff continue to actively pursue additional work opportunities with landowners.

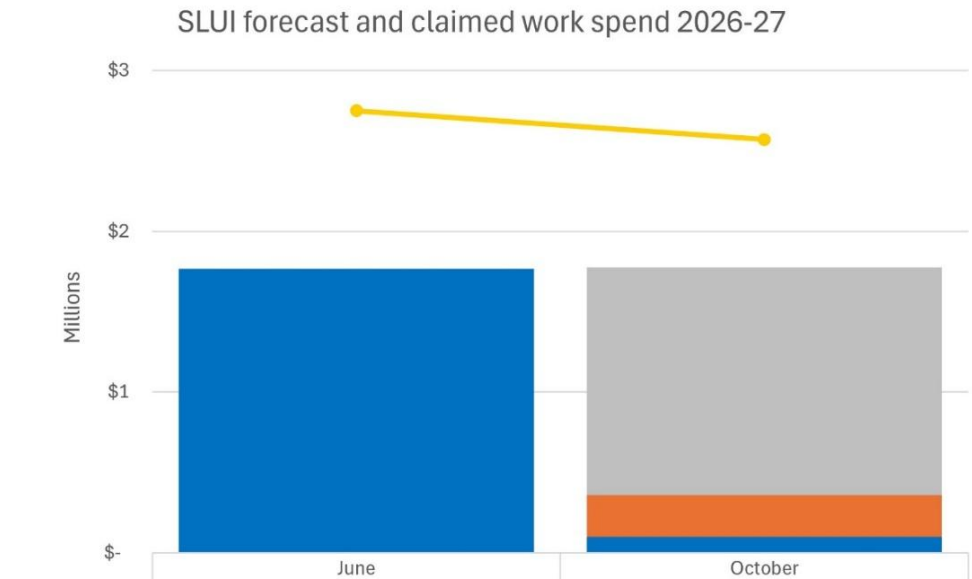
13.21. Current programme performance reflects lower demand for some erosion-control work types, particularly afforestation, and continuing changes in the programme operating environment. Landowner investment decisions, government policy settings, carbon market influences and wider economic conditions continue to affect participation in the programme.

13.22. Staff are continuing a range of initiatives intended to improve programme uptake, including promoting the revised grant rates approved by Council, following up landowners who previously deferred participation, and identifying additional opportunities through analysis of highly erodible land and biodiversity priorities.

13.23. Lower allocation levels are also expected to reduce grant expenditure relative to current budget assumptions. Horizons is continuing discussions with MPI regarding current contract delivery and associated funding implications, including utilisation of available co-funding under the current HCE contract.



	June	October
Proposed	-	883
On-Track	-	299
Claimed	2,278	34
Target	3,540	3,635



	June	October
Proposed	$-	$1,416,708
On-Track	$-	$260,663
Claimed	$1,765,104	$97,637
Target	$2,750,000	$2,570,330

Figure 11: SLUI programme grants allocation including 2025-26 completed programme and current 2026-27 allocation by hectares of work (top) and grant budget allocated (bottom). Blue shows works complete, orange work with high certainty of completion and grey the amount proposed. Combined to reach the overall allocation.

Programme Delivery, Funding and Future Direction

13.24. The current HCE contract expires in June 2027. Current Annual Plan and contract targets of 3,540 hectares and 3,635 hectares respectively are among the highest annual treatment targets established during the life of the programme and are materially higher than recent delivery levels. By comparison, the programme completed 2,309 hectares of erosion-control works during 2025/26 and has historically averaged approximately 3,200 hectares of treatment annually.

13.25. Horizons lodged an application with MPI in April 2026 for a sixth four-year HCE contract covering the period from July 2027 to June 2031. The application includes a farm mapping target of 7,500 hectares per annum and lower erosion-control treatment targets than the current contract. The proposal reflected recent delivery trends, changing programme demand and anticipated funding settings while maintaining treatment levels broadly consistent with recent programme performance.

13.26. The programme has continually evolved since its establishment in 2006 in response to changing landowner demand, government policy settings, co-funding arrangements, carbon markets and wider economic conditions. More recently, demand for some treatment types, particularly afforestation, has reduced significantly. At the same time, the mix of treatment types being delivered through the programme continues to evolve, including retirement, reversion, pole planting and riparian works.

13.27. SLUI is also a mature programme. Since commencement, more than 65,000 hectares of erosion-control works have been completed and more than 700,000 hectares of farmland mapped. As a result, a significant proportion of the highest-priority erosion control opportunities have already been identified or treated. Future delivery increasingly depends on landowner willingness to undertake more complex, higher-cost or lower-priority projects, alongside changing economic and policy drivers.

13.28. These changes do not alter the long-term objectives of SLUI. The programme continues to improve catchment resilience, reduce erosion, decrease sediment delivery to waterways and support sustainable land use. However, the relationship between programme funding, annual treatment targets and environmental outcomes is likely to differ from earlier phases of the programme.

13.29. In February 2026, Council approved increases to selected grant rates and grant caps to encourage programme uptake and improve allocation levels. The revised grant settings were subsequently promoted through direct landowner engagement, newsletters and radio advertising. The effectiveness of these measures continues to be monitored.

13.30. Historically, SLUI reserves have provided flexibility to manage fluctuations in programme demand and support delivery above annual budget levels when required. The future role of reserves, including the balance between supporting annual programme delivery and preserving flexibility for future opportunities, is currently being considered through the 2027-37 Long-term Plan process.

13.31. Current delivery levels are below those assumed when the existing four-year HCE contract was established. Horizons is continuing discussions with MPI regarding current contract delivery, future target expectations and associated funding implications. Future programme delivery will depend on the combination of rates funding, reserve utilisation, landowner investment and MPI co-funding. Changes to any of these factors are likely to influence future programme scale, treatment targets and delivery outcomes.

13.32. Council will consider future programme funding, reserve utilisation and delivery assumptions through a Long-term Plan decision paper scheduled for late October 2026. At the time of preparing this report, the outcome of Horizons' application for future MPI co-funding had not been publicly announced.

13.33. The next phase of work will focus on confirming future co-funding arrangements with MPI, progressing Long-term Plan decisions on programme scale and funding, and continuing

efforts to increase programme allocations and delivery under the current contract. Future reporting will continue to track current programme performance while providing Councillors with updates on future funding arrangements, programme scale and associated delivery implications.

Whanganui Catchment Strategy and Regional Grant Programmes

Programme Overview

13.34. The Whanganui Catchment Strategy (WCS) and Regional Grant (RG) programmes support erosion control, water quality improvement and catchment resilience through financial assistance and technical advice to landowners. The programmes support a wider range of property sizes and land uses than SLUI and provide funding for works including fencing, planting, retirement and other land management activities.

13.35. WCS receives an annual Horizons contribution of $50,000, supplemented by funding from the Whanganui River Enhancement Trust (WRET). The Regional Grant programme has an annual grant allocation of $87,000. The 2026/27 Annual Plan target is 50 grant projects completed and claimed.

Programme Performance

13.36. As at 30 September 2026, 30 WCS projects had been approved with Horizons funding of $50,000 and anticipated WRET funding of approximately $70,000. Regional Grant projects approved to date total 18 projects with approved grant funding of approximately $28,000.

13.37. Completed works (Table 34) comprise seven Whanganui Catchment Strategy projects and two Regional Grant projects, with a combined grant value of approximately $45,000. Current allocations and completed projects indicate the programme remains on track to achieve the Annual Plan target of 50 completed grants. The location of works completed and claimed through the SLUI, WCS and Regional Grant programmes is shown in Map 16.

Table 34: Works completed through the Whanganui Catchment Strategy and Regional Grant programmes, 1 July to 30 September 2026.

Programme	Space Planting (#)	Seedlings (#)	Native Plants (#)	Fencing (m)
Whanganui Catchment Strategy	-	-	-	6,418
Regional Grant Programme	50	-	-	590
Total	**50**	**-**	**-**	**7,008**

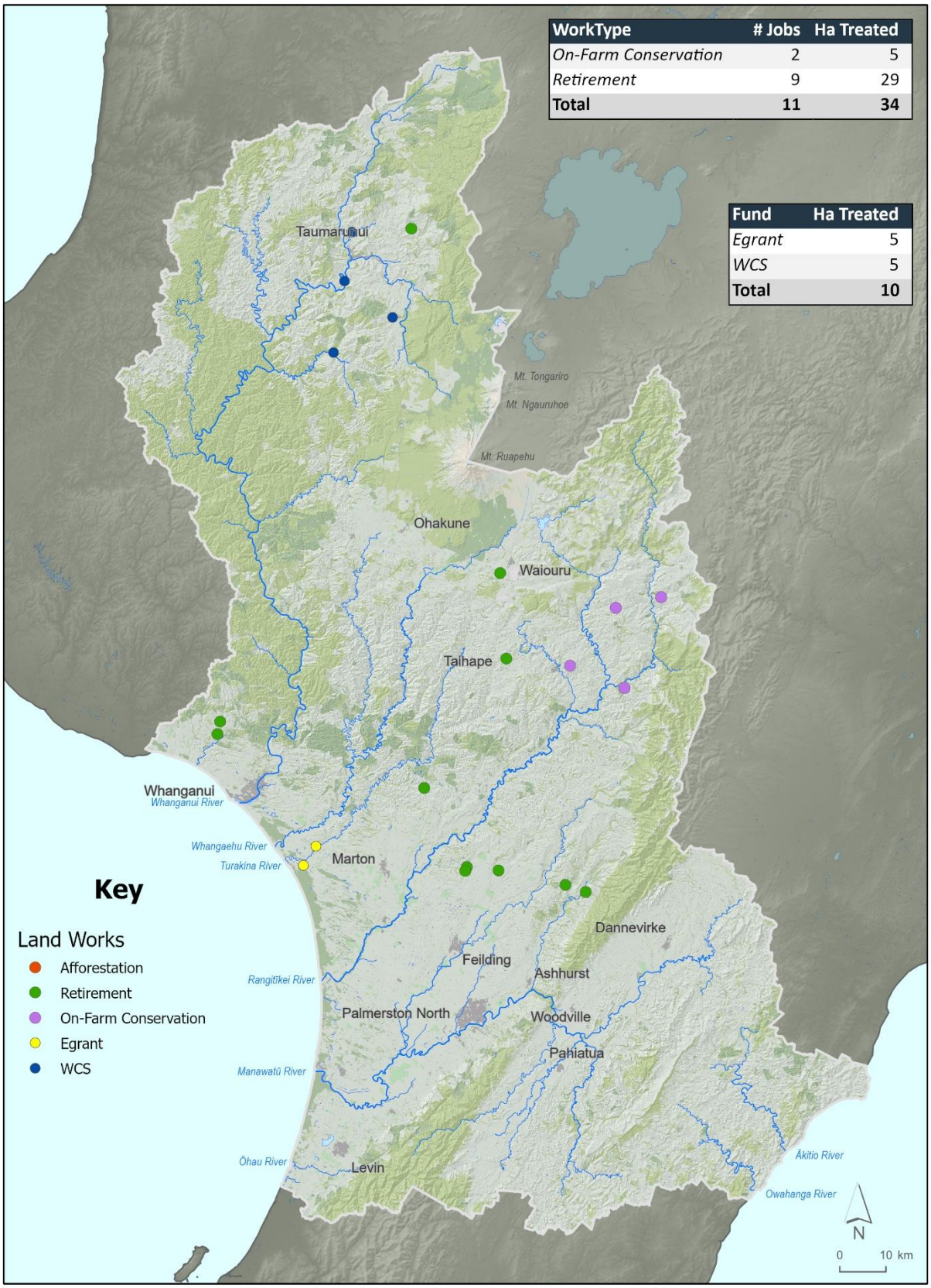
Advisory and Landowner Support

13.38. In addition to grant delivery, staff continue to provide technical advice and support to landowners, catchment collectives and community initiatives across the region. Activities during the quarter included support for catchment groups, wetland restoration initiatives, pole planting programmes, school planting projects and general soil conservation advice.

13.39. Land advisors also continue to act as an important point of contact between landowners and the wider Council. During the reporting period, advice and referrals were commonly sought on vegetation clearance, afforestation consents, sediment detention structures, streambank erosion, stock exclusion requirements and other land management matters.

Programme Outlook

13.40. Current allocations and completed projects indicate the programme remains on track to achieve the Annual Plan target. Programme delivery continues to be influenced by landowner participation, seasonal conditions and contractor availability.



2027 Worktype Locations

Map prepared by W McKay, Catchment Operations Group on 2/10/2026

Map 16: Location of works completed and claimed during 2026/27 across the SLUI, Whanganui Catchment Strategy and Regional Grants programmes.

FORESTRY MANAGEMENT

Programme Overview

13.41. Horizons holds forestry interests arising from previous SLUI and River Management activities. These include Forestry Rights established through SLUI and a number of river management forestry blocks located within river schemes. The land management team coordinates ongoing management of these forestry interests.

13.42. Horizons originally established ten SLUI Forestry Right forests covering approximately 1,387 hectares of planted area. Six Forestry Rights have since been sold back to landowners, resulting in four remaining Forestry Rights (Table 35 and Map 17) with a net stocked area of approximately 533 hectares. Forestry Rights and associated carbon obligations represent a long-term asset management responsibility for Horizons, with future financial outcomes influenced by timber values, carbon settings and Forestry Right arrangements.

Table 35: Forestry rights summary, September 2026.

Property	Net Stocked Area (ha)	Primary Species	Secondary Species	Forestry Right Start Date	Forestry Right End Date	Carbon Share Available to Horizons	Forestry Right Current Status
JV0011	164.6	Radiata	Redwood, eucalypt and other species	1 March 2008	30 June 2042	No	Ongoing
JV0025	103.75	Radiata	None	1 July 2008	30 June 2041	Yes	Ongoing
JV0059	107.6	Radiata	Eucalypt	1 July 2008	30 Dec. 2042	Yes	Ongoing
JV0323	156.7	Radiata	None	1 Oct. 2012	31 Dec. 2046	Yes	Ongoing
Total	**532.65**						**4 Forestry Rights**

Programme Activity

13.43. Ongoing management of Forestry Rights includes liaison with landowners, oversight of asset condition and administration of contractual obligations. During the reporting period, maintenance work was completed on two Forestry Right properties following wind damage.

13.44. Horizons continues to review opportunities where Forestry Right interests may be sold back to participating landowners. Discussions were held with one Forestry Right owner during the quarter regarding forestry costs, ETS obligations and carbon arrangements.

13.45. Audit valuations were completed during the reporting period for both Forestry Right and River Management forests. Following recent forestry sales, new growth and carbon assessments are also being undertaken to meet MPI reporting requirements.

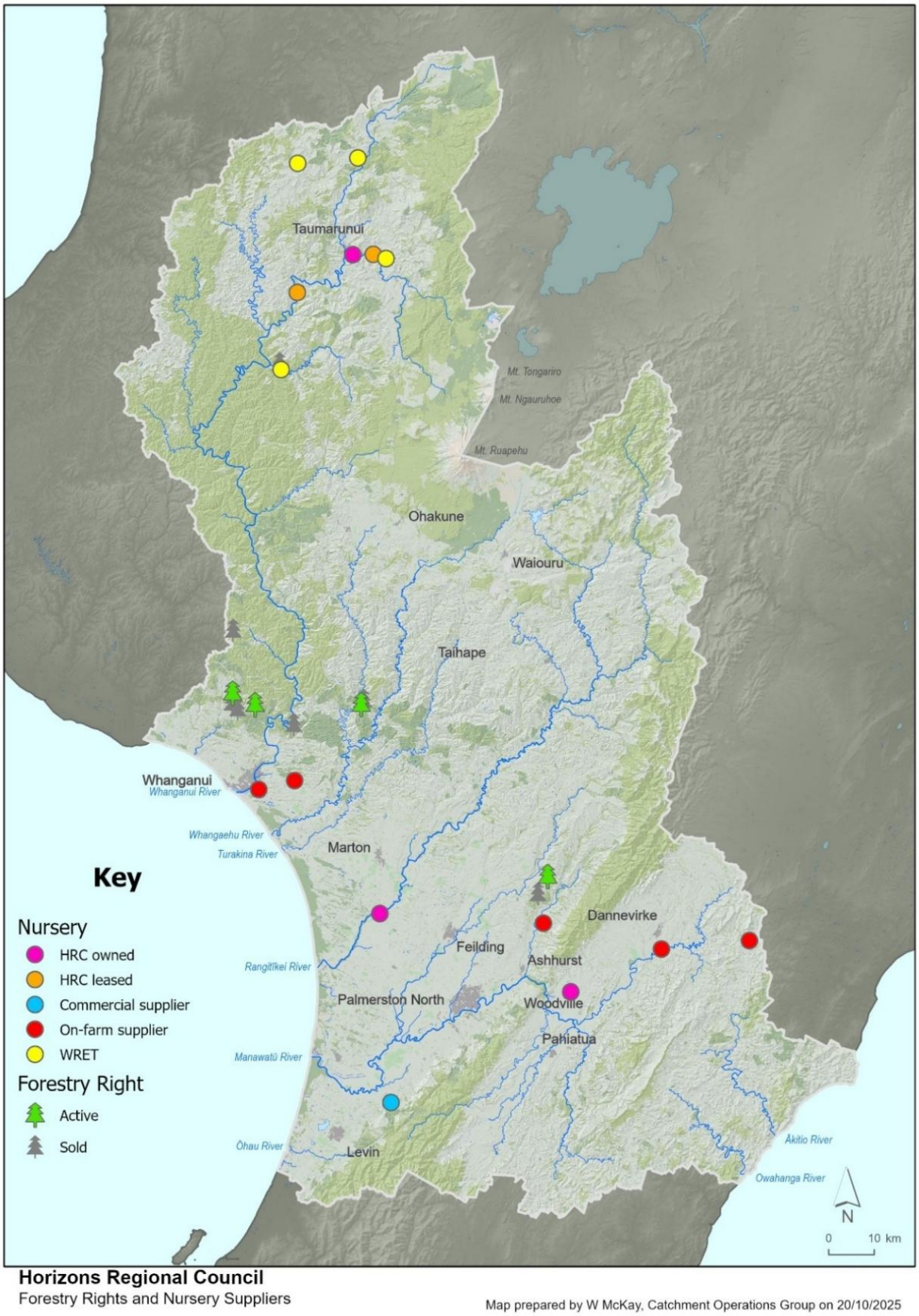
Carbon and Forestry Right Management

13.46. Some River Management forestry assets have associated pre-1990 Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) allocations and may carry future carbon liabilities. Work is underway to confirm forest records, assess potential liabilities and improve asset management information. This work is ongoing as staff time and resourcing allows.

13.47. Horizons has reported known issues relating to forestry losses and associated carbon credit liabilities to MPI and is awaiting further advice. During the quarter, staff also sought specialist forestry advice regarding long-term carbon obligations and reviewed standing timber insurance arrangements.

Programme Outlook

13.48. Forestry activities remain largely focused on asset management, Forestry Right administration and management of carbon-related obligations. Future reporting will continue to provide updates on Forestry Right transactions, carbon liability assessment and any matters with potential financial or strategic implications for Council.



Map 17: Locations of forestry and nursery sites, including Forestry Rights which have now been sold back to the landowner.

Nursery Operations

Programme Overview

13.49. Horizons operates willow and poplar nurseries that provide planting material for erosion-control programmes across the region. Nursery production supports the SLUI, Whanganui Catchment Strategy, Regional Grant programmes and River Management activities, while also supplying poles for sale to landowners.

13.50. Nursery production is centred on the Woodville and Bulls nurseries, supplemented by smaller sites within the Ruapehu District. Annual Plan performance measures require production and sourcing of 30,000 poles per year to support erosion-control activities across the region.

Programme Performance

13.51. As at 30 September 2026, provisional nursery production indicates 33,069 poles were available for sale or distribution, exceeding the 2026/27 Annual Plan target of 30,000 poles. Production was primarily from the Woodville Nursery (19,630 poles) and Bulls Nursery (8,215 poles), supplemented by smaller nursery sites in the northern part of the region. Final production numbers remain subject to confirmation through completion of annual harvest and sales reporting.

13.52. Demand for individual willow and poplar varieties continues to vary between seasons. During the reporting period, harvesting of some Kawa poplar blocks was deferred due to lower demand for that variety. At the same time, nursery management and replanting programmes continued to respond to changing preferences for different willow and poplar varieties.

13.53. Replanting programmes were completed across nursery sites (Figure 12) during the reporting period, including establishment of additional willow and poplar stock for future nursery production. This included planting 4,000 Tangoio willow stakes and 1,000 Shinsei poplar stakes at Bulls, together with establishment of additional willow and poplar varieties for future bulking and evaluation.

Programme Outlook

13.54. Demand for individual poplar and willow varieties continues to vary between years, requiring ongoing management of nursery production, variety selection and propagation programmes.

13.55. The mix of varieties required for the current planting season will become clearer as discussions with landowners continue and orders are confirmed. Staff will continue to manage nursery production and sourcing arrangements, including exchanges with other councils where appropriate, to respond to changing programme requirements.



Figure 12: Replanting at the Bulls Nursery and planting material produced for erosion-control programmes.

Industry Partnerships

Programme Overview

13.56. Horizons' Industry Partnership programme supports sustainable land management through collaboration with industry groups, research organisations, catchment collectives and community groups. These partnerships support knowledge sharing, applied research, industry engagement and promotion of sustainable land use practices.

13.57. The 2026/27 Annual Plan target is to support five industry initiatives that promote sustainable land use. As at 30 September 2026, four initiatives had been supported, and the programme remains on track to achieve its Annual Plan target.

Programme Performance

13.58. Industry partnership activities undertaken during the reporting period are summarised in Table 36. These partnerships support knowledge sharing, applied research, industry engagement and catchment-scale initiatives that promote sustainable land management outcomes across the region. An example of this work is shown in Figure 13.

Table 36: Industry partnership activities, 1 July to 30 September 2026.

