



Regional Council functions

Serving the Whanganui community and environment

June 2026

Service centres

Kairanga

Cnr Rongotea and Kairanga
-Bunnythorpe Roads,
Palmerston North

Marton

19 Hammond Street

Taumarunui

34 Maata Street

Regional houses

Palmerston North

11-15 Victoria Avenue

Whanganui

181 Guyton Street

Depots

Taihape

243 Wairanu Road

Woodville

116 Vogel Street

Contact

24 hr freephone 0508 800 800
help@horizons.govt.nz
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Horizons Regional Council,
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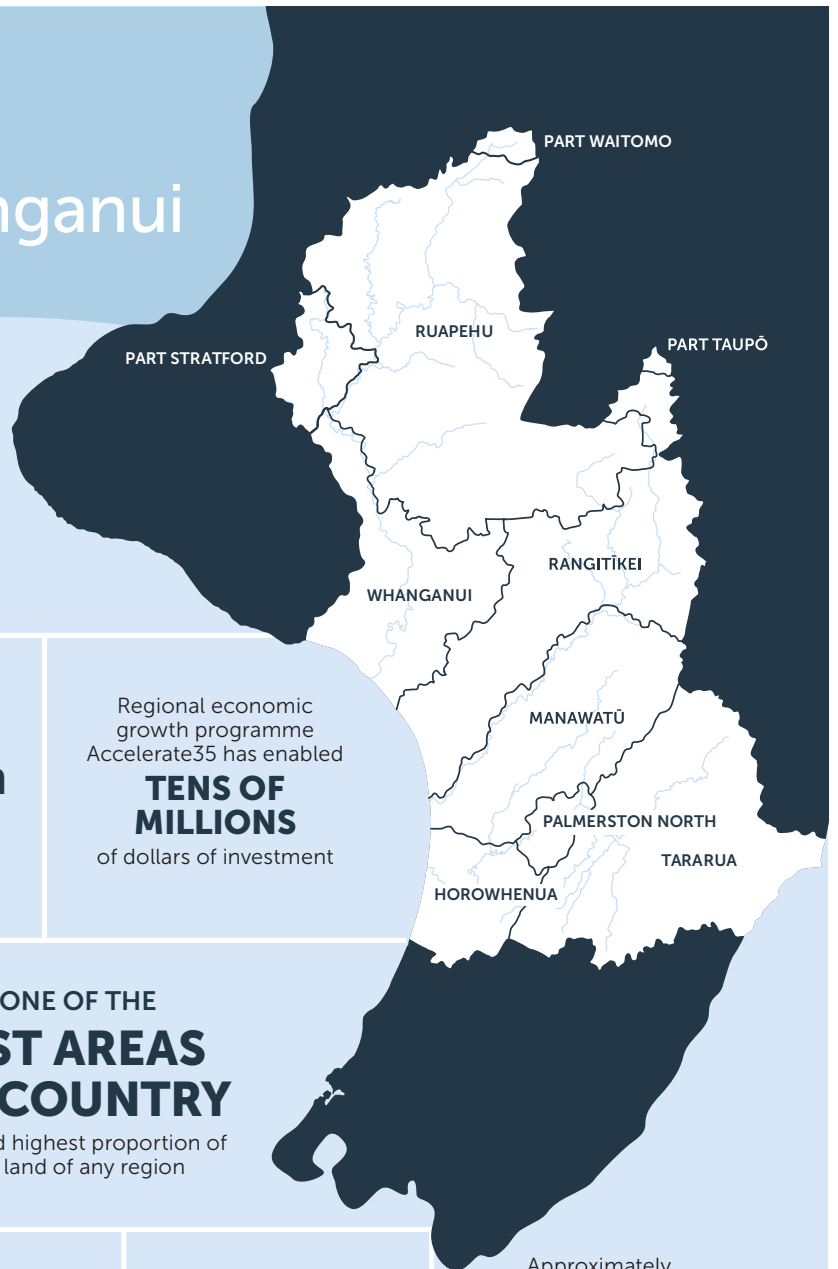
Ngā ihirangi

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Our Region

Manawatū-Whanganui



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

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

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

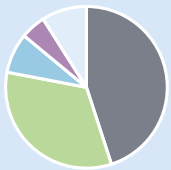
THERE ARE OVER
35,000km
of waterways in the
Horizons Region

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

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

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

LAND USE IS:



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

The Horizons Region
is made up of
2.2 MILLION
HECTARES

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

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

Approximately
117,000
RATEABLE PROPERTIES
contribute to our
work programmes

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

We also have
two coasts with
jurisdiction extending

12

NAUTICAL
MILES
out to sea

THERE ARE

40

ESTUARIES

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

WE HAVE OVER

230
LAKES

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

OVER
27%

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

Regional Council functions – serving the Whanganui community and environment

Ratepayers in the Whanganui District contribute approximately \$9.82 million to deliver regional council functions, which is approximately 14.1% of Horizons' rate take (2024-25 financial year). This document provides an overview of Horizons functions in your district, what your district ratepayers contribute to those activities and work that is undertaken with some key operational examples.