Partnership	Purpose	Activity During the Reporting Period
Ballance Farm Environment Awards	Promote and recognise excellence in sustainable farm management.	Horizons continued its partnership with the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust, including programme planning, judging preparation and support for delivery of the 2026-27 awards programme.
NZ Poplar and Willow Research Trust	Support research and development relating to poplar and willow use in New Zealand.	Horizons participated in Trust activities and received updates on research priorities, strategy and programme direction.
Fertiliser and Lime Research Centre (Massey University)	Support research and information sharing on agricultural production and environmental management.	Ongoing sponsorship and partnership arrangements were maintained during the reporting period.
Catchment Collectives and Community Groups	Support local catchment initiatives, knowledge sharing and sustainable land management outcomes.	Staff continued working with catchment collectives and community groups across the region, including support for field activities, planting programmes and catchment initiatives.
Other Industry and Community Groups	Support sustainable land management through education, engagement and extension activities.	Staff participated in industry meetings, community engagement activities and sustainable land management forums during the reporting period.

Programme Outlook

13.59. Current programme activity indicates the Annual Plan target remains achievable.



Figure 13: Supporting the Maitere Catchment Group pole harvest, Ōhura North Road, Ruapehu District.

Soil Health Programme

Programme Overview

13.60. The Soil Health Programme supports sustainable soil management through monitoring, research and provision of advice to landowners. The programme also contributes to Horizons' State of the Environment monitoring responsibilities and supports understanding of soil health trends across different land uses, soil types and landforms within the region.

13.61. Within the Horizons Region, 102 monitoring sites form part of the national soil quality monitoring programme. The location of these sites is shown in Map 18.

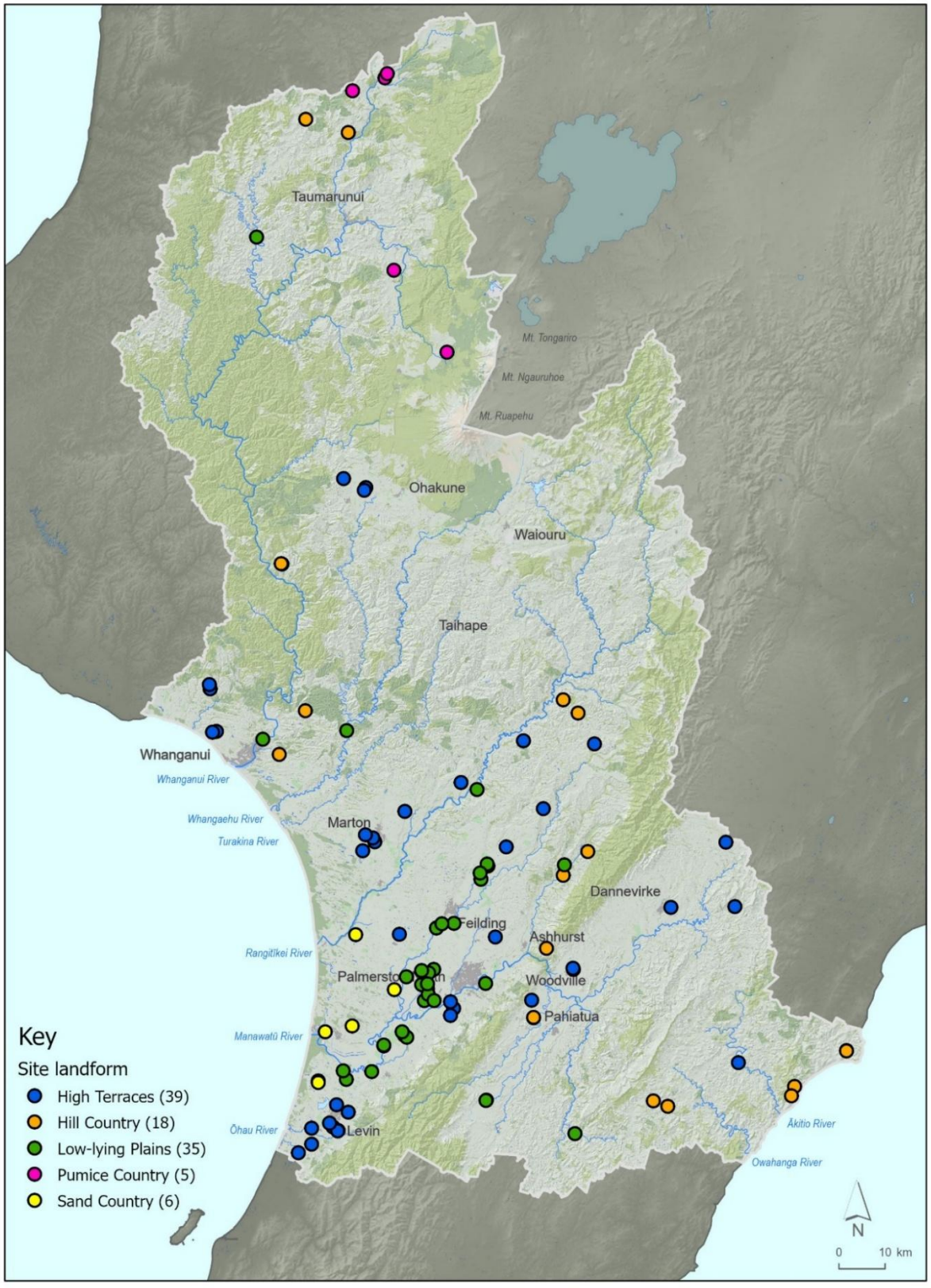
Programme Activity

13.62. Information from the previous year's monitoring programme was provided to participating landowners during the reporting period, including site-specific results and supporting information to assist understanding of soil health indicators and long-term trends.

13.63. The monitoring network remains largely stable over time, although sites are periodically reviewed where land use change or other circumstances affect their suitability for long-term monitoring. During the reporting period, a replacement site was identified in Horowhenua following land-use change associated with the expressway project.

Programme Outlook

13.64. Soil health monitoring for the current programme cycle is scheduled for October and November 2026, with 20 sites selected for re-sampling from the 2021 monitoring round. Results will contribute to future State of the Environment reporting and continued assessment of soil health trends across the region.



Location of Soil Quality Monitoring Sites

Map prepared by: Michael Morgan.
Date: 1/10/2026.

Map 18: Locations and landforms for soil quality monitoring sites.

14. FRESHWATER AND PARTNERSHIPS

Overview

The freshwater and partnerships activity of the Long-term Plan is delivered by the Freshwater and Projects team, who also work on delivery of a range of projects for Horizons that are reported in other sections of this report.

The freshwater programme is a long-standing programme that provides advice and support to landowners for freshwater enhancement work, including stream fencing, planting, fish passage repair, and community projects. The programme also undertakes weed harvesting in Lake Horowhenua and, over time, has supported a broader range of work.

Horizons has sustained an accelerated programme over the period from 2012 to 2025 through securing external funding. This has primarily been from central government and, in some cases, local territorial authorities or industry support groups. Funding has been received through central government's Fresh Start for Fresh Water Clean Up Fund, Te Mana o te Wai Fund, Freshwater Improvement Fund and Jobs for Nature Funds. This financial year, Horizons continues to have government co-funding for the Jobs for Nature (JFN) co-funded project in the Horowhenua. However, overall, has a smaller programme than previous years, with two other large JFN projects completed in June 2025.

Annual Plan targets and progress

14.1. The freshwater and partnerships activity of the Long-term Plan has performance measures to deliver freshwater enhancement work based on three geographical areas (regional, Manawatū Catchment, and Horowhenua District) with each area having a different funding policy.

14.2. The Annual Plan contains ten targets for the programme in the 2026-27 year (Table 37).

Table 37: Summary of the freshwater and partnerships programme Annual Plan targets for 2026-27.

Levels of service and performance measures	Target 2026-27	Allocated	Completed	Percent complete	Target achievement status
Deliver freshwater enhancement work in the region (excluding the Manawatū Catchment)					
18. Kilometres (km) of stream fencing completed	15 km	17.9 km	0.3 km	2%	On track
19. Number of riparian plans planted	35,000	57,241	5,112	15%	On track
20. Fish barriers remediated	2	0	0	0%	On track
21. Number of community projects funded	5	5	0	0%	On track
Deliver freshwater enhancement work in the Manawatū Catchment					
22. Manawatū Accord forums are held twice a year	2	1	0	0%	On track
23. Kilometres (km) of stream fencing completed	15 km	8.4 km	0.8 km	5%	On track
24. Number of riparian plans planted	35,000	44,596	14,004	40%	On track
25. Fish barriers remediated	2	0	0	0%	On track
26. Number of community projects funded	5	7	0	0%	On track
Deliver freshwater enhancement work within the Horowhenua District					
27. Annual report to Council on Horowhenua freshwater restoration activity	Achieved	1	0	0%	On track

REGIONAL FRESHWATER ENHANCEMENT

Background

The regional freshwater programme provides advice and support for the freshwater enhancement work across the region, including in the Horowhenua and Manawatū Catchments. This includes working with landowners, iwi/hapū, catchment care groups, other agencies, and with other teams within Horizons.

The Annual Plan targets are based on completion of stream fencing, riparian planting, fish passage remediation, and community grants. Landowners and external agencies are significant co-funders of the works completed. The community grant funding is supported by significant volunteer time.

Programme activity

14.3. A summary of the works completed over the year to date (1 July 2026 to 30 September 2026) is provided in the Annual Plan target summary in Table 37 above and the location of the works are shown in Map 19.

14.4. In summary:

- In contrast to last financial year the regional programme has already fully allocated to its targets, with the full budget allocation now committed for both stream fencing and riparian planting. There is a wait list of projects should any funding become available. 310 metres of stream fencing has been completed since the 1 July and 5,112 riparian plants planted.
- The Manawatū programme has riparian planting allocation above targets with more applications to complete to reach the stream fencing targets however, it is tracking well. 14,004 riparian plants have been claimed and 832 m of stream fencing completed.
- The focus this reporting period has been on riparian planting, getting plants from nurseries to site, assisting landowners and liaising with contractors. While the planting season is a little later in the central plateau and Taihape areas, the rest of the team are now moving onto planting claims, responding to fencing enquiries, preparing applications for funding and will determine fish passage fixes for the upcoming construction season.

Community Grants

The eligibility criteria for both the regional and Manawatū freshwater community grants are documented on the Horizons' website at the following link[1]. The criteria are:

- The project can demonstrate an improvement in education or enjoyment of freshwater in the wider community.
- For education projects, include examples of how the project would improve community knowledge, and how the learning could be used to improve freshwater outcomes.
- For projects that are based on enhancing the enjoyment of freshwater, demonstrate the benefits to the wider community.
- Horizons Regional Council would weigh favourably to projects which show innovation.
- The project must be based within the region, with preference given to groups that are also based within the region.

14.5. The funding application round for the Manawatū and Regional Freshwater Community Led Projects closed at the end of July 2026. Between the two funds $200,000 is available, with $100,000 each for both the Manawatū and Regional Programme. At the close of the funding round 12 applications had been received seeking a total of $236,267.54. All 12 projects were awarded funding with some amounts reduced to reflect the panels

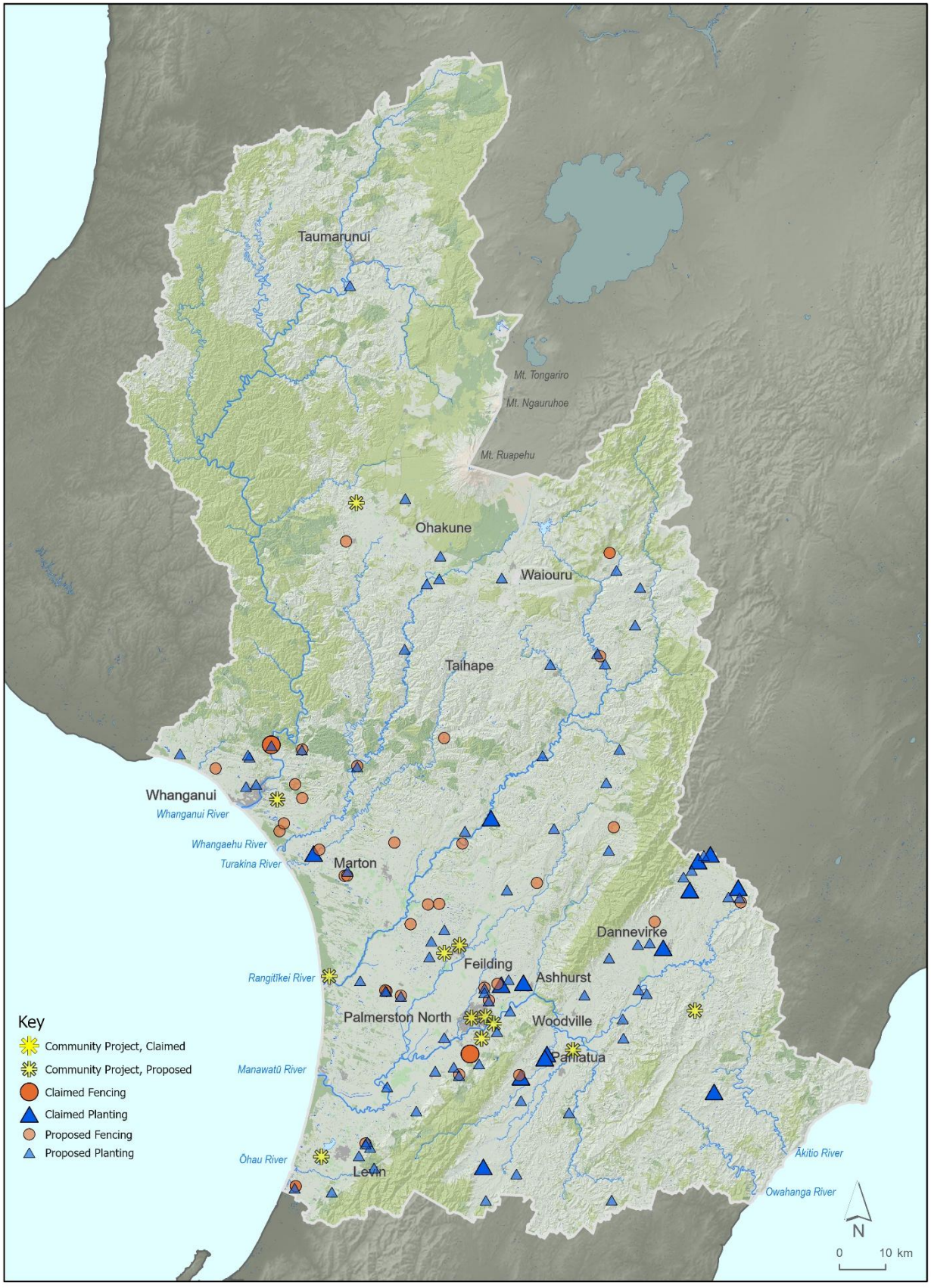
[1] https://www.horizons.govt.nz/about-our-region-and-council/grants-and-sponsorship/freshwater-community-grant

assessment and overall merit of the proposals. Funding agreements have been sent to the project leaders and eight have been signed and returned to date.

14.6. Five projects were awarded funding from the regional programme to reach the total fund amount of $100,000 (Table 38). The regional funding can be used across the region including the Manawatū Catchment with some of the regional funding being utilised to fund the Waitahora Catchment Care Group's project, investigating the source of elevated nitrate levels in spring water.

Table 38: Summary of regional freshwater community grant recipients for the 2026-27 financial year is below.

#	Applicant	Project name	Panel decision	Total funding allocated ($)	Project status
1	Whanganui Region Catchment Collective	MCI Sampling	Approved	$11,443.46	Agreement signed
2	Te Eco School	Wonderful Water	Approved	$2,880	Agreement signed
3	Waitahora Catchment Care Group (MRCC)	Spring to Stream Community Project	Approved	$17,696.54	
4	The Farm Track Community Group	Arawhata Wetland Farm Track	Approved	$30,000	Agreement signed
5	Rangitīkei River Catchment Collective	MCI Sampling & faecal source tracking	Approved	$37,980.00	
Total				**$100,000**	



Freshwater Projects Status to 30 September 2026

Map prepared by: Lucy Ferguson
Date: 9/10/2026.

Map 19: Stream fencing, riparian planting, and freshwater community-led projects allocated and claimed to 30 September 2026.

MANAWATŪ CATCHMENT FRESHWATER ENHANCEMENT

Background

The Manawatū Catchment freshwater enhancement work programme was established as a part of the formation of the Manawatū River Leaders' Forum and the signing of the Manawatū River Leaders Accord in 2010.

The Manawatū River Leaders' Forum is a collaboration of the iwi/hapū, local government, farming and industry leaders, and environmental and recreational advocacy groups. The main goal of the Accord is to improve the Manawatū River, such that it sustains fish species, and is suitable for contact recreation, in balance with the social, cultural, and economic activities of the catchment community. Specific goals set out in the Accord are:

- The Manawatū River becomes a source of regional pride and mana.
- Waterways in the Manawatū Catchment are safe, accessible, swimmable, and provide good recreation and food resources.
- The Manawatū Catchment and waterways are returned to a healthy condition.
- Sustainable use of the land and water resources of the Manawatū Catchment continues to underpin the economic prosperity of the region.

The Annual Plan targets (Table 37) are based on the completion of holding two Manawatū River Leaders' Forum meetings and completing stream fencing, riparian planting, fish passage remediation, and community grants. Landowners and external agencies are significant co-funders of the works completed. The community grant funding is supported by significant volunteer time.

Programme activity

Manawatū River Leaders' Forum

14.7. In March 2025, Council agreed to fund the engagement of Manaaki Whenua (Landcare Research, now New Zealand Institute for Bioeconomy Science Limited) to assist with development of the next Manawatū River Leaders' Accord Action Plan. The Action Plan is being developed in line with the Accord's vision and goals and is funded through the Manawatū Accord targeted rate reserve.

14.8. Engagement with Forum members commenced in June 2025 and has included workshops, focus groups and direct engagement with partner organisations. A total of 40 participants from 21 organisations contributed to development of the draft Action Plan.

14.9. During the reporting period, Council considered the draft Manawatū River Leaders' Accord Action Plan and endorsed Horizons' proposed contribution to the Accord, subject to approved budgets, available resources and future funding decisions. Council also confirmed ongoing support for the Manawatū River Leaders' Forum and endorsed Councillor Te Kenehi Teira and Chair Nikki Riley continuing as co-chairs.

14.10. The next Manawatū River Leaders' Forum meeting is scheduled for 23 October 2026. The focus of the meeting will be finalisation of the Action Plan and confirmation of participating organisations' future commitments and actions.

Freshwater enhancement works

14.11. Summary of the works completed this financial year to date is provided in the Annual Plan target summary in Table 37. An example of the workings is shown in Figure 14. Map 19 overviews the locations of completed and planned works for the year. Overall, at this point in the year:

- The stream fencing programme has 8.4 km of stream fencing allocated and 832 m has been completed.
- The riparian planting programme has surpassed the target with 44,596 riparian plants allocated and 14,004 of those are claimed.

14.12. Of the Freshwater Community Grants applications received in July, eight fall within the Manawatū FMU and have received funding. (Table 39). Project leaders have received the funding agreements and five have been signed and returned.

Table 39: Summary of Regional Freshwater Community grants decisions and achievements for the 2026-27 year.

#	Applicant	Project name	Panel decision	Total funding allocated ($)	Project status
1	Pahiatua Golf Club	Pahiatua GC wetland restoration	Approved	$16,251.50	
2	Environment Network Manawatū	Connecting young people as Kaitiaki of our streams	Approved	$15,000	Agreement signed
3	Green Corridors Range to River	Turitea Stream riparian planting	Approved	$13,435.00	
4	Palmerston North Golf Club	Wetland Restoration Project	Approved	$21,339.98	Agreement signed
5	Mangaone West Catchment Group	2027 Native Planting	Approved	$7,256.00	Agreement signed
6	Feilding High School	Mangakino Restoration Project	Approved	$10,000	Agreement signed
7	Aokautere School	Shade house for propagation of plants	Approved	$7,547.83	Agreement signed
8	Waitahora Catchment Care Group (MRCC)	Spring to Stream Community Project	Approved	$9,169.69	
Total				**$100,000**	



Figure 14: An example of riparian fencing recently completed, with large margins and plans to plant the area next winter. This is in the Mangaone Catchment (Manawatū District).

HOROWHENUA DISTRICT FRESHWATER ENHANCEMENT

Background

The Horowhenua Catchment freshwater enhancement work programme was established as a part of the formation of the signing of the Lake Horowhenua Accord in 2011.

The Lake Horowhenua Accord is a collaboration of the Lake Horowhenua Trust, Horizons Regional Council, Horowhenua District Council, the Lake Horowhenua Domain Board, and the Department of Conservation. The Accord is led by the Lake Horowhenua Trust.

The work programmes of the Accord have included development of an action plan, improved monitoring of the lake, and several large government co-funded programmes, including Freshwater Clean-up Fund, Te Mana o Te Wai Fund, Freshwater Improvement Fund, and Jobs for Nature.

Horizons continues to collaborate with the Accord Partners on freshwater enhancement work in relation to Lake Horowhenua through delivery of lake weed harvesting and the Jobs for Nature project, which includes the development of a wetland complex near Lake Horowhenua. The freshwater team also contributes to work around Lake Rākau Hamana, where Horizons has taken on a role of repairing damage caused by illegal works.

The Annual Plan target (Table 37) is to provide an annual report to Council on Horowhenua freshwater restoration activity. Progress updates are provided throughout the year via the Integrated Catchment Committee report.

Restoration of Lake Horowhenua

Lake Horowhenua is the largest lake within the Horizons' Region and the largest dune lake within New Zealand. Monitoring data shows that the lake experiences poor water quality and many of the parameters monitored are below the One Plan targets and the national bottom line for a range of the attributes that are contained in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (2014 and 2020). Water quality summaries for the lake include the Lake Horowhenua Report Card and summary of water quality in the broader Freshwater Management Unit (FMU).

Horizons' efforts toward restoration of Lake Horowhenua includes work through the Lake Horowhenua and Hokio Stream Catchment Strategy 1998, the Lake Horowhenua Accord (2013), Lake Horowhenua Action Plan (2014-16) and Horizons One Plan. The One Plan includes the Lake Horowhenua Catchment within nutrient management rules and via two non-regulatory methods (Method 5-6 Lake Horowhenua and other coastal lakes and Method 5-7 lake quality research, monitoring and reporting).