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

Your place

The Whanganui District sits on the north-western boundary of the Horizons Region. Most of the population of the district – 48,700 people and growing – lives in the Whanganui city area at the mouth of the Whanganui River. Te Awa Tupua, the Whanganui River, is central to the district's identity. In 2017 it became the first river in the world to be recognised as a legal person. Legislation in relation to the Whanganui River catchment and for Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika, the Whangaehu River, is designed to ensure these two awa have their mauri upheld and enhanced. Whanganui is known

as a city of arts and culture. Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery, which reopened in 2024 following a \$70-million development, holds a large collection spanning four centuries of art history. Whanganui Regional Museum holds a significant range of taonga, including a renowned Lindauer collection. The city was recognised in 2021 as Aotearoa New Zealand's only UNESCO City of Design, one of 49 such cities worldwide. Iwi based in the district include Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangi and Ngā Rauru. Whanganui District is also home to the country's most unique public transport service, the Durie Hill Elevator. Tourism, primary industries (especially hill country farming), manufacturing, and healthcare and social assistance make up large parts of the district's economy, with tertiary education provided by UCOL and Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

Whanganui District is focused on supporting community wellbeing, economic development and protecting the cultural, environmental and heritage values that make the district unique. Wellbeing, economic opportunity, environmental stewardship and place-based identity are recurring themes throughout Council's strategic planning documents. Horizons contributes to many of the outcomes sought by Whanganui District Council through flood protection, environmental management, transport services, science, land management and long-term planning, creating opportunities for continued collaboration across the district.



Digger at South Mole, South Mole

District priority/outcome	How Horizons contributes
Community wellbeing and resilience	Flood protection, river management, hazard planning, emergency management, climate science and supporting resilient communities.
Economic development and growth	Supporting productive land use, transport services, environmental management, and the resilience of communities, businesses and infrastructure
Environmental stewardship	Freshwater management, biodiversity programmes, land management and environmental monitoring and catchment management.
Infrastructure investment and planning	Supporting evidence-based planning, catchment management, natural hazard resilience and long-term infrastructure decision-making.
Culture, heritage and identity	Supporting the health and wellbeing of Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River), environmental restoration, and working alongside tangata whenua and communities to protect important environmental and cultural values.
Partnerships and community outcomes	Working alongside iwi, communities, catchment groups and partner organisations to support local outcomes.

What Horizons does for your communities

Horizons Regional Council is here to serve the 251,000 people who call the Horizons Region home. With 117,000 rateable properties to service, a total budget of \$78 million per annum and accountability for more than 30 pieces of primary legislation and dozens of pieces of secondary legislation, the equivalent of 320 full-time equivalent staff spread across seven territorial authority areas deliver services at a regional scale. Those services are provided through groups of activities: Catchment Operations; Strategy, Regulation and Science; Transport and Regional Services; and Partnerships, Governance and Leadership. Horizons has one service a centre in the Whanganui District, based a short walk from Whanganui District Councils' main office on Guyton St.

Horizons' priority areas in Whanganui

- Te Kōpuka
- Te Pūwaha
- Lower Whanganui Scheme and wider flood protection
- Regional and urban public transport services
- Ngā Wai Tōtā o Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika
- Pest plant and animal control including Kia

Whārite project to protect and support whio and North Island brown kiwi populations

- Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI)
- Support for Tarapuruhi Bushy Park

Funding regional-scale delivery, locally

Horizons funds activities through a range of sources, including rates, grants and subsidies, fees and charges, investments, and reserves. These funding arrangements ensure ratepayers get value for money through the economy of scale regional service delivery provides. It also ensures Horizons can leverage co-investment from partners such as central government, landowners and territorial authorities. A good example of that leverage in the Whanganui District is attracting funding to the Te Pūwaha port revitalisation project. A collaborative effort led by iwi and upheld by project partners, Te Pūwaha has attracted significant central government investment. Horizons' role has ensured funding has gone into river management works which provide protection for critical infrastructure (including the port, three waters and flood protection assets).

Mahi on the ground – Catchment Operations Group

This group is made up of the following activities:

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

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

Catchment Operations Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

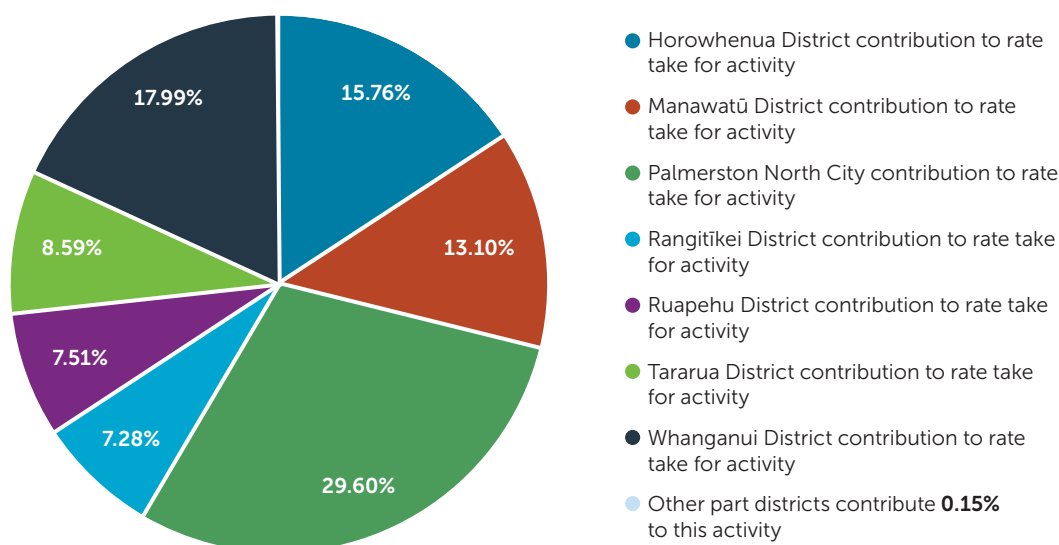
	Land Management	Freshwater and Partnerships	Biodiversity and Biosecurity	River Management and Flood Protection
Regional rates	5,114,164.31	3,672,349.08	10,457,457.77	17,846,633.19
Grants and subsidies	910,000.00	1,920,000.00	-	10,887,326.00
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	144,230.30	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	858,127.94	-	166,630.00	2,013,715.14
Funding surplus/ shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	-107,711.60	45,157.58	-172,523.26	9,859,794.70
Total Operational Expenditure	7,134,234.15	5,547,191.50	10,796,611.03	20,887,879.63
Whanganui District rates	919,890.63	369,846.02	1,612,530.65	1,592,536.47
Whanganui District contribution to rate take for activity	17.99%	10.07%	15.42%	8.92%

Land Management Activity

Land Management at a glance

- Aim of the activity is to reduce hill country **erosion**, and improve **water quality** and **flood capacity** in our region's waterways.
- The work done at the top of catchments ensures benefits all the way to the bottom so is **funded universally** through UAGC, general rates and user charges.
- Regionally **63,000** hectares of erosion control works benefit downstream communities such as Whanganui.
- Budget for the region: **\$7.13 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: **\$919,890**, which is a **15.76%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- Land Management activity undertaken in the district in 2024-25: **\$598,000**.
- **9** of the **102** soil quality monitoring sites are located in the Whanganui District.
- Current SLUI central government contract runs until **June 2027**.
- **125** whole farm plans have been developed under SLUI.
- **4,883** hectares of land mapped and **12,012** hectares of erosion control works completed.
- **3** forestry right partnerships within the district, with forests due for harvest within the next 5-10 years.
- Modelling suggests erosion work could reduce sediment load in the region's rivers (including the Whanganui and Whangaehu rivers) by about **50%**.
- Maintaining an **integrated catchment approach** with rivers crossing different territorial authorities will be a challenge.

Land Management





Sheep on farmland

Understanding soil and keeping it where it belongs

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

The primary focus of Land Management works is on unstable hill country areas throughout the Whanganui and Whangaehu River catchments and work done further up the catchment helps people, property and businesses in Whanganui District. More detail on this is outlined below.

The Whanganui District contains a significant amount of highly erodible land, split between national park and farmed land. This makes it one of the most significant districts for the SLUI programme across the entire Horizons Region. Since SLUI began in 2006, 125 whole farm plans have been developed in the district, with 84,883 hectares of land mapped and 12,012 hectares of erosion control works completed. A further 374 hectares have been completed under the Regional and Coast grant programme, including 4.5 hectares in 2024-25.

The activity also maintains a regional network of sites to monitor long-term changes in soil health, with 9 of the 102 soil quality monitoring sites located in the Whanganui District.

Horizons also makes an annual application for funding support to the Whanganui River Enhancement Trust (WRET), receiving between \$70,000 and \$100,000 per year since around 2006. This funding supports extra grant funding for land works within the Whanganui catchment, with significant benefit to the Whanganui District.

Income and Spend for SLUI by TLA



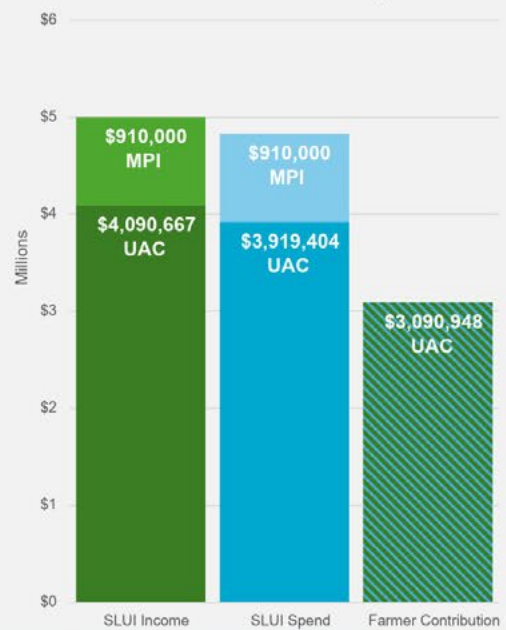
Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.