Lake Horowhenua has had a long, complicated history of management. The Lake Horowhenua Accord is a collaboration led by the Lake Trust (that are elected to represent the Beneficial Owners of the lake). Other partners include the Horowhenua Lake Domain Board (Domain Board), Horizons Regional Council (Horizons), Horowhenua District Council (HDC), and DOC. Horowhenua District Council led the formation of the Lake Horowhenua Accord with the commitment being signed in August 2013. The Accord aligns a range of organisations who have various, and in some cases overlapping, responsibilities for Lake Horowhenua.

Horizons' work on Lake Horowhenua Restoration has been the subject of a range of items to Council over time including a summary item to Horizons Strategy and Policy Committee in 2020. There have been several government co-funded work programmes as a part of delivering on Lake restoration commitments. More information on these can be found on Horizons website and in a summary item in September 2018.

Horizons has established a dedicated funding policy for the Horowhenua District Freshwater Enhancement work programme. This work programme is primarily the Lake Horowhenua weed harvesting operation and the Jobs for Nature project. The Lake Horowhenua weed harvesting operation that has been summarised in a September 2021 Council item. Updates on the weed harvesting operation are provided quarterly via the Integrated Catchment Committee.

Council considered the funding policy for the Horowhenua Freshwater Enhancement programme as a part of the Long-term Plan in 2024. Council also considered provisioning additional funding for the Arawhata Wetland as a part of the Long-term Plan in 2024.

Lake Weed Harvesting

14.13. Lake-weed harvesting was identified in reports on lake restoration options for Lake Horowhenua in 2010 and 2011. The background to the project is overviewed in the September 2021 Council item. The work is delivered in partnership with the Lake Horowhenua Trust and Muaūpoko Tribal Authority. This year will be the fifth year of the full operation of the weed harvesting following the completion of the trial operation in the 2021-22 financial year.

14.14. The harvester has recently been serviced with engine components, valves and hoses being replaced. This is the first lot of significant maintenance works completed on the weed harvester and is expected given the age and the hours that the harvester has operated for.

14.15. The annual work programme and progress is overviewed in Table 40.

Table 40: Overview of Lake Horowhenua weed harvesting programme and progress.

Task #	Activity description	Progress
1	Update the weed harvesting management plan (NIWA).	Completed
2	Lodge the updated plan with consents monitoring by 30 September.	Completed
3	Complete macrophyte (lake weed) monitoring as required by consent conditions.	Work contracted
4	Employment of contractors and staff for the harvesting (including skippers).	In progress
5	Work with project partners for delivery of the project.	In progress
6	Making arrangements for weed transport and disposal to a composting operation.	In progress
7	Set up site and complete preparation to enable harvesting.	In progress
8	Complete harvesting.	To be completed
9	Complete reporting on the annual harvesting activity.	To be completed

Arawhata Wetland

Background

The JFN Horowhenua Freshwater Management Unit (FMU) Water Quality Interventions project, which includes work in the Lake Horowhenua Catchment and wider FMU, was approved by Council in July 2020, initiated in March 2021 and was contracted through to June 2025 then extended to June 2026.

The project has five objectives. In abbreviated form, these are to:

1. Establish a project governance group.
2. Produce further science on groundwater and nutrient/sediment pathways and sources within the FMU to refine the placement of interventions for water quality improvement.
3. Design and construct a wetland complex.
4. Dissemination of information around the FMU and project is communicated to iwi, hapū, and the community.
5. Employment.

A governance group was established in 2021 and continues to meet on an approximately quarterly basis.

A range of science and design work has been completed. A public web tool has been established and is updated as reports are completed.

The budget totals $12.5M; $11.2M from Central Government and $1.3M from Horizons. This funding allowed for the purchase of a 142-hectare dairy farm in Levin for $6.75M, with Horizons contributing $1M of this. This land was purchased to enable the construction of the Arawhata Wetland Complex. The lease of the land and an associated house provide additional income into the project.

The land purchased for the wetland is in the downstream part of a large stream/drainage network to provide treatment to the water flowing into the lake from the Arawhata sub catchment. Further information can be found in the concept report.

Following the purchasing of a larger land parcel, a master plan for the wetland complex was conceptually designed with phasing to enable the construction to occur over time as further funding became available. Phase 1.1 of the wetland complex will ensure the delivery of the MfE project deliverable of 15 hectares of wetland. Phase 1.1 includes two sediment retention devices and large areas of treatment wetland. These components will see a reduction in sediment, phosphorus and nitrogen entering Lake Horowhenua from the Arawhata Catchment.

The construction of the Arawhata Wetland complex required a number of resource consents. The application for consents was lodged with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under the COVID19 Fast Track Consenting Act process. The dedicated section of Horizons website includes the reports completed to inform the project including information related to the consenting process and a link to the decision of the Expert Consenting Panel. Further information on the fast-track consenting process can be located at the following link.

The Arawhata Wetland project encountered substantial delays through consenting. The consents were granted through the intensive COVID19 Fast Track consenting process in October 2024, but the project was further delayed when this decision was appealed. The appeal was resolved outside of the High Court process in May 2025. The Arawhata Wetland project now has operative consents, with construction of the first phase beginning in March 2026.

The project held a deed of funding with MfE through to June 2025. Due to the delays throughout the consenting process, the delivery of the Arawhata Wetland complex would not have fitted within this timeframe. A variation to the MfE contract was sought to extend the deed of funding expiry until October 2026. This was approved by MfE. The funding for the 2025-26 year was $2,374,046.90 funded via lease income and MfE co-funding with staff time from approved budgets.

Programme activity

Progress over 2026-27

14.16. Construction of the Arawhata Wetland commenced in March 2026 with the first stage of phase one. Stage one of phase one will see two sediment retention devices installed, one diverting flows from the Kohitere Stream and another diverting flows from Joblin's Drain. These will capture sediment and sediment-bound phosphorus before it can reach Punahau/Lake Horowhenua.

14.17. Over 15 hectares of farmland will also be taken out of production, with selected areas planted in wetland species. Images of the site and construction are provided as Figure 15 to Figure 18.

14.18. The project had been on track to have construction completed by 25 June 2026 however, wet conditions at the start of June 2026 had meant that the contractors have not been able to get soil dry enough to enable compaction of the Joblins Sediment Pond (SRP) bunds. In addition, ground conditions were too wet that planting within the restoration wetlands (see photo below) and the constructed sediment wetland has not been possible.

14.19. An extension to the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions, and Transport (CERT) co-funding has been secured in October with a time extension for the project through to 20 March 2027 to enable these last elements of the project to be completed. There are no additional ratepayer costs associated with the extension, noting staff time will continue to be covered within the approved budgets.

14.20. Works have recommenced for the 2026-27 construction season at the site. The fine weather conditions being experienced have allowed for the final compaction of the bunds associated with the constructed elements of the wetland.

Ongoing budget requirements

14.21. There are ongoing costs for the Arawhata Wetland beyond the construction phase and Jobs for Nature project. These costs include drain maintenance, sediment trap maintenance, culvert maintenance, weed and animal pest control, plant release, and regulatory requirement costs etc.

14.22. In the 2026-27 year, the Arawhata Wetland project has budgeted to draw down $100,000 of reserves toward these costs with income from the lease of the land to also fund these costs.

14.23. The project requires ongoing maintenance of the Arawhata property, including drain maintenance and pest control. After a governance group resolution, the project team has renewed the farm lease for a further two years (expiring June 2027), with provisions to remove areas of land as required for wetland construction.

14.24. Council has recently approved entering into a 10-year lease with the Levin Riding for the Disabled for an area of land and buildings off Makomako Road. The establishment of the lease is a work in progress, noting it requires reducing one lease and creating a new lease.



Figure 15: Image of the constructed wetland area showing the restoration wetlands after construction (left side of the image), the constructed sediment wetland (front middle of the image), and the sediment retention pond (in the middle of the image).



Figure 16: Close up image of the construction sediment wetland on the eastern side of the Arawhata Stream. Further planting to be undertaken within the wetland.



Figure 17: Close up image of the two restoration wetlands on the western side of the Arawhata Stream. Only planting of the two restoration wetlands remains.



Figure 18: Aerial image of the sediment retention pond nearing completion.

Lake Rākau Hamana

Background

Lake Rākau Hamama is a dune lake close to Hōkio Beach Township. The lake and its surrounding margin have high biodiversity values and, historically, it had no natural outlet to the coast. Water levels within the lake vary throughout the year depending on rainfall and groundwater levels.

In 2017, unlawful works were undertaken by Mr Fyfe Williamson (Mr Williamson) through a dune to create an outlet and lower the lake level. These works resulted in Horizons using the emergency work provisions of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) to install a temporary dam structure to prevent the lake from completely draining. This dam was installed as a temporary solution while a long-term solution was designed/developed and constructed.

In May 2019, Mr Williamson was sentenced in the Levin District Court to 80 hours community service. No enforcement order was imposed on Mr Williamson requiring him to remedy the effects of his offending, which would have seen restoration of the newly created lake outlet.

In summary, the freshwater team is undertaking a project on Lake Rākau Hamama following a regulatory issue arising from an external person's actions. Several papers have been presented to Council around this issue, including public excluded items in September 2020 and December 2024. A publicly available item was presented on 30 October 2024.

The project team received draft design options for the remediation of the Lake Rākau Hamama outlet. From these options, a paper was brought to Council in December 2024 to progress the remediation of the breached sand dune. Council has given direction to officers to progress with a reinstatement option.

Programme activity

14.25. Further consultation and consenting will continue to be progressed with the chosen option. The cost of construction for the chosen option will be brought through to Council for approval.

14.26. Monitoring equipment as required by the current consent has been installed in the Lake. This information will also be used to inform detailed design.

14.27. The expiry date of the Lake Rakau Hamama consent has been extended to December 2027. The existing consent was on existing use rights and with the amendments to the Resource Management Act 1991 at the end of December 2025 the expiry date was extended out to December 2027.

15. RIVER MANAGEMENT AND FLOOD PROTECTION

Programme overview

15.1. The River Management and Flood Protection activity manages 34 river and drainage schemes across the region (Map 20). These schemes contain approximately 3,969 assets with a provisional replacement value of approximately $1.3 billion.

15.2. The activity delivers:

- maintenance and repairs within river and drainage schemes;
- asset inspections, renewal planning and other asset management activity;
- capital works to maintain and improve flood resilience;
- readiness, response and recovery activity associated with weather events;
- regulatory and dam safety requirements;
- investigations that inform future scheme management, including gravel management, flood vulnerability and Room for the River work; and
- environmental grants for eligible river works.

15.3. The programme is guided by the Long-term Plan, Infrastructure Strategy, Asset Management Plan, Annual Plan performance measures and Council decisions. Scheme committees, scheme ratepayers, landowners, iwi and hapū, territorial authorities and affected communities also contribute to the planning and delivery of the programme.

15.4. The 2026-27 year includes continued delivery of the current work programme alongside preparation of the Infrastructure Strategy 2027-57. Council considered the strategic direction for the new Strategy on 7 October 2026 and selected a combination of moderate change and status quo approaches. These decisions are being incorporated into the draft Infrastructure Strategy and the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

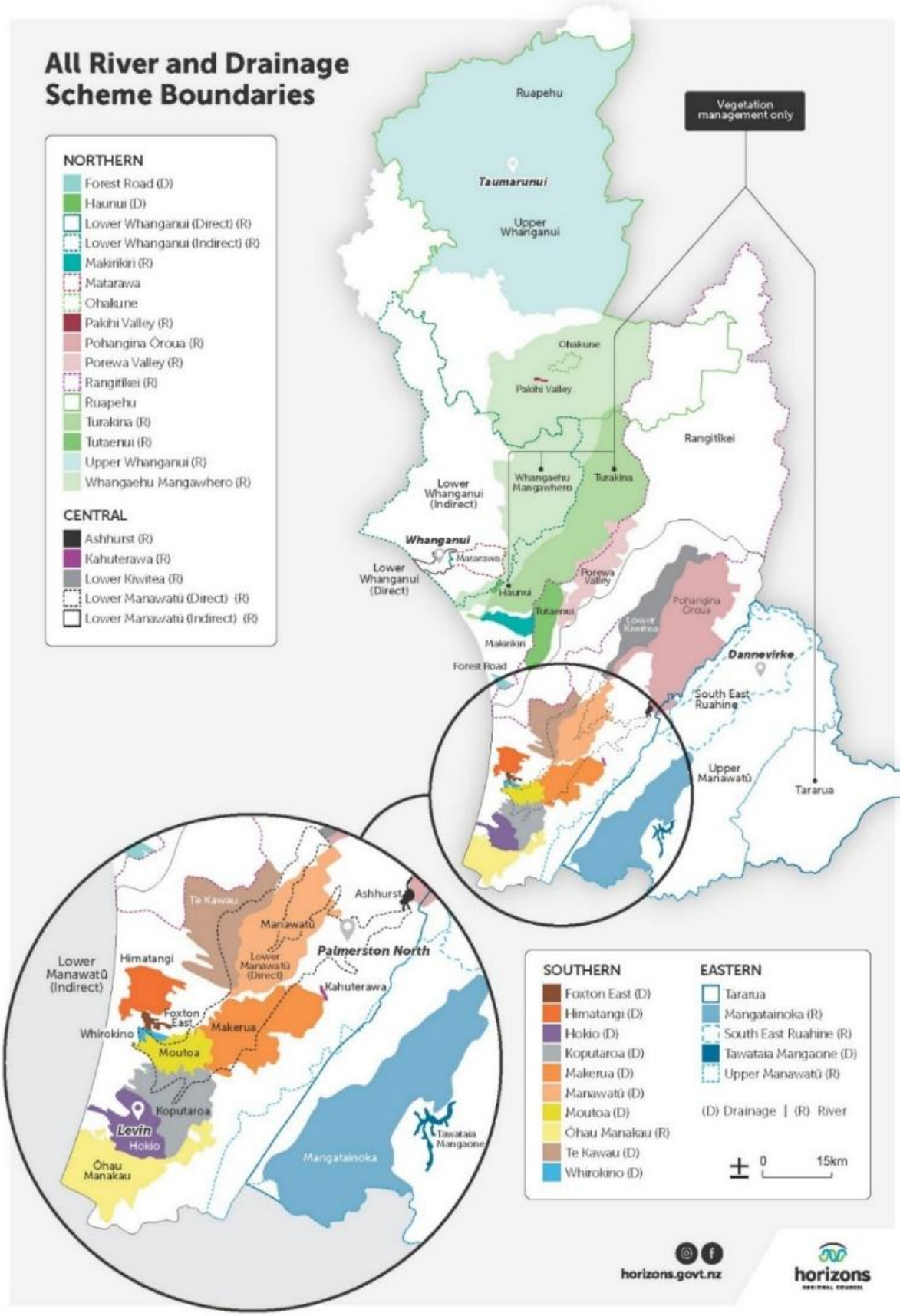
Programme summary

15.5. The River Management and Flood Protection programme is progressing, with Annual Plan performance measures generally tracking as expected. Significant work remains underway on asset management, renewals planning and development of the Infrastructure Strategy.

15.6. A major focus during the reporting period has been development of the Infrastructure Strategy 2027-57 and the supporting 2027-37 Long-term Plan. Council has now provided direction on several strategic issues, including maintenance, repairs, renewals, communications, emergency management, river management approaches and future capital projects. This direction is being incorporated into the draft Infrastructure Strategy and associated financial modelling.

15.7. Alongside the core programme, a number of Council-approved work programmes remain underway, including the Hōkio Scheme drainage improvements, Ruapehu joint work programme, Makirikiri Scheme work programme and Pohangina-Ōroua recovery programme.

15.8. The following sections provide updates on development of the Infrastructure Strategy, Annual Plan performance, maintenance and repair operations, targeted scheme programmes, asset management and renewals.



Map 20: River and drainage schemes in the Manawatū-Whanganui Region.

INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2027-57

Background

15.9. Development of the Infrastructure Strategy 2027-57 commenced in early 2026 and has included Council workshops, Committee discussions, scheme engagement, environmental scanning, asset management analysis and financial modelling. The Strategy will form part of the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

15.10. Throughout 2026, Council considered a series of strategic issues relating to service levels, affordability, asset management, communications, emergency management, future river management approaches and capital investment. Following workshops and a Council report in October 2026, Council provided direction on the preferred level of change for each issue (Table 41).

15.11. The Infrastructure Strategy is now being refined to incorporate Council's direction and will return to Council later in 2026 as part of the draft Long-term Plan process.

Table 41: Council Direction on Infrastructure Strategy Key Issues.

Strategic Issue	Council Direction	Current Planning Assumption	Indicative Additional Annual Cost
Maintenance	Moderate Change	Increase maintenance budgets by approximately 10% above current levels.	~$0.55M
Repairs	Moderate Change	Increase repair budgets by approximately 10% above current levels.	~$0.30M
Renewals	Moderate Change	Expand renewal programmes and funding arrangements to additional schemes.	~$1.10M*
Communications	Status Quo	Continue existing communications, reporting and scheme engagement activities.	Nil
Emergency Management Response and Recovery	Status Quo	Continue current insurance, reserve and financial resilience arrangements.	Nil
Structure, Function and Funding of Schemes	Status Quo	Continue existing scheme structures and funding arrangements while improving delivery systems and information.	Nil
River Management Approaches	Moderate Change	Expand investigation of Room for the River, river line and blue-green infrastructure approaches.	~$0.20M
Capital Programme	Moderate Change	Develop a future capital project pipeline and progress up to two projects per year towards investment readiness.	~$0.45M operating expenditure plus project investigation costs
Total Currently Identified Additional Annual Investment			~$2.60M**

*Additional renewal programme costs. This is a planning assumption and remains subject to further analysis and Council decisions on the number of schemes included, programme scope and funding arrangements.
**Plus future capital construction costs to be determined.

Infrastructure Strategy Programme Activity

15.12. Council's direction generally supports increased investment in ensuring delivery, renewal planning, future river management approaches and development of a future capital project pipeline, while retaining current approaches to communications, emergency management financial resilience and scheme structures.

15.13. The current phase of work (Table 42) has shifted from option development to preparation of the draft Infrastructure Strategy and supporting Long-term Plan information. Work is underway to refine investment assumptions, develop supporting programmes and assess financial implications.

Table 42: Infrastructure Strategy Work Programme.

#	Workstream	Current Focus
1	Maintenance and Repairs	Apply Council's Moderate Change direction across schemes and confirm programme, reserve and funding implications for the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.
2	Renewals	Develop a defensible renewals methodology, confirm programme requirements and assess funding and reserve requirements.
3	Capital Programme	Confirm future capital investment priorities and refine the programme of projects required to maintain and improve levels of service.
4	Future River Management Approaches	Define Council's Moderate Change approach for Room for the River, river lines and blue-green infrastructure, including scope, objectives and implementation options.
5	Financial Modelling and Forecasting Assumptions	Refine expenditure forecasts, reserve requirements, borrowing assumptions, rates impacts and funding pathways.
6	Levels of Service and Performance Measures	Review levels of service and associated performance measures for inclusion in the Infrastructure Strategy and Long-term Plan.
7	Engagement and Assurance	Prepare material for scheme engagement, Long-term Plan consultation and Audit New Zealand review.

Next Steps

15.14. The draft Infrastructure Strategy is expected to be presented to Council alongside the draft Financial Strategy, aiming for later in 2026. The Strategy will then continue to be refined through audit review, Long-term Plan consultation, scheme engagement, submissions, hearings and Council deliberations prior to adoption as part of the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

15.15. Future Integrated Catchment Committee reports will continue to provide updates on development of the Infrastructure Strategy, including progress on renewals, the future capital programme, river management approaches, financial modelling and implementation of Council's preferred strategic direction.

ANNUAL PLAN PERFORMANCE

Overview

15.16. The River Management and Flood Protection activity has 18 applicable Annual Plan performance measures for the 2026-27 financial year. As at 30 September 2026, four measures have been achieved, 14 measures are considered on track. No measures are currently assessed as being at risk or not achieved (Table 43).

Table 43: Progress against the river management Annual Plan targets for 2026-27, 1 July 2026 to 30 September 2026.

	Level of service and performance measures	Target	Progress update	Status
#	**We will undertake maintenance within the river and drainage schemes**			
1	28. Maintenance is undertaken on scheme drains (a drain may receive maintenance more than once per year, and each maintenance activity counts toward the target).	520 km	5 km completed	On track
2	29. Kilometres of scheme river erosion protection maintained, e.g., mulching or maintenance of vegetation used for riverbank erosion (such as mulching of willows).	75 km	10 km completed	On track
3	30. Kilometres of river channel maintenance completed, e.g., movement of gravel in reach to reduce erosion pressure on stopbanks.	18 km	18 km completed; This excludes aerial surveying	Achieved
4	31. Number of scheme floodgates maintained, e.g., cleaned, repaired, adjusted, etc.	97	375 floodgates maintained; includes inspections with planned maintenance	Achieved
5	32. Kilometres of scheme stopbanks maintained, e.g., mowing of stopbanks, repairs to stopbanks, etc.	65 km	34 km completed	On track
6	33. Number of river scheme amenity works maintained (e.g., tracks on stopbanks).	1	0 completed	On track
	We will complete asset management activity for the river and drainage schemes			
7	34. Percentage of critical asset inspections completed.	77%	16% of critical assets inspected	On track
8	35. Percentage of non-critical asset inspections completed.	20%	0.2% of non-critical assets inspected	On track
9	36. Percentage of asset renewal programme completed.	75%	12% of renewal programme budget spent	On track
10	37. Asset condition report provided to Council. May report on the previous year's information.	Achieve	Complete July ICC (pages 63-64) updated below	Achieved
11	38. Asset revaluation process completed and reported to Council. May report on the previous year's information.	Achieve	Complete July ICC (pages 65-67) updated below	Achieved
12	39. Number of assets upgraded or modified to meet NES-F requirements.	2	0 completed	On track
	We will continue to undertake capital works programmes to maintain and build resilience to climate change that have been identified through the planning process and approved by Council at the first Integrated Catchment Committee meeting at the start of each financial year			
13	40. Percentage of the approved capital works programme completed.	70%	No projects completed to date	On track
	We will continue to respond to weather events that impact our river and drainage schemes			
14	41. Council is informed of the likely impact of weather events that cause significant damage to river and drainage schemes on work programmes and budget within three months of the event occurring.	Achieve	Update in this report	On track
	We will report on River and Drainage Activity.			
N/A	42. Dam Safety Assurance Programme reports completed as a part of meeting the Dam Safety Regulations 2022.	N/A	Target is for year 2	Not applicable
N/A	43. Intermediate Dam Safety Review reports completed as a part of meeting the Dam Safety Regulations 2022.	N/A	Target is for year 2	Not applicable
15	44. Annual report on regulatory activity, including Environmental Code of Practice and Consents, and work to align with new regulations such as national policy statements and environmental standards.	Achieve	Annual report will be provided later in the financial year	On track
	We will continue to provide advice and direction around performance and sustainability of our scheme networks			
16	45. Number of gravel management reports completed.	2	Three reports proposed to be completed by 30 June 2027	On track
N/A	Flood vulnerability assessment reports completed including analysis of the potential impact of climate change.	N/A	Target is for year 1.	Not applicable
17	46. Annual report on Room for River projects.	Achieve	Mangatainoka Catchment selected for work. Report to be provided later in the financial year	On track
	We will continue to support community climate resilience by providing Environmental Grants to assist applicants to undertake works within waterways			
18	47. Number of Environmental Grants completed.	5	Two grants allocated	On track

SCHEME OPERATIONS – MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

Programme overview

15.17. Horizons introduced a maintenance-based programme approach in 2024-25. Under this approach, each river and drainage scheme is assigned an annual maintenance programme and associated budget, with delivery tracked throughout the year.