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

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

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

Total SLUI Income and Spend



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

SLUI Income and Spend by TLA 2024 - 2025

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



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

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$7.13 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$919,890

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

The current SLUI contract with central government via the Hill Country Erosion Fund runs until June 2027, with a new round of funding already applied for. If successful, SLUI would have government co-funding until June 2031. Funding agreements are also in place with the NZ Poplar and Willow Research Trust and the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust, which runs the annual Ballance Farm Environment Awards. Horizons also makes an annual application to the Whanganui River Enhancement Trust, receiving between \$70,000 and \$100,000 per year since around 2006 to support land works within the Whanganui catchment.

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

People and relationships

About 19 FTEs directly contribute to the Land Management activity across the region. Five Land Management staff are based in Whanganui, comprising three support staff and two land management advisors who service the district from the Whanganui office on Guyton St. Other support for the Land Management activity is provided by corporate staff (e.g. finance, communications, HR).

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

Key considerations for delivery models

The aim of the Land Management activity is to reduce hill country erosion and improve water quality and flood capacity in the region's waterways. Work done at the top of catchments delivers benefits all the way to the bottom. This is why funding is structured on a uniform basis, ensuring an integrated approach to catchment management where people contribute to work they benefit from even when it is done outside their district.

Within the Whanganui District, most of the farmed land is targeted for support from the SLUI programme. This targeted support extends upstream into the Ruapehu District, reflecting the fact river catchments do not follow district boundaries. SLUI modelling suggests the work being undertaken could reduce sediment in the region's waterways – including the Whanganui, Whangaehu rivers, and Kai Iwi stream – by approximately 50%, although this may be impacted in the future by climate change causing more frequent and intense storm events. Maintaining this integrated catchment approach in an amalgamation environment, especially with river catchments in the Whanganui District crossing territorial authorities, will be a challenge depending on how territorial authorities see their futures.

The three Forestry Right partnerships in the Whanganui District, with harvest due within the next five-to-ten years, represent a further consideration.

2024-25 Activities

\$920,000

Rate contribution from the district to Land Management activities

\$598,000

Worth of Land management activities delivered in the district

2024-25 Key Outputs

3 Farms mapped

2,241 ha mapped area

1,167 ha erosion mitigation works

Total Outputs 2006-2025

125

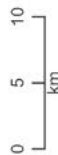
Farms mapped

84,883 ha

Total mapped area

12,386 ha

erosion mitigation works



Land Management Activities In Whanganui District 2025 FY

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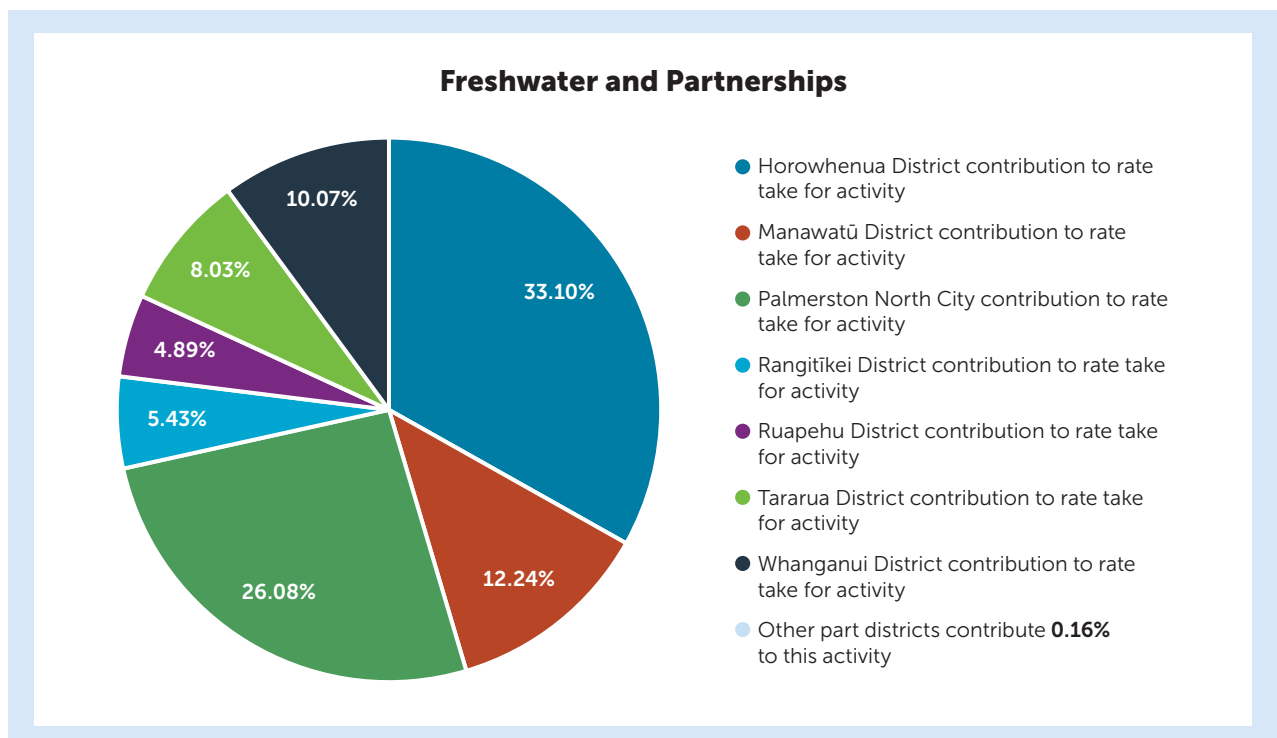