15.18. Repair programmes are informed by engineering inspections, asset condition assessments and identified defects. The 2026-27 maintenance budget was set at $5.450M and the repair budget at $2.951M.

Programme Activity 2026-27

15.19. Maintenance and repair programmes have been developed for all 34 river and drainage schemes, building on previous years' maintenance programmes, asset inspections and defect information.

15.20. Current repair programmes include approximately 400 identified defects assigned to jobs planned for delivery during 2026-27. The identified works continue to be refined as further inspection information, site investigations, permissions, methodologies and cost estimates become available.

15.21. Work continues to improve the linkage between maintenance, repairs, inspections, defects and reporting systems. Further system enhancements are planned to reduce duplication, improve reporting and strengthen the linkage between asset inspections and work programmes.

15.22. As at the end of August 2026, expenditure totalled $0.89M (8% of the available maintenance and repair budget). The finance system currently forecasts full utilisation of the available maintenance and repair budgets by year end.

15.23. Current work programmes total approximately $8.8M (82%) of the revised maintenance and repair budget. Additional maintenance and repair works are expected to be identified during the year as further inspections, investigations and development of repair programmes are completed, particularly where the scope, methodology and cost of potential works are still being assessed.

15.24. A significant proportion of expenditure is expected to occur later in the financial year as programmes progress through planning, procurement, permissions, landowner engagement and physical delivery phases.

15.25. Work programme allocation varies between schemes. Some schemes currently have identified works that exceed available budgets, while others have funding available for additional works to be identified. Where programmed works exceed available budgets, staff will prioritise delivery within approved funding levels unless additional funding approvals are obtained.

15.26. Table 44 provides an overview of maintenance and repair budgets, expenditure and current work programme forecasts for each scheme. The finance system forecast reflects current year-end financial forecasts, while the work programme forecast reflects the estimated value of works currently identified and programmed for delivery as recorded in separate software.

15.27. Table 45, Figure 19 and Figure 20 provide further detail on progress towards achieving maintenance and repair programme targets.

Table 44: Maintenance and repair budget position and work programme allocation as at 31 August 2026.

Scheme	Revised Budget Maintenance and Repairs ($)	Total Actual Year to End of August ($)	Actual Spend Year to End of August (% of Revised Budget)	Finance System Forecast Year End ($)	Finance System Forecast Year End (% of Revised Budget)	Current Work Programme Estimate Forecast to Year End ($)	Current Work Programme Estimate Year End (%)
Northern Area							
Ruapehu District Wide	246,545	798	0%	246,545	100%	252,500	102%
Upper Whanganui	63,943	-	-	63,943	100%	60,465	95%
Ohakune	55,134	-	-	55,134	100%	50,100	91%
Pakihi Valley	4,435	-	-	4,435	100%	6,000	135%
Whangaehu - Mangawhero	55,134	-	-	55,134	100%	50,000	91%
Lower Whanganui	182,463	1,681	1%	182,463	100%	114,000	62%
Matarawa	74,710	1,177	2%	74,710	100%	91,300	122%
Haunui	17,930	-81	0%	17,930	100%	16,000	89%
Makirikiri	21,765	-27	0%	21,765	100%	135,670	623%
Turakina	39,032	-29	0%	39,032	100%	35,000	90%
Pōrewa Valley	88,717	930	1%	88,716	100%	141,200	159%
Tutaenui	88,076	836	1%	88,077	100%	141,850	161%
Forest Road	19,405	-76	0%	19,405	100%	19,400	100%
Rangitīkei	503,064	183,077	36%	503,065	100%	505,118	100%
Central Area							
Ashhurst	22,551	1	0%	22,551	100%	22,600	100%
Lower Kiwitea	121,150	-	-	121,150	100%	119,075	98%
Kahuterawa	4,925	-	-	4,925	100%	0	0%
Lower Manawatū	2,969,649	132,419	4%	2,969,648	100%	2,282,484	98%
Eastern Area							
Tararua District Wide	282,817	50,481	18%	282,817	100%	447,550	158%
Mangatainoka	388,490	-	-	388,490	100%	506,000	130%
South East Ruahine	335,485	34,610	10%	335,485	100%	329,486	98%
Tawataia-Mangaone	26,695	-	-	26,696	100%	30,000	112%
Upper Manawatū - Lower Mangahao	210,229	-	-	210,229	100%	318,000	151%
Pohangina - Ōroua	2,617,006	328,656	13%	2,617,006	100%	714,219	83%
Southern Area							
Foxton East	31,205	6	0%	31,205	100%	33,000	106%
Himatangi	21,206	3	0%	21,206	100%	23,500	111%
Makerua	512,687	15,388	3%	512,687	100%	477,272	93%
Manawatū	697,790	62,635	9%	697,790	100%	706,985	101%
Te Kawau	212,132	42,779	20%	212,132	100%	289,012	136%
Hōkio	52,784	783	1%	52,784	100%	69,887	132%
Ōhau - Manakau	246,946	958	0%	246,946	100%	248,820	101%
Koputaroa	184,809	15,990	9%	184,809	100%	174,425	94%
Whirokino	45,864	3,170	7%	45,864	100%	53,345	116%
Moutoa	303,488	11,974	4%	303,488	100%	317,310	105%
All Schemes	**10,748,261**	**888,139**	**8%**	**10,748,262**	**100%**	**8,781,574**	**82%**

Table 45: Summary of maintenance-based programme completed for 2026-27 as of 30 September 2026. Note that some maintenance activities include a component of regular inspecting with asset servicing activities, such as dams, drains and floodgates.

Maintenance activity	Target[1]	Completed	% of target complete[2]	Description
Drain (km)	520	5	1%	Mechanical with spray mostly expected during Spring and Autumn. On track.
Floodgate (No.)	97	375	387%	Maintenance and/or checks. Achieved.
Stopbank (km)	65	34	52%	Mostly mowing. On track.
River edge protection (km)	75	10	13%	Willow maintenance. On track.
Channel (km)	18	18	100%	Includes aerial spraying, channel clearance and gravel management. Achieved.
Amenity (No.)	1	0	0%	Maintenance. On track.
Weir (No.)	NA	0	NA	Maintenance and/or checks.
Pump station (No.)	NA	22	NA	Maintenance and/or checks.
Flood barrier (No.)	NA	0	NA	Maintenance and/or checks.
Dam (No.)	NA	72	NA	Maintenance and/or checks.

[1] Assets can have multiple maintenance treatments during the year, with each treatment counting towards the target, e.g., a drain being chemically cleaned twice per year, in spring and then in autumn.

[2] Performance targets were established prior to implementation of the maintenance-based programme approach and before maintenance activity was consistently recorded across schemes. Improved programme planning and reporting now provides better visibility of maintenance activity and indicates that some targets may no longer appropriately reflect the level of work being delivered.

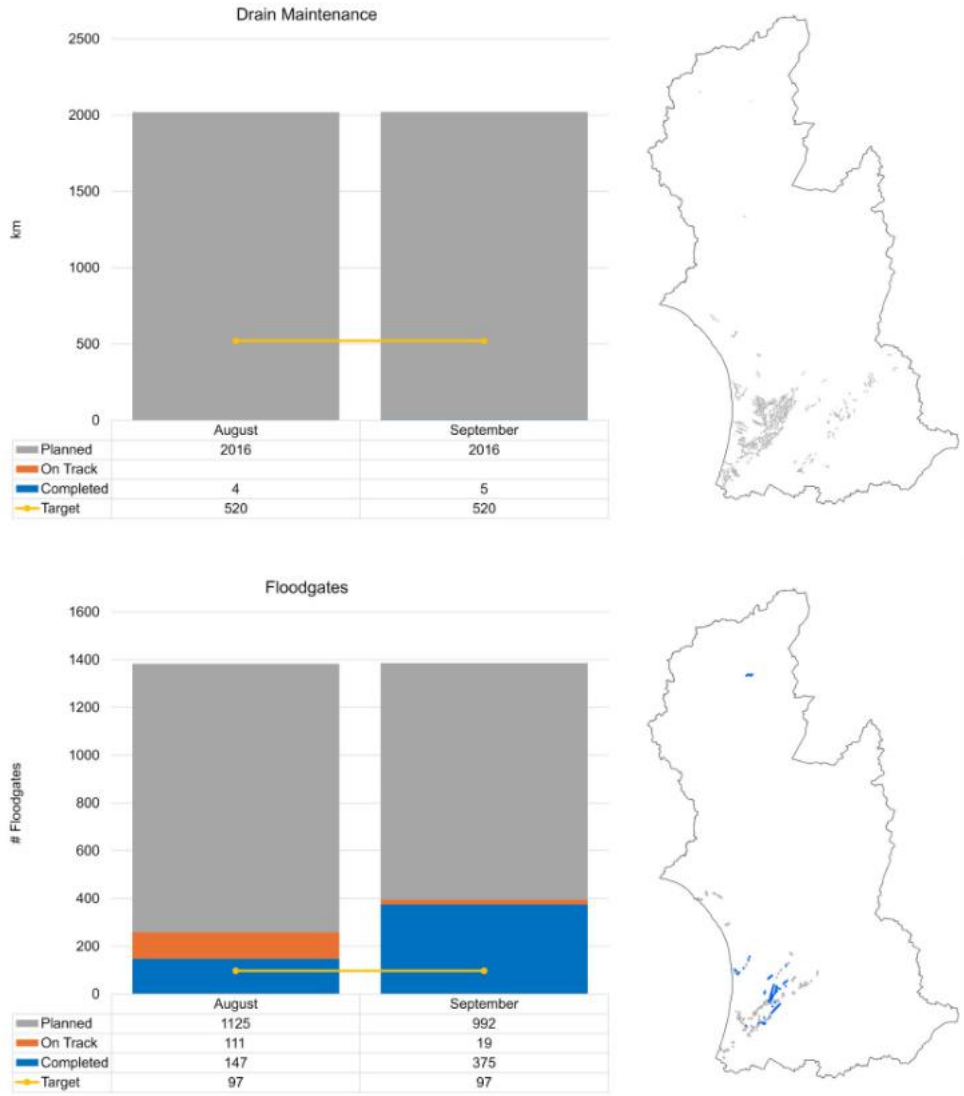


Figure 19: Summary of some of the maintenance-based programme work programmes for 2026-27 by reporting month.



Figure 20: Summary of some of the maintenance-based programme work programmes for 2026-27 by reporting month.

TARGETED SCHEME PROGRAMMES

Overview

15.28. Targeted Scheme Programmes are activities receiving ongoing governance oversight outside routine maintenance, repair, renewal and capital works programmes. This section provides updates on scheme meetings and engagement, the Hōkio Scheme, Ruapehu joint work programme, Makirikiri Scheme programme and the Pohangina-Ōroua recovery programme.

Scheme Meetings and Engagement

Overview

15.29. District-based scheme meetings provide an opportunity for ratepayers, landowners and elected members to discuss scheme performance, work programmes, budgets and emerging issues. The most recent round of scheme meetings was held during February 2026 and covered all 34 river and drainage schemes.

Programme Activity

15.30. A total of 20 follow-up actions were identified through the February 2026 scheme meetings, excluding minor operational matters. As at October 2026, the majority of actions have been completed, progressed into approved work programmes or incorporated into other Council workstreams. This includes actions relating to the Ruapehu joint work programme, Makirikiri Scheme investigations, Pohangina-Ōroua recovery activities, flood damage assessments and various operational matters.

15.31. Several actions have now been closed following consideration through other Council processes. This includes:

- investigation of options to improve flood protection for Marton and the wider catchment, having transferred into the Infrastructure Strategy and future capital programme work;
- investigation of gravel accumulation at the Ōroua River bridges at Awahuri and Kōpane, which was considered through the Ōroua gravel management study reported to the Integrated Catchment Committee; and
- actions resulting in approved 2026-27 work programmes for the Ruapehu District.

15.32. One action relating to the Burkes Pump Station remains unresolved. No further work is currently planned on this matter. While some ratepayers continue to express concerns regarding the original decision to install the pump station, the associated operating costs and the rating mechanism used to fund it, Council has not directed any further review work through the Infrastructure Strategy or Long-term Plan processes. The action is therefore considered closed.

15.33. The Infrastructure Strategy process identified opportunities to improve engagement with scheme ratepayers, landowners and stakeholders. In response, staff have commenced work with the communications team on options for communication over the year. The intent is to improve how information on scheme performance, work programmes, projects and future investment requirements is communicated and discussed with interested parties.

Programme Outlook

15.34. Future scheme engagement is expected to focus on development of the Infrastructure Strategy 2027–57 and the 2027–37 Long-term Plan. The next district-based scheme meetings are currently expected to be held during March and April 2027 and will provide an opportunity to discuss proposed Long-term Plan assumptions, future service levels, funding requirements, renewal programmes and scheme priorities. Development of the communications and engagement strategy will continue over the coming months and is expected to inform future engagement approaches.

Hōkio Scheme additional works

Overview

15.35. In December 2025, Council approved a package of drainage improvement actions within the Hōkio Scheme. The programme includes a combination of drainage improvements, culvert upgrades, monitoring improvements and associated works intended to improve drainage performance within the scheme area. More detailed information is available through previous Council reports, and the separate Council item is being prepared for Council.

Programme Activity

15.36. Progress has continued on implementation of the approved work programme. Four of the seven approved actions have been completed, including installation of remote monitoring cameras, completion of culvert replacement works associated with the Arawhata Wetland project, and closure of matters where no further action was required.

15.37. The remaining actions are progressing (Table 46). Resource consents have been obtained for the upgrade of Culverts 3 and 7, with works currently planned for November 2026 subject to suitable weather conditions. Planning also continues for vegetation and sediment removal works at the Lake Horowhenua outlet in conjunction with project partners.

Table 46: Hōkio Scheme drainage improvement programme status.

Action #	Workstream	Status	Comment
1	Lake Horowhenua outlet vegetation and sediment removal	In Progress	Planning and permissions underway.
2	Culvert 2 upgrade	Complete	Completed through Phase One of the Arawhata Wetland project.
3	Culvert 3 upgrade	In Progress	Consent granted, works planned for November 2026.
4	Culvert 4 monitoring	Complete	Camera installed and operational.
5	Culvert 5 monitoring	Complete	Camera installed and operational.
6	Culvert 6 floodgate	Complete	No further action required.
7	Culvert 7 upgrade	In Progress	Consent granted, works planned for November 2026

Programme Outlook

15.38. Implementation of the remaining drainage improvement works is expected to continue through 2026-27. A separate project update is being presented alongside this report and provides more detailed information on the broader Hōkio and Arawhata work programme.

Ruapehu Flood Resilience Council Collaboration Agreement

Overview

15.39. The Ruapehu Flood Resilience Council Collaboration Agreement establishes a framework for Horizons and Ruapehu District Council to work together on stormwater, roading and flood-resilience issues within the Ruapehu District. The agreement followed a joint meeting of councillors from both councils on 12 March 2025 and Council consideration of the proposed programme in September 2025. It was signed by the Chief Executives of both councils in November 2025.

15.40. Council reviewed progress on 30 June 2026 via a Council item and directed that the agreement continues for a further year. Council also approved further flood modelling and investigations for Taumarunui, investigation and consenting of potential culvert upgrades in Ohakune, and support for Ruapehu District Council to clear stormwater sumps and culverts within Ohakune.

Programme Activity

15.41. Many actions from the original work programme have been completed or transitioned into ongoing scheme activities. Completed work includes drainage and vegetation clearance in Taumarunui, roadside drainage improvements near Matiere, vegetation management within the Ohakune Scheme and establishment of the formal collaboration agreement.

15.42. Current work is focused on implementing Council's June 2026 direction and progressing the remaining targeted activities. Progress is summarised in Table 47.

Table 47: Outstanding Ruapehu Flood Resilience Council Collaboration actions.

Action	Status	Current Position and Next Step
Matiere willow and vegetation removal	In progress	Contractor engaged, with work programmed to commence in November 2026.
Ohakune stormwater sump clearance	In progress	Horizons and Ruapehu District Council are working to identify and clear priority stormwater sumps. The initial work will focus on sump clearance while the separate culvert investigation progresses.
Ohakune culvert investigation	In progress	Initial work is confirming the location, number, dimensions and condition of relevant culverts. Once this information has been assembled and validated, external engineering analysis is expected to be commissioned to assess existing capacity, determine appropriate future capacity and identify potential upgrade options.
Taumarunui flood modelling and options assessment	In progress	Procurement documentation is being prepared, with procurement planned for November or December 2026. Council has requested that options for future flood mitigation be reported by 30 June 2027.
Collaboration Agreement update	In progress	Horizons and Ruapehu District Council continue to operate under the existing agreement. The agreement has not yet been updated to reflect Council's June 2026 direction.

15.43. The Ohakune culvert investigation has included sourcing, validating the underlying asset and survey information needed to establish how many culverts there are, where they are and which culverts are relevant to flood performance before assessing their current capacity and identifying the scale and potential benefits of any upgrades.

15.44. In addition to the targeted actions, routine river management work continues across the Ruapehu Schemes. This includes vegetation clearance and consenting work in Ohakune, floodgate replacement assessments, asset inspections and defect investigations in Taumarunui, and other scheme maintenance activities.

Programme Outlook

15.45. Work will continue through 2026-27 on the outstanding actions and implementation of Council's June 2026 direction. Priorities for the next reporting period are commencement of the Matiere willow-removal works, clearance of priority Ohakune stormwater sumps, completion of the initial Ohakune culvert information and survey work, and procurement of the Taumarunui flood-modelling programme.

15.46. Future updates will report progress against these activities, including whether the information required to commission the Ohakune engineering analysis has been completed. The Taumarunui flood-mitigation options are due to be reported to Council by 30 June 2027.

Makirikiri Scheme

Overview

15.47. The Makirikiri Scheme provides flood protection and drainage services to rural land west of Turakina. The Scheme includes its original operating area and assets added through a Council-approved extension in 2018. Different funding and regulatory arrangements apply across these areas, creating complexity in confirming responsibilities, securing permissions and funding future works.

15.48. The Integrated Catchment Committee considered the Makirikiri Scheme update in May 2026. The Committee resolved to:

- require specific reporting on the Makirikiri Scheme through ICC reports during 2026-27;
- direct that resource consent be obtained for operation of the Mangatikotoko Dam, funded through river management general rates;
- approve up to $10,000 per year of River Management Environmental Grant funding for the general rate share of specified scheme activities through to 30 June 2027;
- endorse the actions identified in the report, subject to the amended resolutions; and
- establish a working group comprising the Group Manager Catchment Operations, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Integrated Catchment Committee and Councillor Bruce Gordon to work with landowners and report progress through the ICC.

Programme Activity

15.49. Progress has been made across several of the endorsed actions. Resource consent applications for maintenance of the Makirikiri Stream spillway and operation of the Mangatikotoko Dam were lodged in September 2026. Planning work has also been completed for remediation associated with the Mangatikotoko Stream slump, and the 2026-27 maintenance programme has been developed.

15.50. The working group recently met with scheme landowners to discuss the May 2026 report and resolutions, progress against the action programme and future scheme management.

15.51. Scheme members raised the following matters for further consideration:

- reconsideration by Council of funding options for some proposed works;
- rates modelling to show the implications of potential funding approaches; and
- development of a clear operational manual documenting the Scheme's assets, expected service levels, work programmes, regulatory requirements and funding responsibilities.

15.52. Progress and the principal outstanding matters are summarised in Table 48.

Programme Outlook

15.53. A further report is being prepared for Council, aiming for consideration in November 2026. The report is expected to respond to matters raised by scheme members, including funding options, rates modelling, priority works and development of the Scheme operational manual.

15.54. Progress against the remaining actions (Table 48) will continue to be reported through the Integrated Catchment Committee. Any proposed changes to the existing funding arrangements, additional expenditure or future work commitments will be referred to Council for decision.

Table 48: Progress against actions endorsed through the May 2026 Makirikiri Scheme update.

Action #	Action area	Status	Current position and next step
1	Scheme funding mechanisms	Implemented, with further review requested	The funding direction from the May 2026 meeting has been implemented. Following recent engagement, scheme members have requested that Council reconsider funding options for some activities and provide supporting rates modelling. These matters are being prepared for further Council consideration.
2	Documented work programme and funding responsibilities	Underway	The 2026-27 maintenance programme has been developed and discussed with scheme members. Scheme members have also requested a clear operational manual documenting assets, service expectations, regulatory requirements, planned work and funding responsibilities.
3	Makirikiri Stream spillway resource consent	Application lodged	A replacement resource consent application was lodged in September 2026 to enable ongoing spillway maintenance.
4	Makirikiri Stream spillway estimates	Underway	Estimates and delivery options have been obtained and are being refined alongside the consent requirements.
5	Makirikiri Stream spillway funding	Further Council consideration required	Funding arrangements cannot be finalised until the scope, consent requirements and anticipated cost are sufficiently clear. Funding options are expected to form part of the further Council report.
6	Makirikiri Stream spillway works	Pending	Physical works remain dependent on completion of the consent process and confirmation of funding and procurement arrangements.
7	Mangatikotoko Dam resource consent	Application lodged	The resource consent application was lodged in September 2026. In accordance with the May 2026 resolution, the work is being funded through river management general rates.
8	Mangatikotoko Stream access-ramp remediation	Underway	The outstanding access-ramp issue is being assessed, with scope, estimates and the appropriate permissions pathway being confirmed.
9	Planning assessment for slump remediation	Complete	The planning assessment has been completed and is informing the options available for remediation.
10	Permissions and implementation for slump remediation	Underway	The preferred response, required permissions, cost and implementation arrangements are being determined.
11	Document benefits of Mangatikotoko Stream maintenance	Underway	Recent engagement with affected landowners has helped clarify their concerns and the perceived benefits of the work. Further documentation is required to support consideration of future activity and funding.
12	Decide whether and how to progress ongoing Mangatikotoko Stream maintenance	Further decision required	Ongoing maintenance presents regulatory, environmental, benefit and cost-sharing considerations. Further analysis, landowner engagement and Council consideration are required before deciding whether to seek consent and how future activity would be funded.

Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme

Overview

15.55. The Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme has experienced sustained pressure since Cyclone Gabrielle in February 2023, with recovery and ongoing river management needs exceeding available budgets and delivery capacity. A further significant weather event in February 2026 increased demand for repairs and maintenance and prompted a review of programme priorities.

15.56. In response, the Scheme established a subcommittee to assist with prioritising works and provide ongoing input into programme delivery. Council subsequently approved additional funding, use of reserves, borrowing and an additional river management staff resource to support implementation. Since then, the focus has shifted from recovery planning and funding decisions to delivery of an expanded maintenance and repair programme.

Programme Activity

15.57. The management of Pohangina-Ōroua Scheme works has been transferred to the Eastern Area during the reporting period. This was part of a rebalance within river management operations in relation to workloads and adjusting to the significant larger scale of works in the Pohangina-Ōroua in 2026-27. The Scheme subcommittee met throughout 2026 to prioritise maintenance and repair activities and provide guidance on the allocation of the additional funding approved by Council. The programme was structured to address higher-priority repair sites, undertake preventative works before conditions deteriorated further, and package works geographically to improve delivery efficiency.

15.58. Maintenance delivery has progressed during the first quarter of 2026-27. Channel maintenance, debris removal, gravel management, vegetation management, edge protection works and follow-up planting have been completed at multiple locations throughout the Scheme. As at 30 September 2026, maintenance expenditure represented 59% of the revised maintenance budget.

15.59. Repair delivery has also advanced substantially. Following prioritisation by the subcommittee, a range of repair works have been completed. The majority of outstanding repair works were bundled into six procurement packages. This procurement approach enabled larger packages of work to be tendered and established a structured pathway for delivery of the approved repair programme. Contractor selection has been completed, with these works progressing through landowner agreements, final scope confirmation and implementation.

15.60. The expanded programme represents a significant increase in activity compared with historic annual budgets. As at 30 September 2026, the combined maintenance and repair programme totalled approximately $2.6 million, with current forecasts indicating approximately 91% of the revised budget will be delivered during 2026-27 (Table 49).

Table 49: Pohangina-Ōroua maintenance and repair budget position as at 30 September 2026.

Programme	Revised Budget ($)	Actual Expenditure ($)	Actual Expenditure (%)	Forecast Year End ($)	Forecast (%)
Maintenance	477,500	280,534	59%	477,500	100%
Repairs	1,518,734	201,678	13%	1,310,000	86%
Repairs - Capital	620,218	132,242	21%	585,000	94%
Total	**2,617,006**	**614,454**	**23%**	**2,372,500**	**91%**

15.61. The current repair programme includes completed works, works in progress and a substantial number of programmed repair projects scheduled throughout the remainder of 2026-27. Delivery remains dependent on final landowner agreements, site-specific design confirmation and river conditions, with some repair scopes requiring refinement as conditions and landowner agreements continue to evolve.

Programme Outlook

15.62. The subcommittee met again on 16 October 2026 and noted that the majority of the additional funding approved by Council has now been allocated to identified maintenance and repair activities. The focus of the programme is therefore shifting from prioritisation and procurement to delivery of the approved works programme. Future reporting will focus on delivery against forecast expenditure, completion of repair packages, implementation of the remaining maintenance programme and any material changes requiring further Scheme or Council direction.

16. RIVER MANAGEMENT ASSET MANAGEMENT

Asset Management Summary

- The provisional 2025-26 asset revaluation identified 3,969 river and drainage assets with a replacement value of approximately $1.3 billion.
- Asset inspection targets are currently on track.
- Most assets continue to perform their intended function, however 12.4% of assets show some level of impairment, including 2.5% assessed as having major damage or significant loss.
- Improved inspection and defect information is providing a better understanding of future maintenance, repair, renewal and capital investment requirements. There is more work to fully understand these requirements.
- Active defects have reduced from 1,440 in March 2026 to 1,068 in October 2026.
- Of the 153 defects assessed as High or Very High risk, 52 (34%) have been assigned to a work programme and 101 (66%) have not yet been assigned to a work programme. Assignment does not necessarily reflect priority order, as some defects require further staff capacity, investigation, design, consenting, renewal assessment or funding decisions before an appropriate response can be determined.
- Council has selected a Moderate Change approach to renewals as part of the Infrastructure Strategy development. Work is underway to develop a more robust and defensible renewals programme.

Background

16.1. The river management and flood protection asset portfolio comprises 3,969 assets with a provisional replacement value of approximately $1.3 billion (Table 50). Effective management of this asset base relies on maintaining accurate asset information, understanding asset condition, identifying defects and developing appropriate maintenance, repair, renewal and capital investment programmes.

Table 50: Asset Summary.

Measure	2024-25	2025-26 (Provisional)	Change
Assets	3,946	3,969	+23
Replacement Value	$1.24B	$1.30B	+$62M
Value Change	-	-	+5%

16.2. The 2025-26 revaluation figures remain provisional pending completion of the 2025-26 Annual Report audit.

16.3. The updated asset schedule and asset values arising from the provisional revaluation have been provided to Council's insurance broker to support renewal of the River Management and Flood Protection insurance programme. At the time of writing, the annual insurance renewal process was still underway and final premium information had not been received. The final insurance arrangements are expected to be considered by Council later in 2026. The broader strategic approach to insurance, self-insurance and financial resilience is being considered through the Infrastructure Strategy and Long-term Plan processes.

16.4. Asset numbers should be treated as indicative rather than fixed. As asset information improves, assets may be added, removed, combined or split to better reflect how the network is managed and valued. Some assets may also be counted against more than one scheme where they provide benefits across scheme boundaries.

16.5. Asset inspections provide information on the overall condition of an asset. Defect reporting is a separate process and records specific issues affecting an asset. An asset may have multiple defects recorded against it. For example, a stopbank may contain several individual defects such as stock damage, bull holes, erosion or vegetation encroachment.

Asset Inspections and Condition

16.6. Asset inspections are a key part of managing flood protection and drainage risk. Inspections provide the information used to identify deterioration, assess asset condition, prioritise defects and inform future maintenance, repair, renewal and capital investment programmes.

16.7. Asset inspection targets were on track as at 29 September 2026 (Table 51). During the reporting period, 225 assets were inspected, including 220 high-criticality assets and five low-criticality assets. Further detail on defects and identified asset issues is provided below.

Table 51:Asset Inspection Progress as at 29 September 2026.

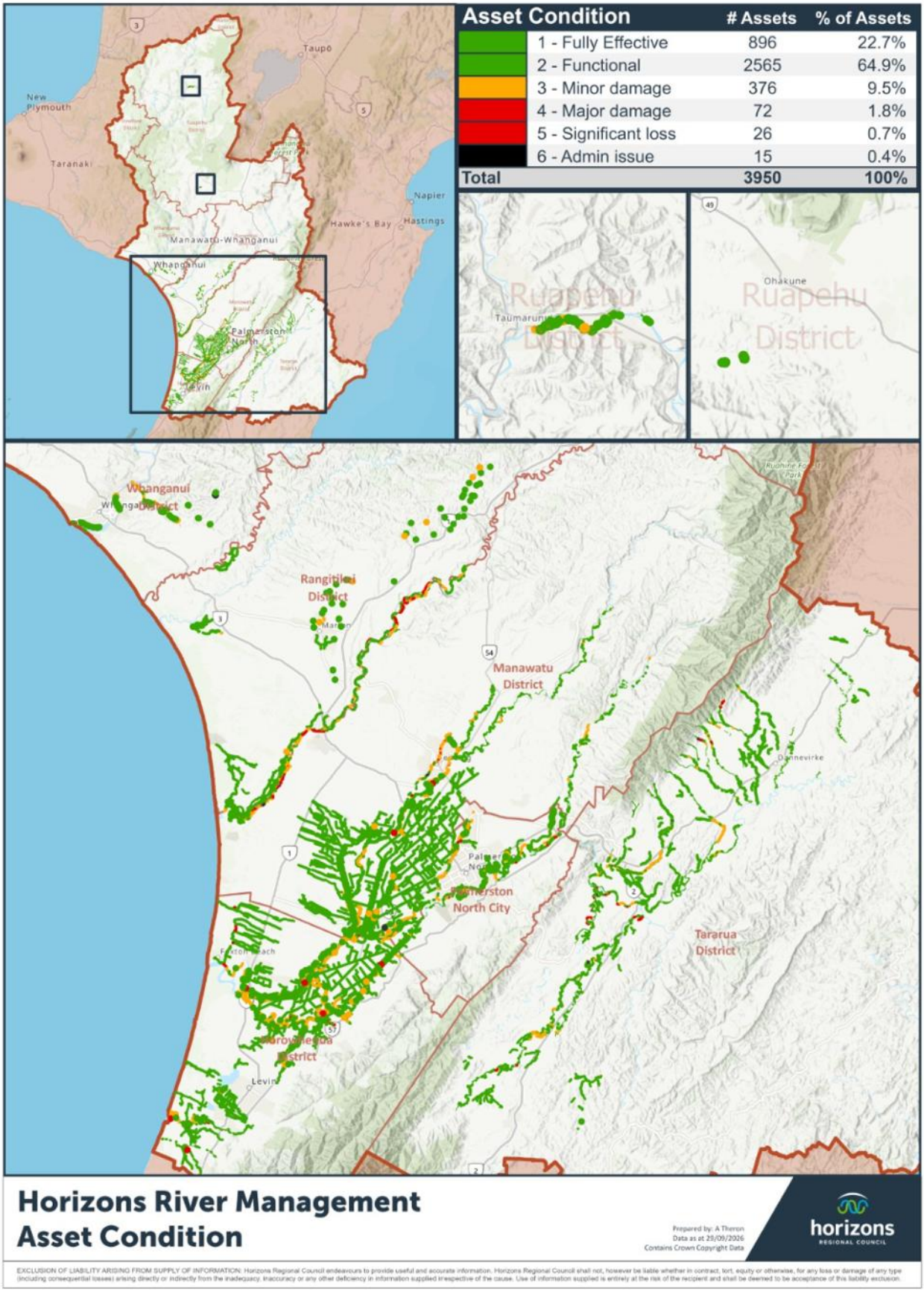
Category	Asset Population	Inspected This Year	Annual Target
High Criticality Assets	1,336	220 (16.4%)	77%
Low Criticality Assets	2,614	5 (0.2%)	20%
Total Assets	**3,950**	**225 (5.7%)**	-

16.8. Asset condition information (Table 52, Map 21) indicates that most assets continue to perform their intended function. As at 29 September 2026, 87.6% of assets were assessed as fully effective or functional. However, 12.4% displayed some level of impairment, including 2.5% assessed as having major damage or significant loss.

16.9. While condition assessment provides a useful indicator of overall network health, condition alone does not determine risk. The significance of individual asset issues varies depending on the role of the asset within the flood protection network, the consequences of failure and the level of service affected. For this reason, asset condition information is considered alongside defect information, risk assessments and programme delivery constraints when determining investment priorities.

Table 52: Asset Condition Summary as at 29 September 2026.

Asset Condition	Percentage of Assets
Fully Effective / Functional	87.6%
Minor Damage	9.5%
Major Damage / Significant Loss	2.5%
Administrative Issues	0.4%
Total	**100%**



Map 21:Asset Condition as at 29 September 2026.

Defect Management

16.10. While asset condition provides a high-level view of network performance, defect information provides a more detailed understanding of the work required to maintain levels of service and long-term asset resilience. The focused work on inspections, data quality and defect management has improved visibility of asset risks and future work requirements. There remains a considerable amount of work to do to further improve knowledge and the response to the information.

16.11. In July 2025, 450 assets (11.6% of the network) contained 1,104 known defects. This increased to 1,440 in March 2026.

16.12. As at October 2026, 1,068 active defects were recorded (Map 22). The reduction reflects a combination of completed works, reassessment and validation of historical defect records and ongoing refinement of asset information. Defect numbers should not be considered a full measure of network performance, as they are influenced by inspection coverage, inspection type, asset information quality, changing asset condition and completed works.

16.13. As Council's understanding of the asset base improves, new defects may continue to be identified while others are reassessed, resolved or retired.

Defect Risk Profile

16.14. Defects are prioritised using a risk-based approach that considers both the likelihood of a defect affecting asset performance and the potential consequences should a flood event occur before the defect is addressed. This helps direct limited maintenance, repair, renewal and capital investment resources toward issues in balance with resolving known issues small or large in a timely manner with the greatest potential impact on people, property, infrastructure and scheme levels of service.

16.15. As at October 2026, 1,068 active defects were recorded (Table 53). Of these, 23 were assessed as Very High risk and 130 as High risk. Together, High and Very High-risk defects represent 14% of all active defects.

Table 53: Active Defects by Risk Rating.

Risk Rating	Number of Defects
Very High	23
High	130
Medium	466
Low	400
Not Risk Rated	49
Total	**1,068**

16.16. A total of 392 defects (37%) have been assigned to work programmes during the 2026-27 financial year, while 676 defects (63%) are not currently assigned to a job (Table 54).

16.17. The rate at which defects can be progressed is also influenced by available staff resources, contractor capacity, funding availability and competing programme priorities. As a result, identified defects may be addressed through maintenance activities, repair programmes, renewals, capital projects, monitoring programmes or changes to asset management information over time.

16.18. Defects vary significantly in their risk, complexity, cost and preferred treatment option. In some cases, further investigation, design, consenting, renewal planning, capital project development or reassessment of asset information is required before the most appropriate response can be determined.

Table 54: Active Defects and Work Programme Status.

Risk Rating	Assigned to Work Programme	Not Assigned to Work Programme	Total
Very High	3	20	23
High	49	81	130
Medium	148	318	466
Low	179	221	400
Not Risk Rated	13	36	49
Total	**392**	**676**	**1,068**
Percentage	**37%**	**63%**	**100%**

16.19. Of the 153 defects assessed as High or Very High risk, 52 (34%) have been assigned to a work programme and 101 (66%) have not yet been assigned. This is a concerning position and highlights the scale of work required to assess, prioritise and determine appropriate responses to identified defects. Completing this work requires time and specialist input, and progress is constrained by available staff capacity alongside delivery of existing maintenance, repair, renewal and capital programmes.

16.20. Defect numbers and work programme allocation vary significantly between schemes, reflecting differences in network size, asset type, inspection coverage and the maturity of asset information.

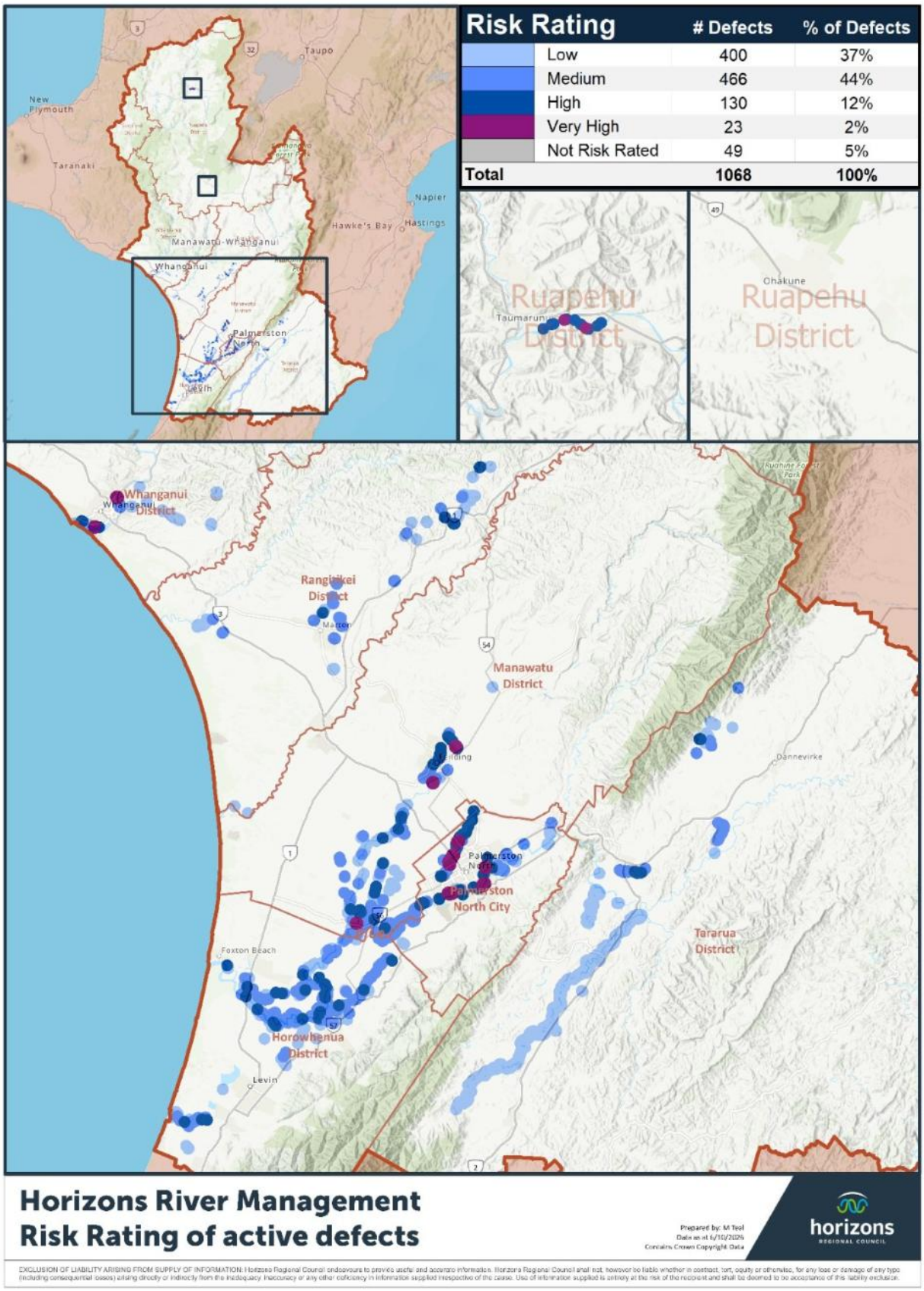
16.21. The Lower Manawatū Scheme currently contains 560 active defects, representing approximately 52% of the defect register. Across the region, the Central Area accounts for 593 defects (56%), followed by the Southern Area with 208 defects (19%), the Northern Area with 179 defects (17%) and the Eastern Area with 88 defects (8%).

16.22. Table 55 provides a scheme-level summary of active defects and work programme allocation. The information is intended to assist Councillors and scheme stakeholders to understand the current distribution of identified defects across the region and how those defects are being incorporated into work programmes.

16.23. Continued improvement of asset condition, defect and risk information is providing a stronger evidence base for future maintenance, repair, renewal and capital investment decisions and is informing development of the Infrastructure Strategy and Long-term Plan.

Table 55: Active Defects by Scheme and Work Programme Status.

Scheme	Assigned to Programme	Not Assigned to Programme	Total Defects	% of Total Defects	% Assigned
Northern Area					
Upper Whanganui	10	5	15	1.4%	67%
Rangitīkei	1	7	8	0.7%	13%
Lower Whanganui	10	19	29	2.7%	34%
Makirikiri	10	1	11	1.0%	91%
Matarawa	18	15	33	3.1%	55%
Tutaenui	12	21	33	3.1%	36%
Pōrewa Valley	14	36	50	4.7%	28%
Northern Subtotal	75	104	179	16.8%	42%
Eastern Area					
Mangatainoka	4	38	42	3.9%	10%
Upper Manawatū-Lower Mangahao	1	10	11	1.0%	9%
South East Ruahine	13	22	35	3.3%	37%
Eastern Subtotal	18	70	88	8.2%	20%
Southern Area					
Hōkio	1	1	2	0.2%	50%
Koputaroa	12	20	32	3.0%	38%
Makerua	10	6	16	1.5%	63%
Moutoa	2	0	2	0.2%	100%
Ōhau-Manakau	6	39	45	4.2%	13%
Manawatū Drainage	59	7	66	6.2%	89%
Te Kawau	27	8	35	3.3%	77%
Whirokino	4	6	10	0.9%	40%
Southern Subtotal	121	87	208	19.5%	58%
Central Area					
Ashhurst	14	18	32	3.0%	44%
Lower Kiwitea	0	1	1	0.1%	0%
Lower Manawatū	164	396	560	52.4%	29%
Central Subtotal	178	415	593	55.5%	30%
Total	**392**	**676**	**1,068**	**100%**	**37%**



Map 22: Risk rating and location of active defects as of October 2026.

17. Renewals

Renewals Summary

- Renewal budgets have been allocated across participating river management schemes for 2026-27.
- Current programme costs remain preliminary and are expected to change as asset information, condition assessments and defect information continue to improve.
- Additional renewal requirements identified during the year may require approval through existing Council delegations and funding decisions.
- Council has selected a Moderate Change approach to renewals through the Infrastructure Strategy process.
- Specialist support has been engaged to assist development of a more consistent and defensible renewals programme for the 2027-37 Long-term Plan.