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Freshwater and Partnerships Activity

Freshwater and Partnerships at a glance

- The aim of this activity is to improve **aquatic habitat** and **water quality** by working with external partners.
- The work done has benefits at both a local and regional scale, so is funded via **targeted and general rates**.
- The health of waterways in the Whanganui District is directly connected to land use and water management decisions made across catchments **spanning multiple territorial authority areas**.
- Budget for the region: **\$5.55 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: **\$369,846** which is a **10.07%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget.
- Freshwater and Partnerships activity undertaken in the district in 2024-25: **\$560,000**.
- Freshwater improvement activities are funded through a combination of **targeted rates, general rates, and central government funding**.
- 2024-25 expenditure in the Whanganui District under this activity **exceeded its rates contribution** but benefitted from regional council advocacy for central government funding.
- Nearly **25,000** plants were planted, **13** fish passage remediations undertaken, and **4.9** kilometres of stream fencing completed in the Whanganui District in 2024-25.
- Freshwater does not adhere to lines drawn on maps, achieving meaningful water quality improvements requires coordinated action **across people-defined boundaries**, and a **shared commitment** to long-term outcomes.
- The Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act (25 July 2019) established the **Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika Framework**, creating statutory partnership arrangements for managing the Whangaehu River catchment.
- The **Te Awa Tupua Act** established a framework for statutory partnerships arrangements for managing the Whanganui River catchment.



Working with communities to improve freshwater health

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

The Whanganui District sits at the heart of one of New Zealand's most significant river systems. The Whanganui River — recognised as a legal person under the Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act — flows through the district, connecting headwaters in the Ruapehu District to the Tasman Sea. The health of the Whanganui River and its tributaries is shaped by land use and water management decisions made across multiple territorial authority areas upstream, making a catchment-scale approach to freshwater improvement essential. The Whangaehu River, which also flows through the district, carries highly acidic water from the Ruapehu crater lake and presents unique water quality challenges that extend across district boundaries.

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

The \$11.3 million Jobs for Nature Riparian Management project — funded \$4.6 million from Government, \$2.7 million from Horizons, and \$4 million from landowners — expanded Horizons' existing stream fencing and riparian planting programme over four years, significantly increasing delivery beyond existing targets. The programme aimed to accelerate water quality improvements by scaling up interventions that exclude stock from waterways, reducing E. coli levels and improving river swimmability. It responded to strong landowner demand that had previously been constrained by limited funding and staff,

with additional resources enabling expanded delivery across all waterways, including smaller streams that contribute most to nutrient and E. coli loads. In 2024-25, nearly 25,000 plants were planted and 4.9km of stream fencing completed in the Whanganui District as part of this programme.

The \$3.2 million Jobs for Nature Fish Passage project — funded \$2.6 million from Government, \$300,000 from Horizons, and \$300,000 from barrier owners — expanded Horizons' programme to identify and remediate barriers to native fish migration, helping address widespread declines in fish diversity and distribution across the region. The project focused on stream walking, barrier removal, and monitoring to improve fish passage, with at least 25 barriers removed and 1,250km of habitat opened up across the region. In 2024-25, 13 fish passage remediations were undertaken in the Whanganui District, restoring migratory pathways and increasing habitat availability for native fish and kākahi.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$5.55 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$396,846

Grant funding and external subsidies are sought wherever possible. Where these are not available, freshwater improvement activities are funded through a combination of targeted rates, general rates, and central government funding. Whanganui ratepayers also contribute through general rates to the Regional Freshwater Improvement programme and provided the ratepayer share of the Jobs for Nature Riparian Management and Fish Passage projects. This recognises the regional and intergenerational benefits of this work across catchments.

People and relationships

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

Key relationships for this activity in the Whanganui District include landowners, Whanganui District Council, iwi and hapū – particularly those with connections to the Whanganui and Whangaehu rivers, including Ngā Tangata Tiaki and other river iwi – community groups, the Department of Conservation, and central government agencies involved in freshwater management and biodiversity funding.

Key considerations for delivery models

Freshwater does not adhere to lines drawn on maps. The Whanganui District sits at the heart of a catchment that extends well into the Ruapehu District and connects to the coast through a river system of national significance. Water quality outcomes in the Whanganui District are directly shaped by land use decisions made upstream across multiple territorial authority areas. Freshwater investment made in the district delivers benefits that extend downstream to the river mouth and coastal environment.

The statutory frameworks established under the Te Awa Tupua Act and the Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act add a distinctive dimension to freshwater management in this district. Te Awa Tupua recognises the Whanganui River as a legal person with its own rights and interests, and requires Horizons to give effect to those rights when exercising statutory functions relating to the river. Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika, established under the Ngāti Rangi settlement, creates parallel obligations for the Whangaehu catchment. These frameworks require sustained partnership with iwi and a regionally coherent approach to freshwater management spanning the full length of both river systems across multiple district boundaries. How these obligations would continue to be met under any post-amalgamation arrangement is an important consideration.

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

2024-25 Activities

\$370,000

Rate contribution from the district to Freshwater activities

\$560,000

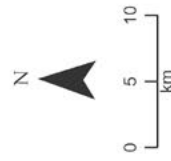
Worth of Freshwater activities delivered in the district

2024-25 Key Outputs

13 Fish passage remediations
4.9 km of stream fencing
24,800 plants planted

Key

- Fish passage remediation
- Planting project
- Fencing project



Freshwater Activities In Whanganui District 2025 FY

Prepared by: W McKay
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Biodiversity and Biosecurity Activity

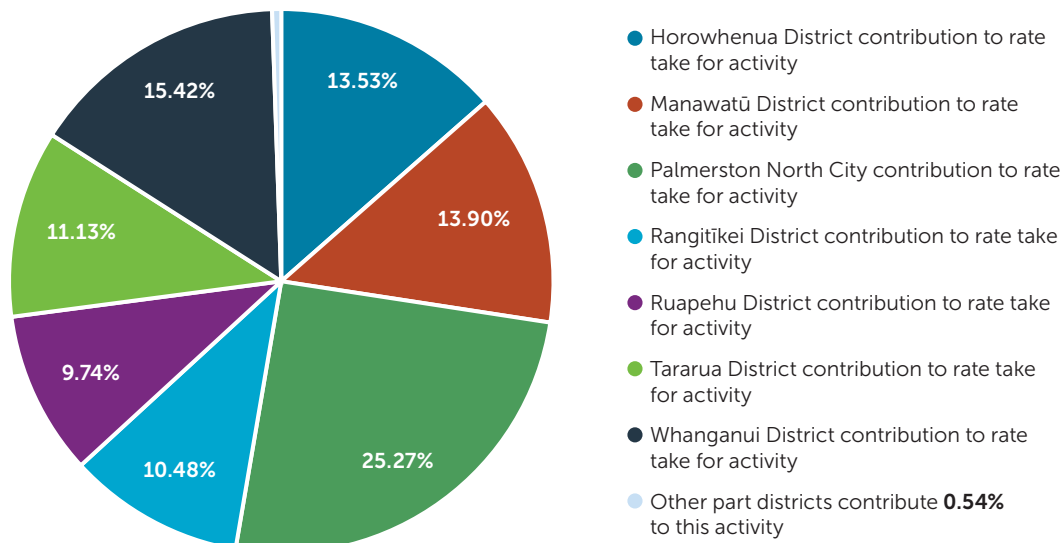
Biodiversity and Biosecurity at a glance

- The aim of the activity is to protect and restore **indigenous biodiversity** and prevent or manage the spread of harmful **pest plants and animals**.
- Budget for the region: **\$10.8 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$1.61 million**, which is a **15.42%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **2** icon biodiversity site and **3** priority sites serviced in the district.
- Biodiversity activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$159,025**.
- **1,198** plant pest control sites are managed in the district.
- **24,836** possum bait stations in the district.
- More than **74,000** hectares in the Whanganui District are classed as possum habitat.
- **17** historic rookeries eradicated.
- Animal pest control activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$578,000**.
- **2** biological control agents released in district to control Old Man's Beard.
- **85%** of biodiversity and biosecurity work is mostly from general rates and UAC to recognise the regional benefit.
- **15%** is funded via targeted rate to recognise economic benefits of biosecurity protection for rural properties more than **4** hectares.
- Tarapuruhi Bushy Park and Kia Whārite funded as **Icon Projects**.
- Pest plants and animals do not respect territorial boundaries so effective biosecurity work depends heavily on **coordinated action**.
- In the Whanganui District pest species can spread across boundaries via **coastal, freshwater and terrestrial environments**.
- The Regional Pest Management Plan exists to ensure a **regional-scale** response to issues.
- Biodiversity relies on integrated **catchment management approach** in relation to biosecurity.
- **4** Kanorau Koiora Taketake – Indigenous Biodiversity Community Grant projects in Whanganui.



Hihi (Stitchbird)