Background

17.1. Renewal works replace existing assets that have reached the end of their useful life or are no longer able to reliably provide the intended level of service. Renewals help maintain scheme performance and reduce the likelihood of future asset failures.

17.2. Renewal planning for river management schemes remains an area of active development. Historic approaches have varied between schemes, reflecting differences in asset information, funding arrangements, asset condition knowledge and programme maturity.

2026-27 Renewals Programme

17.3. Renewal budgets have been allocated across participating schemes for the 2026-27 financial year (Table 56). Current programme costs remain preliminary and will continue to be refined as condition information, defects, investigations and delivery requirements are further assessed.

Table 56: Renewal programme capital budget and expenditure 2026-27 as of August 2026.

Project #	Project Name	Annual Plan ($)	Actual ($)	Forecast Capex Renewal($)	Forecast Expenditure/Budget %
1	Renewal - Koputaroa Drainage Scheme	66,566		80,000	120%
2	Renewal - Makerua Drainage Scheme	61,260		120,000	196%
3	Renewal - Manawatū Drainage Scheme	67,494	467	193,500	287%
4	Renewal - Moutoa Drainage Scheme	47,995	7,660	100,000	210%
5	Renewal - Te Kawau Drainage Scheme	39,819	24,509	45,000	113%
6	Renewal – Ōhau-Manakau Drainage Scheme	0		--	--
7	Renewal – Whirokino Drainage Scheme	0		15,000	--
Total		**283,134**	**32,636**	**553,500**	**270%**

17.4. Current forecast renewal expenditure exceeds approved annual budgets. This reflects identifying renewal requirements beyond the capacity of existing budgets. The forecast programme remains preliminary and will continue to be refined as investigations, scope development, delivery planning and funding decisions progress.

17.5. Where renewal costs exceed approved budgets, funding options may include reprioritisation of work programmes, use of available reserves, or approval of additional expenditure through existing Council delegations and governance processes.

Infrastructure Strategy and Long-term Planning

17.6. Through development of the Infrastructure Strategy 2027-57, Council has selected a Moderate Change approach to renewals. Current planning assumptions include an additional approximately $1.1 million per annum for future renewals, however further work

is required to confirm programme scope, affordability, funding requirements and delivery capacity.

17.7. Initial assessments indicate annual renewal requirements may exceed current funding levels. Further analysis is required to better understand long-term renewal liabilities, programme timing, reserve requirements and the relationship between renewals, repairs and future capital investment.

Renewals Planning Improvement Programme

17.8. Specialist asset management support has been engaged to assist development of a more consistent and defensible renewals framework for the 2027-37 Long-term Plan and Infrastructure Strategy.

17.9. The work includes:

- reviewing existing renewals planning approaches and funding arrangements;
- assessing how other infrastructure providers approach renewals planning;
- developing options for sizing and prioritising future renewals programmes;
- identifying funding implications and reserve requirements;
- improving the linkage between asset condition, defects, repairs and renewals; and
- identifying longer-term improvements required to improve asset stewardship and planning maturity.

17.10. The objective of this work is to provide Council with greater confidence that future renewals programmes are appropriately sized, affordable and based on the best available asset information. The work will also support elected members to consider options for future funding arrangements and investment priorities through the Long-term Plan process.

17.11. Findings from this work are expected to inform the draft Infrastructure Strategy, future renewal programmes, reserve planning and Long-term Plan financial modelling.

Fish passage Asset Modifications

17.12. The National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F) require fish passage to be considered when constructing, upgrading or maintaining structures that can create barriers to fish movement, including culverts, floodgates and similar assets. Council's Annual Plan target is to complete two asset upgrades or modifications that improve fish passage outcomes during the 2026-27 financial year.

17.13. No upgrades or modifications have been completed during the reporting period. Work is underway to identify and confirm projects that will contribute toward delivery of this target, including projects delivered through existing repair, renewal and capital work programmes.

17.14. Further work is required to identify and prioritise projects that will contribute toward delivery of the target. This assessment is expected to be completed prior to the 2026-27 summer works season, when these types of works are typically undertaken. Progress will be reported through future Integrated Catchment Committee updates.

18. CAPITAL PROJECTS

Overview

18.1. The River Management and Flood Protection capital programme delivers infrastructure improvements, investigations and resilience projects approved by Council. These projects support delivery of current levels of service, implementation of the Infrastructure Strategy and development of future investment options for consideration through the 2027–37 Long-term Plan.

18.2. Council considered the 2026–27 capital programme through Report 26-88 in May 2026 and confirmed project budgets through adoption of the Annual Plan in June 2026. The approved programme (Table 57, Table 58) includes major investment in Te Pūwaha, Feilding Flood Resilience, Palmerston North Flood Resilience, Te Arakura and Turoa Road resilience works.

Table 57: Budgeted capital expenditure in the 2026–27 financial year.

Project #	Project Name	Annual Plan Budget ($)
1	Te Pūwaha – South Mole and South Spit*	8,640,000
2	He Ara Tuku Rau	500,000
3	Feilding Flood Resilience	5,276,528
4	Te Arakura	500,290
5	Mangaone Stream Palmerston North Flood Resilience	1,628,495
6	Turoa Road – Whanganui	250,000
7	Renewal Programmes – Seven Schemes	283,134
Total		**17,078,447**

* Council approved a budget of $8.64 million for the Te Pūwaha Climate Resilience Project through Report 26-88. Council also authorised the Chief Executive to vary expenditure phasing between financial years and to accelerate delivery where practical to reduce overall project costs

Programme Activity

18.3. The Annual Plan Measure 40 requires completion of 70% of the capital programme deliverables approved by Council at the start of the financial year. For 2026-27, Council approved 23 capital programme deliverables as part of the July ICC committee meeting (Table 58).

18.4. As at 30 September 2026, all 23 deliverables remained active. Progress against the Council-approved capital programme deliverables is summarised in Table 58.

18.5. The Te Pūwaha project is the largest project within the programme, with construction of the South Mole approximately 64% complete in mid-September 2026. As anticipated at the time of Council's procurement approval, a variation for the construction of a turning bay has been approved. Weather events and spring tides have had an impact on the construction, and one further variation has been approved to allow for additional work to reduce the costs of having to regularly re-establish access to the construction area. The variations include additional maintenance on the South Mole on the river side to improve resilience and reduce health and safety risk. The variations for this work are being phased over time to enable monitoring of the effectiveness of the approach and to ensure the project remains in budget. Planning and consenting requirements for the South Spit phase are also progressing, with construction expected to commence later in 2026. Discussions are continuing with hapū regarding future implementation of the He Ara Tuku Rau funding programme and an Item to Council is anticipated later in 2026 or early in 2027.

18.6. During the reporting period, Council was advised that applications for central government co-funding of future flood resilience projects were unsuccessful through the most recent national funding process. The applications included projects associated with Feilding Flood Resilience, Palmerston North Flood Resilience and Rangiotu Gates. This outcome does not affect delivery of the 2026–27 capital programme approved by Council. However, it will inform future decisions regarding project timing, affordability and funding through development of the Infrastructure Strategy and Long-term Plan.

Programme Outlook

18.7. Capital programme delivery is expected to continue throughout 2026–27, with projects progressing through investigation, design, consenting, procurement and construction phases. Delivery timeframes remain dependent on obtaining regulatory approvals, landowner agreements, procurement outcomes and suitable construction conditions.

18.8. Future capital investment requirements will continue to be considered through development of the Infrastructure Strategy 2027–57 and the 2027–37 Long-term Plan. The outcome of the recent government co-funding process reinforces the importance of confirming future investment priorities, funding pathways and delivery staging through those processes.

Table 58: Capital programme targets for the 2026–27 financial year.

Task	Target	Update	Status
Whanganui			
1	Complete construction of Te Pūwaha Stage 2B – South Mole Extension.	Construction is underway and approximately 64% complete as at mid-September 2026. Project variations have been approved for the turning bay and to limit the costs of weather events & spring tides impacting access, the project remains forecast to be within the approved budget and is currently forecast for completion during 2026-27.	On Track
2	Start construction of the South Spit works – Stage 3.	Procurement has been completed and a preferred contractor selected. Construction is programmed to commence during late 2026. The restoration plan has been further developed and is currently being reviewed.	On Track
3	He Aru Tuku Rau – Council decisions establishment of the mechanism for decision-making and funding allocation completed.	Discussions continue with project partners and hapū regarding future implementation arrangements. A report is expected to be presented to Council during the 2026-27 financial year.	On Track
4	Turoa Road – scope and complete dam repairs.	Initial maintenance works on the dam culvert have been completed and design work for dam repairs has been commissioned.	On Track
5	Turoa Road – scope and complete drainage maintenance – potentially including establishment of a new retaining wall.	Retaining wall design has been completed and is being reviewed. Further assessment of consenting requirements, costs and delivery options is underway.	On Track
Palmerston North			
6	Complete investigations, design drawings and permissions for Heatley Ave (Manawatū River) erosion protection.	Investigation and design work is underway. Regulatory requirements will be assessed once the preferred design is confirmed.	On Track
7	Complete investigations, design drawings and permissions for the Burrell Road culvert replacement and if required nearby erosion control works.	Design and consenting work is underway, with consent applications expected to be lodged during 2026-27.	On Track
8	Construction of the Burrell Road culvert replacement and nearby works and if required nearby erosion control works.	Construction remains dependent on completion of design and regulatory approvals and is programmed for 2027.	On Track
9	Investigations, design drawings, permissions of erosion protection structure near Pirani Place or other capital project around the Mangaone Stream.	Design, permissions work, procurement and delivery planning are underway.	On Track
10	Construction of erosion protection structure near Pirani Place or other capital project around the Mangaone Stream.	Delivery remains dependent on completion of design, approvals and procurement activities.	On Track
11	Investigations, design drawings, permissions for restoration of the stopbanks near Flygers Line.	Investigation and design work is underway, with procurement planned during 2026-27.	On Track
12	Investigate movement of power pole from stopbank on the Mangaone Stream.	Discussions are underway with the utility provider regarding relocation options and implementation timeframes.	On Track
13	Investigate options for additional resilience in the Mangaone stopbank, near Botanical Road that is encroached on by a church.	Investigation work is underway to identify options and determine an appropriate future work programme.	On Track
Manawatū			

Task	Target	Update	Status
14	Complete consenting process for Rangiotu gates.	The resource consent application remains under assessment. Further information is being prepared for submission.	On Track
15	Complete consenting process for changes to the operation of the Makino floodgates.	The resource consent application remains under assessment. Additional information has been provided and consultation requirements continue to be addressed.	On Track
16	Complete three of the remaining seven land use agreements/purchases.	Negotiations with affected landowners continue and are progressing.	On Track
17	Complete the detailed for the Reid Line upgrades.	Detailed design work is underway and progressing as planned.	On Track
18	Complete investigation of the urban Ōroua and Kiwitea Stopbanks.	Investigation work is being undertaken alongside the Reid Line Spillway programme.	On Track
19	Removal of nuisance trees in the operating area of spillway on Horizons' land.	Initial works have been completed. Remaining works are dependent on resolution of property servicing issues within the spillway area.	On Track
20	Complete a review of the Makino gates to ensure reliability of operation.	A draft technical review has been received and is currently undergoing peer review.	On Track
21	Te Arakura - complete further engagement and design work.	A multidisciplinary project team has been established and engagement with affected landowners has recommenced. Design and implementation planning are progressing. A paper to Council is being drafted for presentation in 2026.	On Track
Ruapehu			
22	Investigate and consent upgrades for increased flood resilience in Ohakune via culvert upgrades and to present a work programme as an option for Long-term Plan Infrastructure Strategy capital programme.	Existing modelling and asset information are being reviewed and consolidated to support identification of future upgrade options and Long-term Plan considerations.	On Track
23	Undertake flood modelling, design and investigations (including data collection) to prepare options for future flood mitigation for Taumarunui and to report back to Council.	Project planning is underway, with procurement of modelling and investigation work expected during 2026-27.	On Track

19. RESPONDING TO WEATHER EVENTS

Background

19.1. The Annual Plan reporting measure requires Council to be informed within three months of any weather event that causes significant damage to river and drainage schemes and has the potential to impact approved work programmes or budgets.

Programme Activity

19.2. Monitoring and response to weather events has continued through the duty officer network led by Horizons' Emergency Management Group. One weather event during the reporting period met the threshold for reporting under the Annual Plan measure.

19.3. In early September 2026, heavy rainfall resulted in elevated river levels across parts of the Manawatū, Horowhenua, Whanganui and Tararua districts. The event required operation of both the Moutoa Sluice Gates and Makino floodgates and resulted in overtopping of low-level stopbanks downstream of Feilding.

19.4. The event had a minor impact on delivery of planned work programmes, with staff redirected to event response and recovery activities. Some planned repair works within the Pohangina-Ōroua River Scheme were delayed as a result.

Readiness and Response Planning

19.5. Work has continued on reviewing flood action plans and emergency response arrangements. Updated drafts of the Makino and Whanganui flood action plans have been prepared but are yet to be finalised. A preparedness review commissioned by Horizons has also been completed and is currently being considered. Further updates will be provided through future reporting.

Outlook

19.6. Outcomes from the preparedness review and flood action plan updates will inform future emergency management and river management response planning.

DAM SAFETY

Background

19.7. The Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022 came into force in May 2024. The regulations require owners of classifiable dams to obtain an independently certified Potential Impact Classification (PIC). Owners of Medium and High PIC dams must also operate an approved Dam Safety Assurance Programme, undertake ongoing surveillance and inspections, complete annual Intermediate Dam Safety Reviews and provide annual compliance certification. More comprehensive reviews and reassessment of dam classifications are required periodically.

19.8. Horizons owns or manages 54 dams. Seven are not classifiable under the regulations, 37 are classified as Low PIC, two as Medium PIC and eight as High PIC. The Medium and High PIC dams are located within the Pōrewa and Tutaenui Schemes and are subject to additional assurance, surveillance, inspection and reporting requirements.

19.9. The Annual Plan measures relating to completion of Dam Safety Assurance Programme reports and Intermediate Dam Safety Reviews are not applicable in 2026-27, as the applicable reporting targets were for earlier years of the Long-term Plan. This does not remove Horizons' ongoing obligations as a dam owner to implement approved assurance programmes, undertake required inspections and address issues identified through reviews.

Inspections and Assurance

19.10. Dam inspections are an important component of the assurance programme. Inspection requirements vary according to dam classification and include regular visual maintenance inspections, annual asset-condition inspections, Intermediate Dam Safety Reviews for Medium and High PIC dams, and special inspections following specified rainfall or earthquake triggers.

19.11. During 2025-26, 376 inspections were completed against 345 required inspections (see the July 2026 Integrated Catchment Committee Report). However, the required inspections could not be completed at one Low PIC dam in the Matarawa Scheme because land access was refused. This remains a risk because Horizons is unable to directly inspect the asset and obtain assurance regarding its condition and performance until access is resolved.

19.12. Inspection performance for 2026-27 will continue to be monitored against the requirements of the approved Dam Safety Assurance Programmes. Ongoing attention is required to ensure inspections are completed, records are maintained, special inspections are triggered when required, and the Matarawa access issue is progressed.

Dam Safety Issues and Improvement Programme

19.13. The 2026 Intermediate Dam Safety Reviews and associated technical assessments identified a programme of dam safety issues and improvement opportunities across the Pōrewa and Tutaenui Schemes. These include:

- gaps in continuous water-level monitoring;
- erosion, vegetation and stock damage affecting embankments, spillways and outlet structures;
- potential obstructions within spillway and outlet channels;
- matters requiring structural, hydraulic or classification assessment; and
- recommendations for earlier comprehensive reviews or additional technical investigations.

19.14. The issues have been prioritised according to their significance and intended response timeframe. High-priority matters are intended to be addressed as soon as practicable, generally within 12 months; Medium-priority matters are intended to be completed or substantially progressed within 24 months; and Low-priority matters are intended to be scoped within 24 months for completion before the next comprehensive review. These timeframes are indicative and may be adjusted following further advice from recognised engineers.

19.15. Progress has been made on several physical issues identified through the reviews. This includes repairs and reinstatement works at Tutaenui dams, remediation of erosion issues and clearance of a blocked outlet drain at Dam W3. Other actions have been incorporated into maintenance and repair programmes, scheduled for delivery later in 2026-27, or referred for further engineering assessment.

19.16. Several matters remain at an early stage, including installation or improvement of monitoring equipment, structural and hydraulic assessment of spillways and outlets, confirmation of downstream flow paths, and review of whether the classification of some dams remains appropriate. Some of these matters may identify further physical works, consenting requirements, resourcing implications or funding requirements. Monitoring improvements are a recurring theme across several of the identified actions and are expected to remain a significant focus of the programme over the coming years.

Financial Implications

19.17. Implementing the Dam Safety Regulations has created significant direct and ongoing costs, particularly for the Pōrewa, Tutaenui and Matarawa Schemes. These costs include recognised-engineer services, technical reviews, monitoring equipment, inspections, investigations and physical remediation. The expenditure has reduced funding available for other scheme activities and has contributed to pressure on scheme reserves. Council increased operational budgets within the Pōrewa and Tutaenui Schemes during 2026-27 to assist in addressing the additional costs associated with dam safety compliance and monitoring activities.

19.18. The 2026 review identified a range of actions that are not yet fully scoped or costed. Any actions that are not able to accommodate within existing budgets may require further consideration by Council.

19.19. Council has supported provision of additional budget through the draft Long-term Plan process for additional dam monitoring infrastructure and ongoing servicing. Implementation remains subject to completion of the Long-term Plan process and confirmation of funding.

Programme Outlook

19.20. The immediate focus is to maintain required inspection and assurance activity, resolve or appropriately manage the Matarawa access issue, progress High-priority investigations and works, improve monitoring coverage, and incorporate identified actions into maintenance, repair and forward funding programmes. Work is also underway to establish a single coordination lead for dam safety obligations to improve oversight and implementation of the dam safety programme.

19.21. Future reporting will provide Council with updates on inspection performance, progress against priority dam safety actions, significant findings arising from assurance activities and any material funding implications requiring governance consideration.

20. REGULATORY ACTIVITY

Overview

20.1. River management and flood protection activities operate within a complex regulatory environment. Depending on the location and nature of the work, activities may be authorised through One Plan permitted activity rules, resource consents or site-specific approvals. Other relevant requirements may include national environmental standards, district plans, heritage legislation, Treaty settlement legislation and requirements associated with ecological, cultural and recreational values.

20.2. Compliance with these requirements is an important part of programme delivery. Horizons is both a regulatory authority and an organisation undertaking river management works and must demonstrate the standards it expects from other consent holders. Failure to obtain or comply with the appropriate permissions can result in environmental effects, delays, additional costs, enforcement action and loss of confidence in Horizons among iwi and hapū, landowners, stakeholders and the wider community.

20.3. The Annual Plan target is to provide Council with an annual report on regulatory activity, including the Environmental Code of Practice for River Works (ECoP), resource consents and work to align with new regulatory requirements. The annual report will be provided later in the financial year. This section provides an interim update on significant permission and compliance activity.

20.4. Catchment Operations currently manages more than 200 resource consents containing over 4,000 consent conditions. A significant volume of work is also undertaken through One Plan permitted activity rules which incorporates the ECoP. The scale and geographic spread of activity means effective regulatory management depends on clear planning, documented approvals, competent staff and contractors, monitoring and early escalation when approved scopes or site conditions change.

Environmental and Regulatory Systems

20.5. The merger of the former Natural Resources and Partnerships and River Management groups into Catchment Operations provided an opportunity to strengthen the integration of operational delivery, freshwater ecology, environmental planning and regulatory support. Further restructuring and reprioritisation during 2025 established a dedicated environmental and regulatory team and increased the focus on regulatory permissions, compliance systems and staff support.

20.6. Council approved an additional role through the 2026-27 Annual Plan to support environmental and regulatory work within the River Management activity. Recruitment has been completed and the successful candidate commenced on 12 October 2026.

20.7. The approach has strengthened over time and includes:

- documented regulatory assessment and approval requirements for individual jobs;
- peer review of significant works through the Jobs Approval Committee;
- increased ecological and environmental planning input;
- improved tracking of resource consents and consent conditions;
- internal, external and regulatory team site inspections;
- closer working relationships with the regulatory team including some staff secondments;
- staff and contractor training; and
- public notification of planned river management works.

20.8. These controls reduce risk but do not remove the need for continued management attention, quality assurance and improvement.

Regulatory Permissions

20.9. Permissions are required for a range of maintenance, repair, renewal and capital activities. Where existing consents or permitted activity rules do not provide an appropriate authorisation, a new resource consent, consent variation or other approval may be required.

20.10. Permission processes range from relatively straightforward applications to complex processes involving technical assessments, engineering design, ecological assessment, engagement with iwi and hapū, affected-party approvals, landowner agreements, further-information requests and, in some cases, hearings or appeals. As a result, the time, cost and conditions associated with obtaining permission cannot always be reliably forecast at the beginning of a project.

20.11. Table 59 summarises 26 significant regulatory actions currently being progressed. It does not include every permission required for individual maintenance and repair jobs. The table is intended to provide governance visibility of the principal processes affecting programme delivery and significant Council assets.

20.12. Staff have also contributed to district plan processes being undertaken by Palmerston North City Council and Manawatū District Council. This work is intended to ensure that significant flood-protection infrastructure is appropriately recognised and protected through the relevant district plans.

Table 59: Significant regulatory actions in progress as at 30 September 2026.