Biodiversity and Biosecurity



Protecting the environment today for tomorrow

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

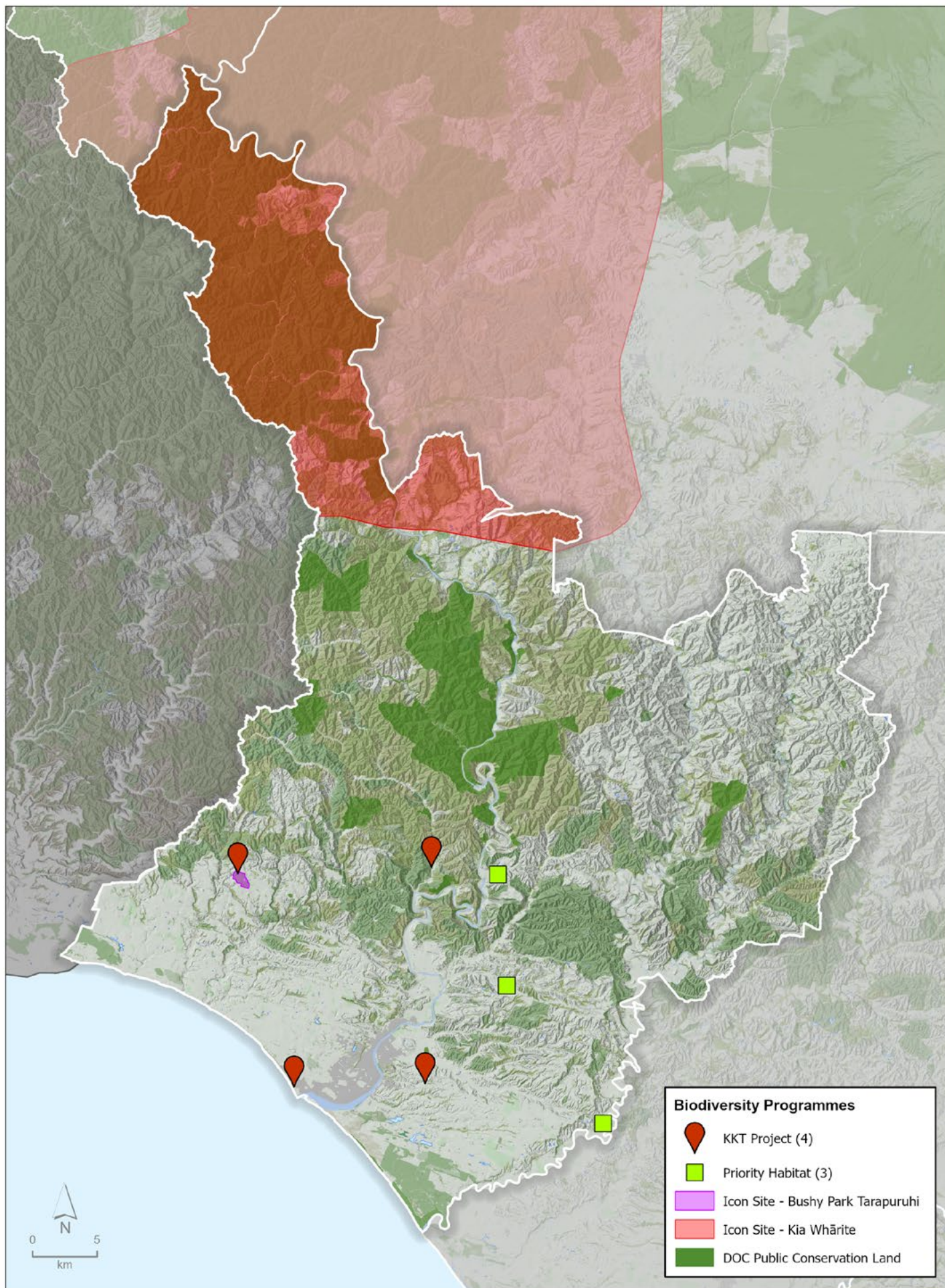
Horizons operates under a Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP), which sets out the rules and programmes for managing listed pest species across the region. The RPMP establishes different management programmes depending on the threat level and distribution of each pest. Horizons works alongside the Department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

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

The Whanganui District contains significant biodiversity values alongside considerable pest pressure, shaped by its mix of coastal environments, river systems, farmland, and native forest remnants.

The possum control programme is the largest animal pest programme in the district, currently servicing 24,836 bait stations across 194,490 hectares, mapped across 25 possum control operations. Rook control is also a focus, with six rookeries now actively managed — down from 23 when the programme began. The animal pest advisory service responded to 139 enquiries in the Whanganui District in the most recent year, out of a regional total of 587 — the highest of any district in the region, reflecting the significant urban and peri-urban pest pressure alongside rural programmes.

The pest plant team manages 1,198 sites with an operational area of 1,849 hectares in the district. High priority pest plants controlled in Whanganui include African feather grass, banana passionfruit, blue passion flower, boneseed, cathedral bells, Chilean rhubarb, Chinese pennisetum, climbing alstroemeria, climbing spindleberry, evergreen buckthorn, moth plant, old man's beard, purple loosestrife, Queensland poplar, Senegal tea, and woolly nightshade. Old man's beard is well entrenched in many areas of the district to the extent that chemical control alone is not the right



Biodiversity Programme Activities

Whanganui District

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

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approach in all locations — two biological control agents have been released to reduce infestation impact and limit spread over time.

The biodiversity team manages three priority habitat sites covering 29 hectares in the district, as well as four contestable fund projects worth \$20,200. The district is also home to two Icon Projects. The Kia Whārite Project is a partnership between Horizons and the Department of Conservation running for 17 years, spanning 190,000 hectares of land which is home to rare and threatened ecosystems recognised as a priority for protection, and spans both the Whanganui and Ruapehu districts. Tarapuruhi Bushy Park is a predator-proof-fenced forest home to hihi, saddleback, and a number of other reintroduced bird species. It serves as both a safe haven for rare and vulnerable biodiversity and a valuable educational resource for the community.