#	Activity or permission	Current position and next step
Northern area		
1	Matiere willow congestion	Landowner permissions delayed commencement. Works are now scheduled for November 2026 and are intended to be undertaken under the permitted activity provisions of the One Plan.
2	Ohakune global consent	The initial scope of proposed activities has been defined. Technical assessments are being prepared and will inform subsequent engagement and preparation of the consent application.
3	Ohakune culvert upgrades	Waterway assessments and planning work have commenced. Culvert location and dimension information is being validated to support engineering assessment and confirmation of regulatory requirements.
4	Pungapunga structure	Technical assessment has been completed regarding a structure established by landowners. Engagement with the landowner, iwi and other stakeholders is underway.
5	Makirikiri Stream spillway sediment removal	The resource consent application was lodged in September 2026.
6	Mangatikotoko Dam	The resource consent application was lodged in September 2026.
Central area		
7	Te Arakura	A project team has been established. The regulatory pathway will be confirmed once the preferred stopbank alignment and project scope have been sufficiently developed. Engagement with affected landowners and marae representatives is continuing.
8	Palmerston North City Council designations	Horizons has participated in the relevant plan-change submission process to support appropriate protection of flood-protection infrastructure. A hearing may be required as the plan-change process progresses.
9	Manawatū District Council designations	Asset and designation information has been collated and a Notice of Requirement is being prepared. Timing remains dependent on the district plan process undertaken by Manawatū District Council. Horizons currently holds no designations for its flood-protection assets within the district.
10	Reid Line Spillway gate operation	A consent variation was lodged in December 2025. Most information requested through the further-information process has been provided. Further engagement with Ngāti Kauwhata is required to inform assessment of cultural effects.
11	Ōroua Catchment gravel management	A draft application has been received and is being reviewed. The proposal is intended to consolidate three existing permissions within the catchment. The previous Upper Ōroua consent expired in December 2023.

#	Activity or permission	Current position and next step
12	Makino Catchment gravel management	Ecological and river-management assessments have been completed, cultural impact assessments commissioned and the application is being prepared.
13	Secondary stopbank, Palmerston North	Legal review of the relevant One Plan provisions is being sought. Engineering and regulatory inspections are expected to inform subsequent engagement and development of an action plan.
14	Rangiotu floodgates	The resource consent application was lodged in July 2024. Further design work has been completed and a response to the regulatory team's further-information request is being prepared. Progress is also linked to decisions on the future project and its funding.
15	Makino Stream consent variation	A variation is being considered to remove specified maintenance requirements from the consent and instead rely on the ECoP where appropriate.
16	Burrell Road culvert replacement and stopbank relocation	Design and consenting work are being undertaken together. The resource consent application is expected to be lodged during 2026-27.
Eastern area		
17	Pohangina Catchment gravel management	The previous consent expired in December 2023. External engagement is continuing, a cultural impact report has been received from Rangitāne o Manawatū and the team is responding to a formal further-information request.
18	Pohangina and Ōroua aerial discharge	The application was lodged in July 2022. Legislative changes have extended the existing permissions to December 2027. Additional information has been requested by the regulatory team and external engagement is continuing.
19	South Eastern Ruahine gravel management	The previous gravel-extraction consent has expired. A draft application covering a range of gravel-management activities has been prepared and is being reviewed. Reduced-scale gravel extraction remains possible through the ECoP where its requirements can be met.
20	Manga-atua Stream gravel extraction	The proposal responds to gravel accumulation affecting drainage in the lower Manga-atua Stream. The proposed work would require extraction below water level and the appropriate regulatory pathway is being assessed.
21	Mangatainoka and Makakahi gravel management	The current resource consent expires during 2027. A replacement application is being prepared.
22	Tararua district-wide vegetation management	A district-wide application and assessment of environmental effects are being prepared for vegetation-management activities near waterways, including associated access, slash-control and hydro-site considerations. The draft application is under review.
Southern area		
23	Hōkio Scheme culvert upgrades	Resource consent has been granted for the approved culvert works.
24	Three culvert replacements	Three culvert replacements involving increased culvert capacity are being assessed for the necessary permissions.
25	Fish-passage consent variation	A consent variation is being considered to provide greater flexibility in work programming and notification while continuing to meet fish-passage requirements.
26	Lake Horowhenua weed-harvesting consent variation	The management plan for the 2026-27 harvesting season has identified potential amendments to consent conditions. The appropriate consent-variation process is being assessed.

Compliance Controls and Oversight

20.13. Obtaining a permission is only the first stage of regulatory management. Ongoing work is required to ensure that consent conditions, permitted activity rules, ECoP requirements and site-specific environmental controls are reflected in project scopes and complied with during delivery.

20.14. Every river management job is required to have its proposed scope and regulatory pathway documented. Significant jobs are reviewed through the Jobs Approval Committee before work begins. Changes in work area, access, methodology, timing or environmental conditions may alter the applicable approval pathway and are expected to be identified and escalated before the changed work proceeds.

20.15. From 1 July to 30 September 2026, 13 internal site audits were undertaken. Some audits identified matters requiring attention and corrective actions, which were referred for follow-up. Internal audits provide an additional assurance control but do not replace monitoring or enforcement undertaken independently by the regulatory team.

20.16. During the same period, the Jobs Approval Committee met nine times and considered 41 jobs. This included reconsideration of scope changes relating to seven jobs approved during previous reporting periods. The committee provides peer review of significant works but remains dependent on accurate scopes, complete information and the approved approach being followed in the field.

Training and Contractor Management

20.17. A modular training programme has been developed for staff responsible for planning or supervising river management works. Modules delivered have covered general regulatory obligations, internal approval processes, emergency works under section 330 of the Resource Management Act, Land Drainage Act powers and responsibilities, river behaviour and geomorphology, terrestrial biodiversity, erosion and sediment control, freshwater ecology and plant biosecurity. The planned cultural module was deferred because the facilitator was unavailable and remains to be delivered.

20.18. Catchment Operations held a contractor information briefing on 21 September 2026. The session reinforced that environmental compliance is a core component of successful delivery alongside health and safety, quality, cost and programme performance. Contractors were reminded that approved job documentation forms part of the environmental approval pathway and that changes to scope, access, work area, methodology or timing must be referred back to Horizons before proceeding.

20.19. The contractor briefing also addressed recurring risks including inadequate erosion and sediment controls, work extending beyond the approved scope, changes being made without prior approval, delays in reporting incidents and incomplete records. Further erosion and sediment-control workshops were scheduled to provide practical training relevant to river management works.

20.20. Contractor performance assessments are used to inform future work allocation and manage delivery, health and safety, quality and compliance risks. Reviews of 34 contractors for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 resulted in one contractor being stood down for 12 months and two receiving first and final warnings. A further contractor was stood down for six months following an event during the current financial year.

20.21. Contractor warnings and stand-downs can affect contractor and landowner preferences and may reduce the contractors available for particular works. However, the procurement relationship does not remove Horizons' responsibility to ensure that work undertaken on its behalf follows the approved scope and regulatory requirements. Contractor assessments and stand-downs are therefore retained as risk controls and are applied through the established contractor-management process.

Compliance Matters and Response

20.22. Catchment Operations remains subject to a Region-Wide Abatement Notice issued in November 2024. An application to cancel the Notice was submitted to the regulatory team on 18 August 2026. At the time of writing, a determination had not been received.

20.23. During the reporting period, a compliance incident occurred in July 2026 and has subsequently been confirmed by the regulatory team as a Significant Non-Compliance. The final outcome was received after the end of the reporting period. This is the first Significant Non-Compliance recorded for Catchment Operations since the June 2024 Turitea Stream incident. The July 2026 incident will be reviewed to identify lessons learned and determine whether any additional actions are required in relation to planning, supervision, contractor management, incident escalation or programme oversight. The July

2026 outcome demonstrates that improved systems, training and auditing have not removed the risk of individual works departing from approved requirements.

Turitea Stream

20.24. The Turitea Stream incident occurred in June 2024 and involved vegetation clearance and machinery access where applicable permissions requirements were not followed. Horizons entered guilty pleas in August 2025 and was sentenced in March 2026, with a fine of $45,500 imposed. The matter resulted in a formal restorative justice process, restoration activity and significant changes to planning, approvals, training, ecological input, auditing and programme oversight.

20.25. Since the reporting period ended, Horizons has met with Councillors of Wellington Fish & Game, provided a formal apology and discussed the Turitea incident, improvements made since, restoration activity and opportunities for stronger future engagement. Ongoing work includes engagement with Rangitāne o Manawatū and delivery of restoration activity within the Turitea Catchment.

Programme Outlook

20.26. The immediate priorities are to:

- complete the review of the July 2026 Significant Non-Compliance and implement any resulting actions;
- continue engagement with the regulatory team regarding the Region-Wide Abatement Notice;
- progress the significant permission processes identified in Table 59;
- maintain internal auditing and Jobs Approval Committee oversight;
- continue the ongoing staff training programme;
- continue contractor training, performance assessment and follow-up;
- progress the Turitea restoration and relationship commitments; and
- ensure that material compliance risks and incidents are reported transparently through future governance reporting.

20.27. The annual regulatory activity report later in 2026-27 will provide a fuller assessment of permission activity, compliance performance, staff and contractor capability, progress against improvement actions and any material implications for programme delivery, resourcing or Council risk.

GRAVEL MANAGEMENT REPORTS

Background

20.28. Gravel management remains one of the most discussed aspects of river management. Through scheme meetings, councillor enquiries and direct engagement with landowners, staff continue to receive requests for increased gravel extraction to improve channel capacity and reduce flood risk.

20.29. Community views on gravel management are often strongly held and can differ significantly between catchments and individual landowners.

20.30. Gravel extraction is an important river-management tool but is only one of several methods used to manage channel capacity, erosion and river behaviour. Depending on local conditions, management responses may include gravel extraction, channel maintenance, vegetation management, beach raking, gravel reserves and other interventions.

Programme Activity

20.31. Horizons undertakes gravel management through a combination of existing resource consents, ECoP provisions and physical work programmes. Gravel extraction is undertaken by both Horizons and third parties operating under their own resource consents and/or permitted activity rules.

20.32. Gravel management activity, including physical works and consenting is also continuing through existing work programmes.

20.33. The Annual Plan target is for the two gravel studies to be completed in 2026-27. Three studies are underway (Makino Stream, Kiwitea Stream and Mangatainoka).

20.34. The location of the programmed gravel studies, current environmental grant projects and the Room for the River study catchment is shown in Map 23.

Communication and Engagement

20.35. Earlier in 2026, Horizons provided additional information on gravel management through district scheme meetings, including explanation of study methodologies, extraction limits, aggradation and degradation trends, and the interaction between gravel management, flood risk and river stability.

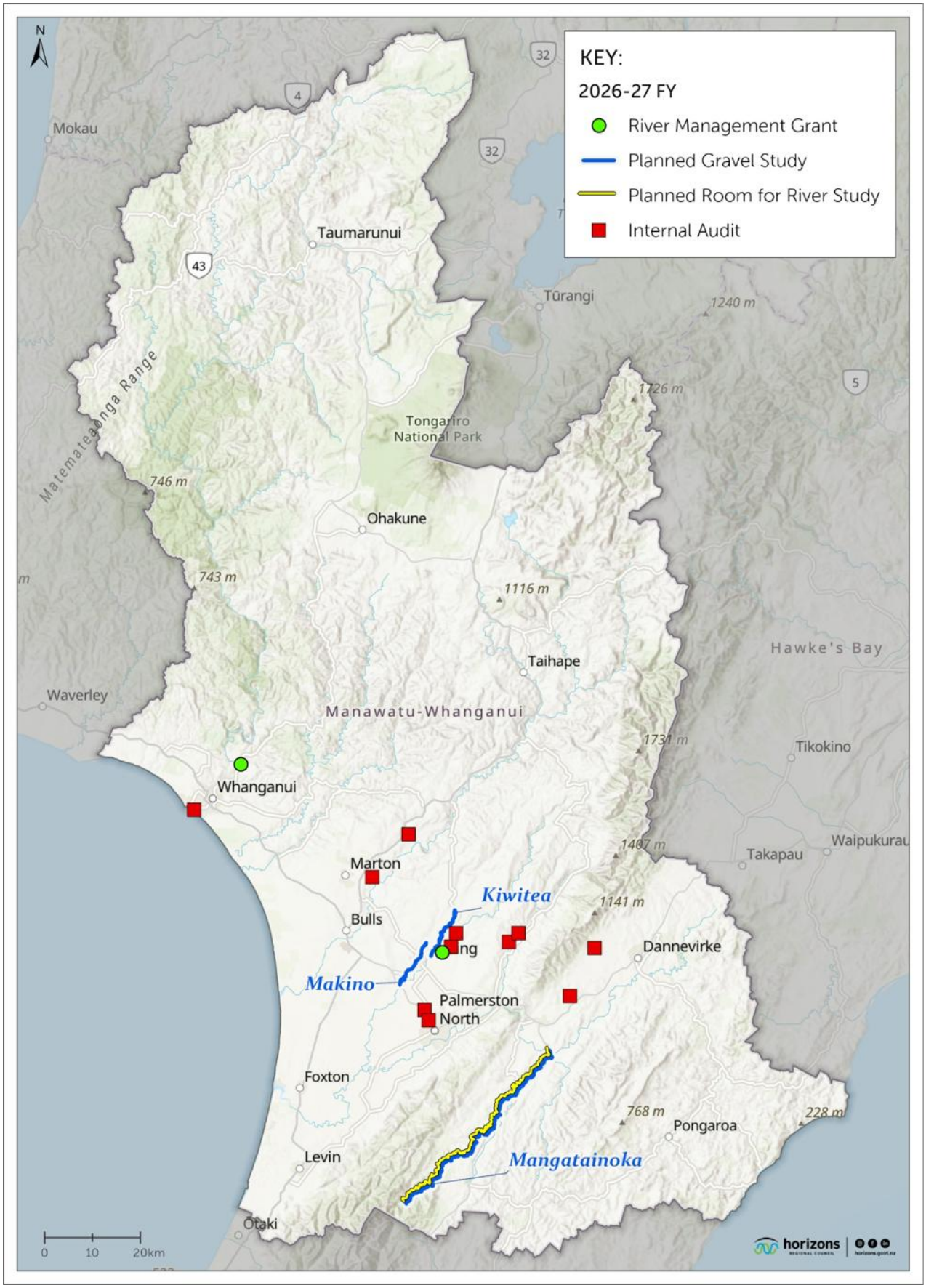
20.36. During the reporting period, as part of the July ICC meeting, staff provided Council with information on the regulatory framework for gravel management and a summary of the available gravel studies. In summary this reported that recent gravel studies across the region continue to demonstrate that river systems behave differently. Some reaches are experiencing aggradation and sediment accumulation, while others are degrading or remain relatively stable. This means that increasing gravel extraction is not always the most appropriate response and, in some circumstances, may increase risks to river stability, erosion protection works, bridges and other infrastructure.

20.37. During September 2026, gravel management and channel maintenance were key themes raised through a Southern Ruahine community meeting attended by more than 50 people. Similar issues were discussed during the October 2026 Tararua Councillor tour involving Horizons and Tararua District councillors, where gravel management was a key topic and councillors were able to view the scale of river-bed-level change associated with long-established gravel reserves and the infrastructure required to manage stream-bed levels around roads and bridges.

Programme Outlook

20.38. The programmed gravel studies will provide updated information on river-bed trends, gravel availability and sediment behaviour within the Makino, Kiwitea and Mangatainoka catchments. Findings from these studies will inform future consenting, gravel-management activity and Infrastructure Strategy development.

20.39. Improving communication of gravel-study findings, extraction limits and the reasons behind gravel-management decisions will remain an ongoing focus. Future reporting will provide updates on study findings, consent renewal activity and any resulting implications for scheme management and flood resilience.



Map 23: Location of the 2026–27 gravel management studies, environmental grant projects and Room for the River investigation catchments and the internal compliance audits.

21. ROOM FOR THE RIVER

Background

21.1. Room for the River, river management line investigations and nature-based solutions form part of Council's consideration of future river management approaches through the Infrastructure Strategy process. The work is intended to improve understanding of river behaviour, flood resilience and opportunities to work with natural river processes alongside traditional flood protection methods.

21.2. The Annual Plan includes a requirement to report on Room for the River activity. The Annual report will be provided later in the financial year.

Programme Activity

21.3. In July 2026, Council considered Report 26-119 regarding Room for the River and River Management Line investigations for the Ōroua and Pohangina Rivers. Council subsequently directed that the completed River Management Lines report be released publicly and that work on Room for the River and river management line projects continue. In response to this direction, the report and supporting information were released publicly through Horizons' website and media channels. The report and supporting material remain available through the Horizons website and include the River Management Lines report and national guidance documents that informed the investigation.

21.4. The Ōroua and Pohangina work programme was supported by $300,000 of Ministry for the Environment funding and investigated how river management lines, mobility corridors and nature-based approaches could contribute to future flood resilience planning. The work was undertaken to improve understanding of river behaviour and future management options rather than determine final implementation decisions.

21.5. The investigation drew on national and international Room for the River approaches, including the Application of Room for the River for NZ Rivers and Streams guidelines and other supporting material (available through Horizons' website). These resources demonstrate that Room for the River can be implemented through a variety of approaches and scales depending on local conditions, objectives and community preferences.

21.6. Council's July 2026 decision and subsequent Infrastructure Strategy discussions recognised that a range of implementation pathways could exist in future. Potential tools may include changes to operational river management practices, floodplain management, nature-based solutions, blue-green infrastructure, voluntary agreements, land-use change or, in some circumstances, land acquisition. No decisions have been made regarding future implementation approaches and further analysis, engagement and Council direction would be required before implementation options could be considered.

21.7. Through development of the Infrastructure Strategy 2027–57, Council subsequently selected a Moderate Change approach through the Infrastructure Strategy process in October 2026. This includes continuing investigation of Room for the River concepts, river management lines, nature-based solutions and blue-green infrastructure while undertaking further work on costs, benefits, implementation pathways and applicability within individual catchments.

21.8. Current work is focused on the initial technical analyses in the Mangatainoka Catchment, where staff are applying the same broad methodology used in the Ōroua and Pohangina investigations. The objective is to improve understanding of river behaviour and inform future management options, rather than progress implementation decisions.

Programme Outlook

21.9. Future work will continue to focus on investigation, option development and analysis within the Mangatainoka Catchment. This work is expected to take two to three years to complete. Any future implementation options, funding implications, landowner engagement

requirements or policy changes would be subject to further investigation and future Council decisions.

21.10. Findings from the Mangatainoka work programme will help inform future Infrastructure Strategy implementation, catchment planning and any subsequent Council consideration of Room for the River approaches.

22. ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTS

Background

22.1. The River Management Environmental Grants programme assists landowners and community groups to undertake eligible river-management works outside of, or alongside, existing river and drainage schemes. Grants typically contribute up to 30% of project costs, subject to a maximum grant contribution of $10,000.

22.2. The Annual Plan target requires completion of five environmental grant projects during 2026-27. As at 30 September 2026, two grants had been approved, with one project completed and the second progressing through planning (Table 60).

Table 60: Environmental grant projects approved during 2026-27.

	Catchment	River Management Area	Works	Total Project Cost ($)	Grant Contribution ($)	Status
1	Ōroua	Central	Rock groyne	49,843	10,000	Completed
2	Whanganui	Northern	Debris and sediment removal	2,500	750	Planning

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Chair

ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.

Report No.	26-189
Decision Required	

PUREORA LANDSCAPE COLLABORATION - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

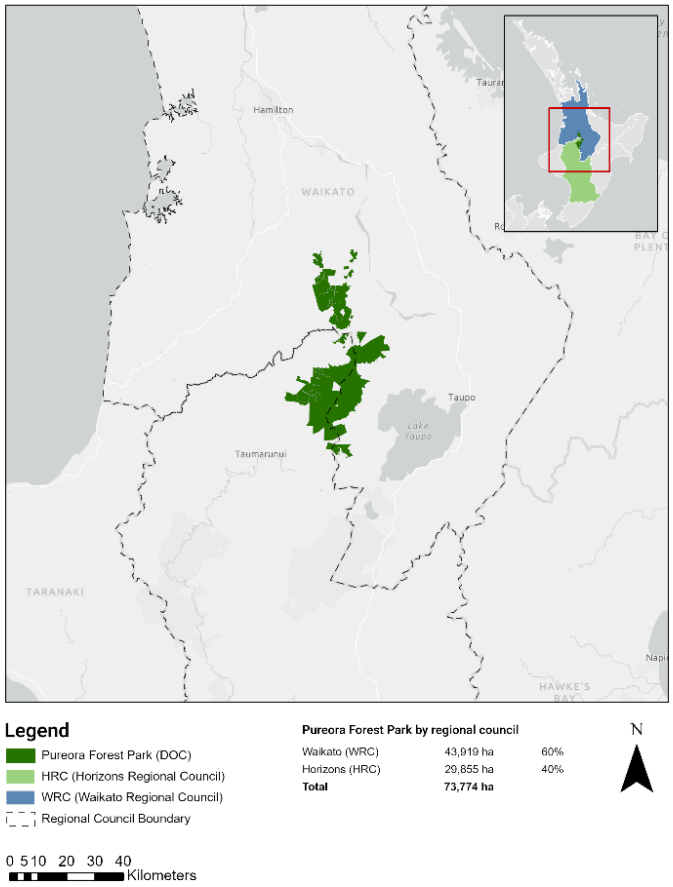
1. PURPOSE

1.1. This paper presents information regarding the Pureora Landscape Collaboration project, its goals and progress to date. This information will assist Council to consider the request for Horizons to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Conservation (the Department), Waikato Regional Council (WRC) and Horizons Regional Council (Horizons), collectively referred to as the Partners; to support collaboration between the Partners in developing a shared vision that contributes to positive environmental, cultural, social, and community outcomes across the wider Pureora landscape.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1. The Pureora landscape is one of the central North Island's most significant interconnected environmental and cultural landscapes spanning approximately 78,000 hectares of podocarp–broadleaf rainforest (Map 1). It encompasses extensive indigenous forests, nationally significant biodiversity, important headwater systems, wetlands, productive lands, and communities connected through generations of history, stewardship, and place.

Pureora Forest Park and Regional Council Boundaries



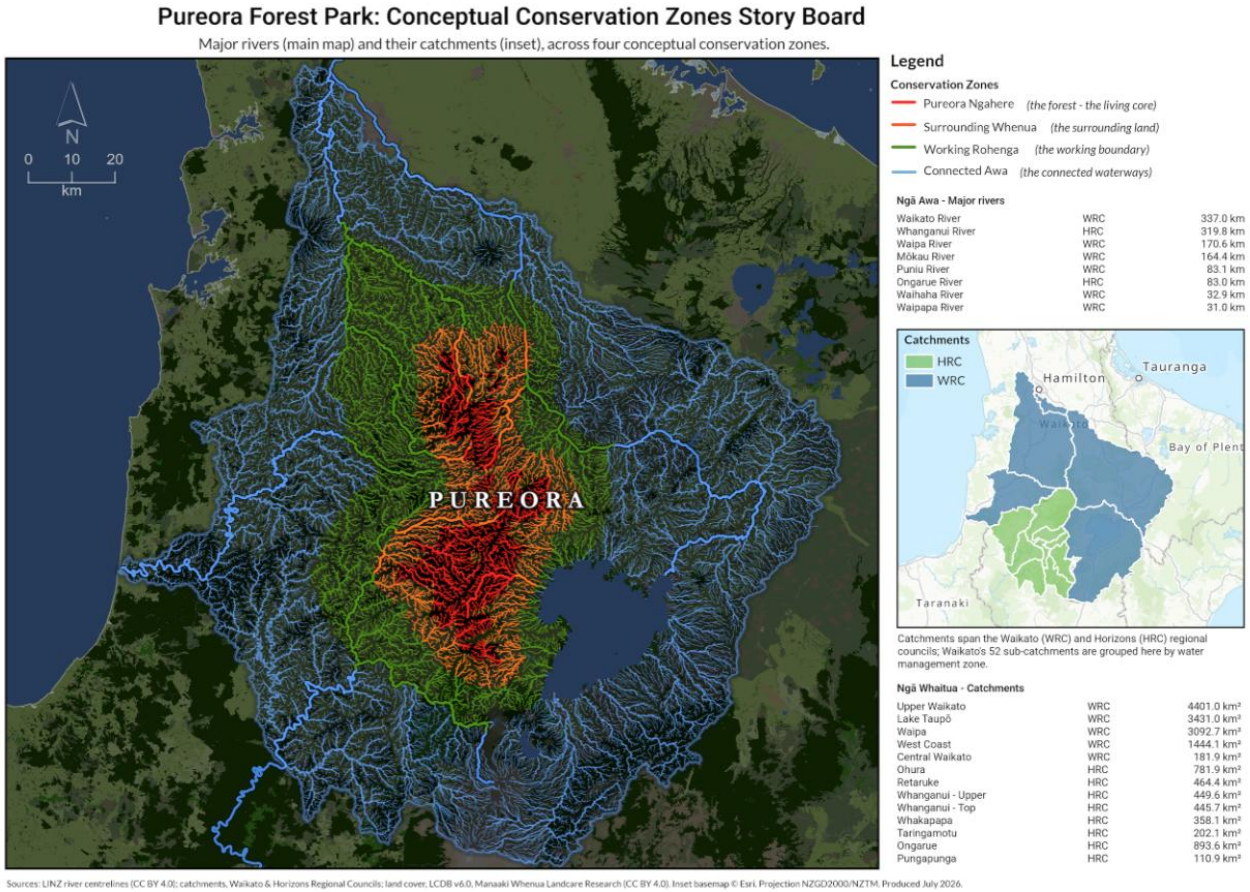
Map 1: Pureora Forest Park in the regional spatial context.

2.2. Water originating within the landscape contributes to the Waikato, Waipā, Whanganui, and Lake Taupō catchments, extending the influence of Pureora well beyond the boundaries of Pureora Forest Park.

2.3. The genesis of what is now a wider collaboration approach begun in 2019 with the production of a report for the Department titled the Pureora Conservation Project Scoping Report. A recommendation of this report was that the Department should initiate the design of a collaborative landscape level conservation project for the Pureora area; and this should be done with key active stakeholders such as regional councils.

2.4. The project grew slowly and early iterations included the Otorahanga Kiwi House, who along with WRC and the Department formed a working group to explore how the original goal could be delivered. Since 2025/26 the Department has funded 1.2 full-time equivalent positions focused on the project. More information can be found at this website: [The Pureora Project: Our work].

2.5. Horizons was invited to participate in the project in 2024. Staff have been attending virtual meetings and providing technical information and support for the work of the group in preparing a collective view of the Partners current operations in and around Pureora to support engagement with the community via hui. The purpose of the hui reflects the current project phase, which is to determine if there is collective interest in developing a comprehensive Pureora Forest Park Landscape Plan. Central to this purpose is understanding how neighbouring landowners may wish to contribute to a broader landscape ecological plan that transcends boundary lines. This approach seeks to move beyond isolated conservation efforts toward a holistic, "mountaintop to valley" restoration model, and is captured in Map 2, where the 'heart' (coloured red) of Pureora is surrounded by a wider landscape of various protection works.



Map 2: Pureora Forest Park: Conceptual Conservation Zones.

2.6. Hui began in 2025 and have been held around Pureora, with the last finishing on 18 October 2026. Between January and August 2026, the hui were titled the 'Pureora Discovery Phase', and revisited the proposition first explored through the 2019 Pureora Conservation Project Scoping Report. Through stakeholder engagement, biodiversity assessment, spatial analysis, document review, and examination of comparable initiatives from across Aotearoa New Zealand, the discovery phase sought to better understand the landscape as it exists today, the stewardship activity already occurring across it, the people connected to it, and the opportunities and challenges associated with its future.

2.7. The common threads from the hui include how best to deliver ecological outcomes and the way people organise around them. Participants discussed science and practical knowledge, restoration beyond public conservation land, deer and browsing pressure, resourcing, existing organisational capability, and ways to make projects and opportunities more visible. The overall emphasis was on building from what already exists rather than assuming a new structure is required at the outset.

2.8. Key findings from the hui:

<u>Pureora matters</u>

- Pureora remains a landscape of significant environmental, cultural, catchment, social, and economic importance. Its indigenous forests, biodiversity, headwater systems, productive lands, and cultural connections extend well beyond the boundaries of Pureora Forest Park and contribute to the wellbeing of communities and catchments across the central North Island.

<u>Stewardship is already occurring</u>

- Restoration, conservation, environmental management, cultural stewardship, research, monitoring, and community initiatives are already occurring throughout the landscape.
- This work is being undertaken by Treaty Partners, Māori landowners, landowners, community organisations, volunteers, researchers, businesses, local authorities, regional councils, and government agencies.

<u>Readiness is present</u>

- The Discovery Phase identified many of the characteristics associated with readiness, including active participation, existing relationships, shared interests, and ongoing stewardship activity.
- Stakeholders continue to demonstrate interest in the future of the landscape, although readiness varies between organisations, communities, and individuals depending on priorities, obligations, resourcing, and capacity.

<u>Capability is present but capacity is constrained</u>

- Many stakeholders identified limitations relating to funding, time, staff resources, volunteer effort, succession, and competing priorities.

2.9. The project group has heard from the community and iwi/hapū that there is a desire to ensure those participating in environmental work across the Pureora Catchment work together and align programmes to deliver sound ecological outcomes.

2.10. The proposed MOU (Annex A) will both confirm and highlight the shared commitment of the Partners to work collaboratively to provide strategic leadership, coordination, and support for the project. Signatories to the MOU are the Departments Regional Director and the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Managers for both regional councils to reflect the level of operational and strategic oversight for each organisation.

2.11. The discovery phase did not recommend a specific governance model, organisation, trust, alliance, or delivery structure. However, the findings suggest a future design and coordination phase focused on:

- Understanding who wishes to participate.
- Improving visibility of existing stewardship activity.
- Better understanding capability, capacity, and investment across the landscape.
- Identifying opportunities for coordination, collaboration, and shared priorities.
- Exploring whether additional arrangements may add value alongside existing stewardship efforts.

2.12. The project group is keen to enable a guidance group, established to support engagement, information sharing, and exploration of future opportunities. This could take the form of a representative leadership forum or collective, with delegates selected by hapū and regular reporting back to marae and whānau along with other community and organisational leadership.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

a. receives the information contained in Report No. 26-189 and Annex.

b. agrees that, in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, the decisions in this report are not significant, and the appropriate level of engagement is: inform

c. supports the Biodiversity Biosecurity and Partnerships Manager signing the Pureora Landscape Collaboration Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of Horizons along with the Department of Conservations Regional Director (Hauraki Waikato Taranaki) and Waikato Regional Councils Biodiversity and Biosecurity Manager.

4. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

4.1. Council Strategic Priorities

- A holistic approach, from the mountains to the sea (integrated catchment management)
- Building resilience to the impacts of climate change
- Strengthening partnerships with tangata whenua

4.1.1. The Memorandum of Understanding supports a collaborative and cooperative long-term approach to developing a shared vision that contributes to positive environmental, cultural, social and community outcomes across the wider Pureora area. It reinforces the importance of being guided by iwi and working collectively across organisational boundaries.

4.2. Council's Community Outcomes

Our region's communities are resilient to the impact of natural hazards and climate change



Our region's communities are vibrant and empowered



Our region's ecosystems are healthy



Our region's relationship with iwi and hapū are respectful and mana-enhancing

4.2.1. The benefit to the community of this work is highlighting the collaborative and cooperative approach to working with our regional and crown partners.

4.2.2. That Horizons works with and is guided by iwi/hapū and the community aspirations to protect places of high value.

4.2.3. Horizons is able to work with partners to deliver large landscape scale environmental projects that provide protection and enhancement of natural values.

4.3. The matters in this report align with the following adopted policies, strategies and plans:

- Regional Pest Management Plan
- Annual Plan

5. SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

5.1. Significance Assessment

5.1.1. Council's Significance and Engagement Policy is not triggered by matters discussed in this report. The decision sought is to support Horizons signing a Memorandum of Understanding and does not commit Council to new funding, projects or statutory decisions.

5.2. Engagement section:

5.2.1. No stakeholder engagement is required.

5.2.2. The project has been highlighted in Integrated Catchment Committee reporting, along with engagement with community and iwi/hapū groups through recent hui within the Horizons and Waikato regions.

6. FINANCIAL IMPACT

6.1. Signing the Memorandum of Understanding does not commit Council to additional expenditure or funding. Any future financial commitments arising from the project's initiatives would remain subject to the normal Council planning, budgeting and decision-making processes.

6.2. Current commitments have included staff time to meet virtually with the collaborative team, provide information for presentations and documents, and attend project hui with local iwi/hapū and community members to talk to the current work programmes Horizons conducts around Pureroa, including those supported by the Kanorau Koiora Taketake - Indigenous Biodiversity Community Fund.

7. CLIMATE IMPACT

7.1. Climate Impact Statements

7.1.1. Signing the Memorandum of Understanding does not directly result in a material change to greenhouse gas emissions.

7.1.2. The Memorandum of Understanding supports collaboration between organisations that work to provide long-term protection and enhancement of the Pureora landscapes natural environment and ecological resilience.

7.1.3. The decision is not expected to limit future adaptation options or Council's capacity to adapt to climate change.

7.1.4. The decision is not directly a response to a changing climate.

7.1.5. The decision supports the intent of the Climate Action Strategy through its support for environmental protection and long-term resilience.

7.1.6. The decision is primarily a partnership and commitment decision. Any specific future actions arising from the Memorandum of Understanding would be assessed for climate impacts as they are developed.

7.2. The decision is primarily a partnership and commitment decision. Any specific future actions arising from the Memorandum of Understanding would be assessed for climate impacts as they are developed.

8. RISK

8.1. The following risks have been identified in relation to the matters raised in this report:

8.1.1. **Strategic:** There is a risk that without signaled commitment from partners, the collaborative approach to the Pureora Landscape Collaboration project could fracture. This could lead to communities viewing organisations mandated to undertake environment protection as being disjointed and not aligned.

Mitigation: The Memorandum of Understanding provides a clear shared basis for continued partnership and long-term commitment to work together.

8.1.2. **Environmental:** No direct environmental risk arises from signing the Memorandum of Understanding.

8.1.3. **Financial:** Signing the Memorandum of Understanding does not create a financial commitment beyond existing Council funded programmes and within existing budgets.

8.1.4. **Compliance:** The Memorandum of Understanding recognises that each member remains subject to its statutory responsibilities, mandates, budgets, delegations and approval processes.

8.1.5. **Operational:** No significant operational risk arises from the decision.

8.1.6. **Reputational:** There is a potential reputational risk if Horizons is perceived to withdraw from the current alignment that has strong inter-regional support.

8.1.7. **Mitigation:** Signing the Memorandum of Understanding provides a clear public indication of Horizons' continued commitment while retaining appropriate boundaries around future decisions and investment.

8.1.8. **Other:** No other significant risks have been identified.

9. BACKGROUND

9.1. The Pureora Ranges are located in the heart of the North Island. It is an area rich in bird and plant life with a long and successful conservation history. The Pureora Ranges are the meeting place of many peoples and home to a diversity of communities that have a range of cultural, recreational and economic associations with the area. The area has complex bureaucracy with two Department operational regions, two regional councils and four

district councils. There are five iwi who hold mana whenua over its parts. The ranges are where waters meet; its rivers and streams feed Lake Taupō to the east, the Waikato Awa to the north and the Whanganui Awa to the south.

9.2. The Department manages the central core of the ranges as Public Conservation Estate (PCE) however, this managed core has ragged edges as it is bisected and constrained by private land holdings. These ragged edges make conservation efforts more difficult and disjointed as there are numerous fronts open to invasion from weeds and animal pests etc. The important natural values of the core area do not, however, stop at the boundaries of the public conservation estate, and neither do the conservation efforts. Much of the surrounding private land is characterised by areas of indigenous vegetation that act as an extension of the ecosystems on PCE and buffer the core area.

9.3. Extending the scope of environmental protection activities to a landscape level, brings in these areas of private land, resulting a smoothing of the ragged edges of the core Pureora area.

9.4. The project inception is in response to many people voicing a desire to see the forests and wildlife of Pureora restored, with previous efforts fragmented and too small scale to make a meaningful difference. Coordinating and combining efforts could help achieve better outcomes for this special place.

9.5. Engagement around the project has highlighted iwi and conservation groups with aims to restore Pureora to a place where seabirds can again thrive and support a vibrant ecosystem in the most inland parts of the North Island. Others wish to see the remnant kiwi population restored and flourishing, while others would like to see the important ecological relation between bats and Dactylanthus enhanced so that both species can prosper.

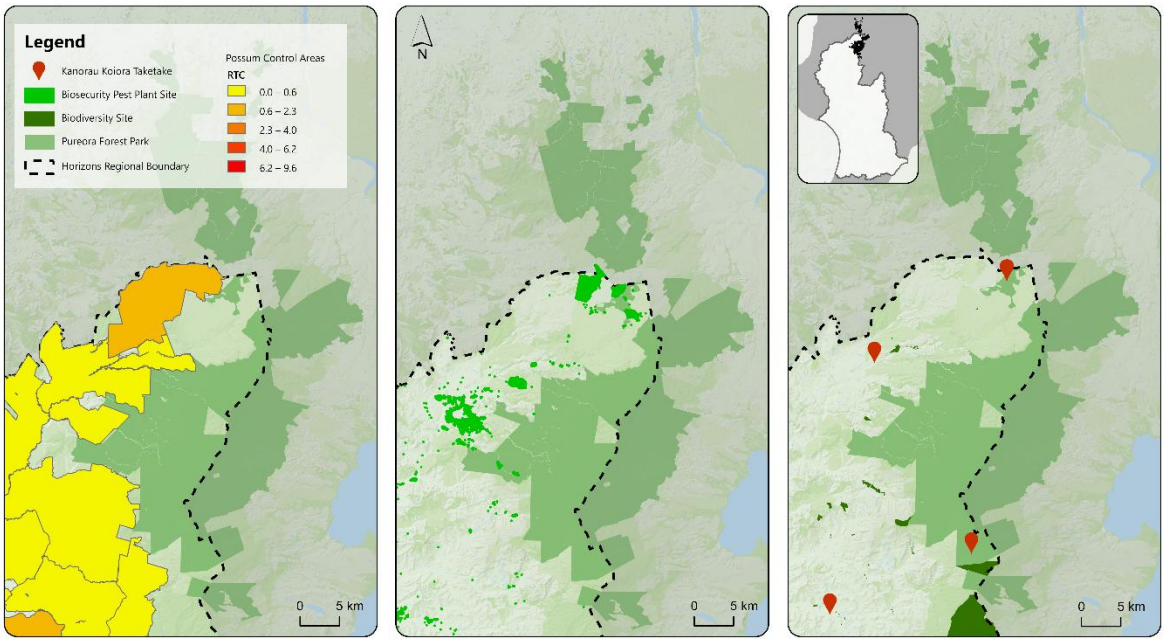
9.6. There are benefits of individuals, landowners, iwi, community groups, local and central government and communities working to a common goal for ongoing conservation management in Pureora. The project group are interested in exploring how it can harness collective efforts to achieve better outcomes for the special place that is Pureora.

9.7. Potential outcomes for the project are:

- stronger partnerships,
- shared goals for Pureora, and
- increased collaboration in conservation and land management.

10. DISCUSSION

10.1. Horizons Regional Council supports protection of the wider Pureora area through on the ground works within the pest animal and pest plant operational programmes; and support of community action via Kanorau Koiora Taketake - Indigenous Biodiversity Community contestable grants. The proximity to Pureora of the current Horizons supported and aligned work is shown in Map 3.



Map 3: Horizons biosecurity and biodiversity works located near Pureora Forest Park. The left tile highlights the PCO coverage and current RTC results; the middle tile locates sites of pest plants managed by Horizons; and the right tile locates past and present contestable fund projects

10.2. Horizons Possum Control Operations (PCO) cover land parcels to the western boundary of Pureora, except for non-rateable land. All PCOs are showing monitor outcomes well less than the target Residual Trap Catch Index (RTC) of 10%.

10.3. Horizons currently manages pest plant control operations, highlighted in bright green on Map 3, against old man's beard, knotweed, Darwin's barberry and *Pinus contorta.*

10.4. Horizons currently supports a number of Kanorau Koiora Taketake – Biodiversity Contestable Fund projects in close proximity to the Pureora project area:

- Mahere ki kaitiakitanga a Whenuakura: This project implements the Protection Principles and values of Ngāti Te Maunga across the 3,500 hectare Whenuakura landscape. Grounded in Te Ao Māori, it integrates kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga to restore and protect indigenous biodiversity. The initiative focuses on enhancing ecosystem health and the connection between people and the land, ensuring the taiao is managed in harmony with tradtional knowledge and ecological needs.
- Pungapunga River Whio Recovery Group: The Pungapunga River Whio Recovery Project began in 2010 with the goal of strengthening the existing Whio population within the Waituhi Forest. Managed by Manulife Forest Management (NZ) on behalf of Taumata Plantations Limited, the project is now in its 16th consecutive year. Over this time, more than 5,000 predators have been removed from the area, significantly improving habitat safety for Whio. The latest population survey shows strong results, with 14 juveniles recorded within the project area, a clear sign that the recovery efforts are working. This funding will support the extension of the trapping network through the installation of 60 AT220 traps, allowing predator control to occur nearer to Whio habitat where they are most vulnerable.
- Pikiariki Restoration Rat Control Project: Establishing a network of A24 traps throughout the Pikiariki Forest, Pureora, to maintain rats at low density throughout the year.

10.5. Horizons' biodiversity team is involved in a number of collaborative programmes with the community and or the Department. The Horizons ICON site programme includes the Kia Wharite and Te Āpiti projects are examples of where good Partner communication, and collaborative planning to align work to an agreed vision produces better environmental outcomes.

10.6. The scope of the proposed MOU is to support collaboration between the Partners to facilitate the development of a shared vision, guide coordinated action, support community iwi and hapu aspirations and to build a lasting partnership while respecting each Partners statutory functions and priorities.

10.7. The MOU includes a number of decision-making principles and acknowledges the need to meet, share information and agree to priorities for planning and work programmes.

TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

10.8. If council decide to support the request for Horizons to become signatories of the MOU with the Department and WRC, this can be actioned immediately.

10.9. Project activity and progress updates will be provided to Council in Integrated Catchment Committee reporting.

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Group Manager Catchment Operations

Michael McCartney
Chief Executive

Nikki Riley
Chair

ANNEXES

A Understanding
Pureora Landscape Collaboration MOU

Item 8

Annex A

Memorandum of Understanding
Pureora Landscape Collaboration

The Department of Conservation, Waikato Regional Council, Horizons Regional Council ("the Partners")

Context | Horopaki

The Partners recognise that the environmental, cultural, and community values of the wider Pureora landscape can be enhanced through greater collaboration and coordination.

Scope | Tirohanga

The scope of this MOU is to support collaboration between the Partners in developing a shared vision that contributes to positive environmental, cultural, social, and community outcomes across the wider Pureora landscape. This includes engagement, planning, knowledge sharing, resource alignment, and the development and delivery of mutually agreed initiatives.

Purpose | Tuapapa

Facilitate development of a shared vision for the future of the wider Pureora landscape.

Guide Coordinated Action, alignment of resources, expertise, and investment to achieve greater biodiversity and conservation outcomes.

Aspirations and values of iwi, hapū, communities, landowners, and stakeholders shape future priorities and actions.

Build a lasting partnership while recognising and respecting each Partner's statutory functions, mandates, and organisational priorities.

Principles | Tikanga

Decisions are guided by the following principles:

1. **Treaty-Grounded:** Decisions are grounded in Treaty principles.
2. **Shared Impact:** Involve relevant Partners where there are shared impacts
3. **Aspirations-Led:** Guided by iwi, hapū, communities, landowners, and stakeholders.
4. **Mahi Tahi:** Working collaboratively towards shared outcomes.
5. **Kaitiakitanga:** Supporting the long-term wellbeing of the Pureora landscape.
6. **Respect for Mana and Mandate:** Recognising the roles, responsibilities, and authority of each Partner.
7. **Trust and Transparency:** Maintaining open communication, accountability, and good faith.

Oversight & Implementation | Mahi Rangatira

The Partners will work collaboratively to provide strategic leadership, coordination, and support for the project. Together, the Partners commit to:

Meeting regularly, to provide strategic oversight, review progress, and agree priorities and actions for the project.

Via an **MOU Implementation Group** to drive delivery of agreed activities and report annually to the MOU Signatories.

The **MOU Signatories** will meet bi-annually to review progress, consider strategic opportunities, and confirm future priorities.

Sharing information openly, with project updates, key documents, decisions, and relevant information accessible to all Partners through a shared repository.

Embedding agreed priorities and opportunities within each Partner's business planning and work programmes.

Name _____

Sign here ↘ _____

Name _____

Sign here ↘ _____

Name _____

Sign here ↘ _____

Public Excluded Section

RECOMMENDATION

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

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

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