The Castlecliff Coastcare group is an example of the community-led conservation work Horizons supports in the district, reflecting the value of partnerships with local groups in delivering biodiversity outcomes along the Whanganui coastline.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$10.8 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$1.6 million

Biodiversity and Biosecurity work across the region is mostly funded from a general rate (55% share) and Universal Annual Charge (30%), recognising the regional benefit from these activities. To acknowledge the additional economic benefits of biosecurity protection for rural landowners, a portion of this work is funded via a targeted rate (15% share) on properties larger than four hectares. Capital expenditure for this work may be funded through borrowing. The regional possum control operation programme uses contractors at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million per year. Pest plant contractors and fencers are also well used across eradication and priority habitat sites in the district. Contractual arrangements include memoranda of understanding and contracts with funding partners in Kia Whārite and Tarapuruhi Bushy Park, and with the Department of Conservation for pest plant work in the Whanganui River.

People and relationships

There are 38 FTEs in the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity across the region. In the Whanganui District, 4.44 FTEs deliver biodiversity and biosecurity work programmes — 0.6 FTE in biodiversity, 2.84 FTE in biosecurity animals, and 1 FTE in biosecurity pest plants.

The biodiversity and biosecurity teams work with landowners, QEII National Trust, and Ngā Whenua Rāhui for on-site works, and alongside Ngā Rauru, Tūpoho, and Ngā Tangata Tiaki for work within the wider Whanganui catchment. Staff work within the compliance requirements of the Regional Pest Management Plan and maintain relationships with Whanganui District Council roading and parks staff, the Department of Conservation Whanganui, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, KiwiRail, and community groups including Castlecliff Coastcare.

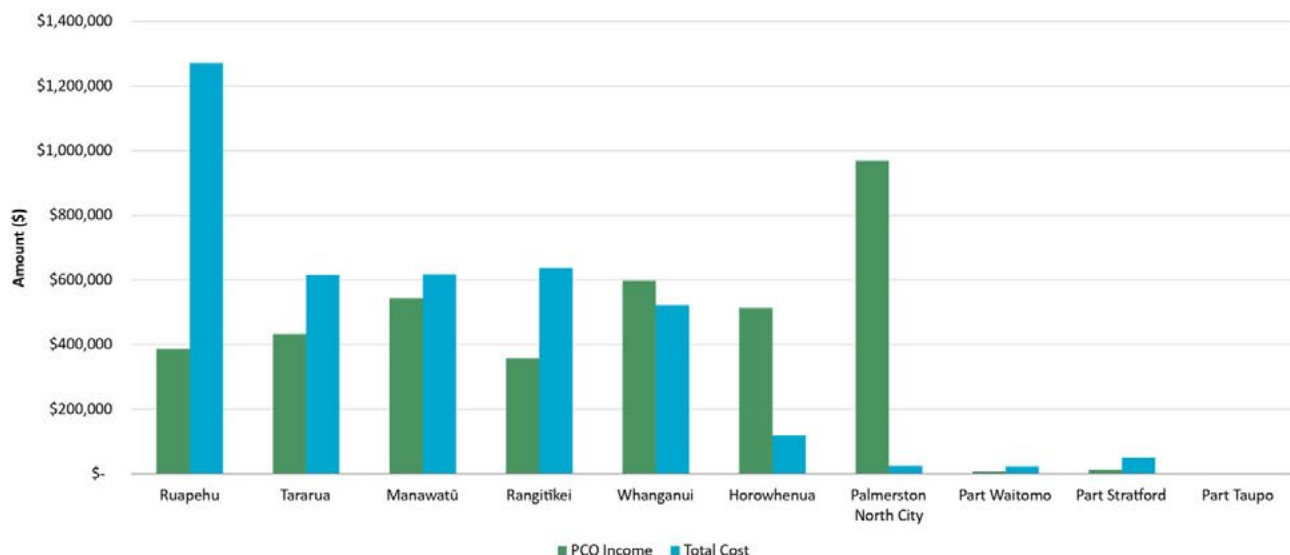
Iwi relationships are especially important, given the need to practice kaitiakitanga in a way which aligns with the kawa and tikanga of mana whenua.

Key considerations for delivery models

Pest plants and animals do not respect territorial boundaries. The effectiveness of biosecurity work depends heavily on coordinated action across land tenures and administrative boundaries. A gap in control on one property or in one district can undermine investment made across a much wider area. This is particularly true in the Whanganui District, where pest species moving via coastal, freshwater and terrestrial environments can rapidly spread across council boundaries. This is partly why the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) exists — to ensure a regional-scale response to issues, helping to keep pest infestations under control no matter where they come up to try to avoid them spilling over into other territorial authority areas. This also feeds into an integrated catchment management approach to biodiversity due to its reliance on biosecurity.

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

Income and Spend for PCO by TLA



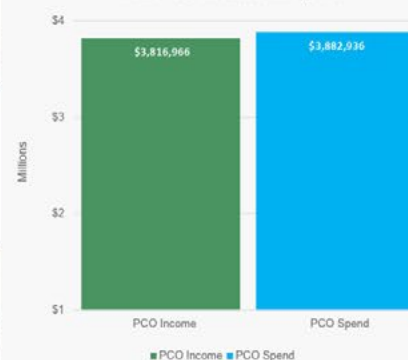
Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.
Income sources are from PCO Rates Revenue, comprising General Rate (55%), Environmental Initiatives (30%), and Biosecurity & Biodiversity >4ha rate (15%).

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

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

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

Total PCO Income and Spend



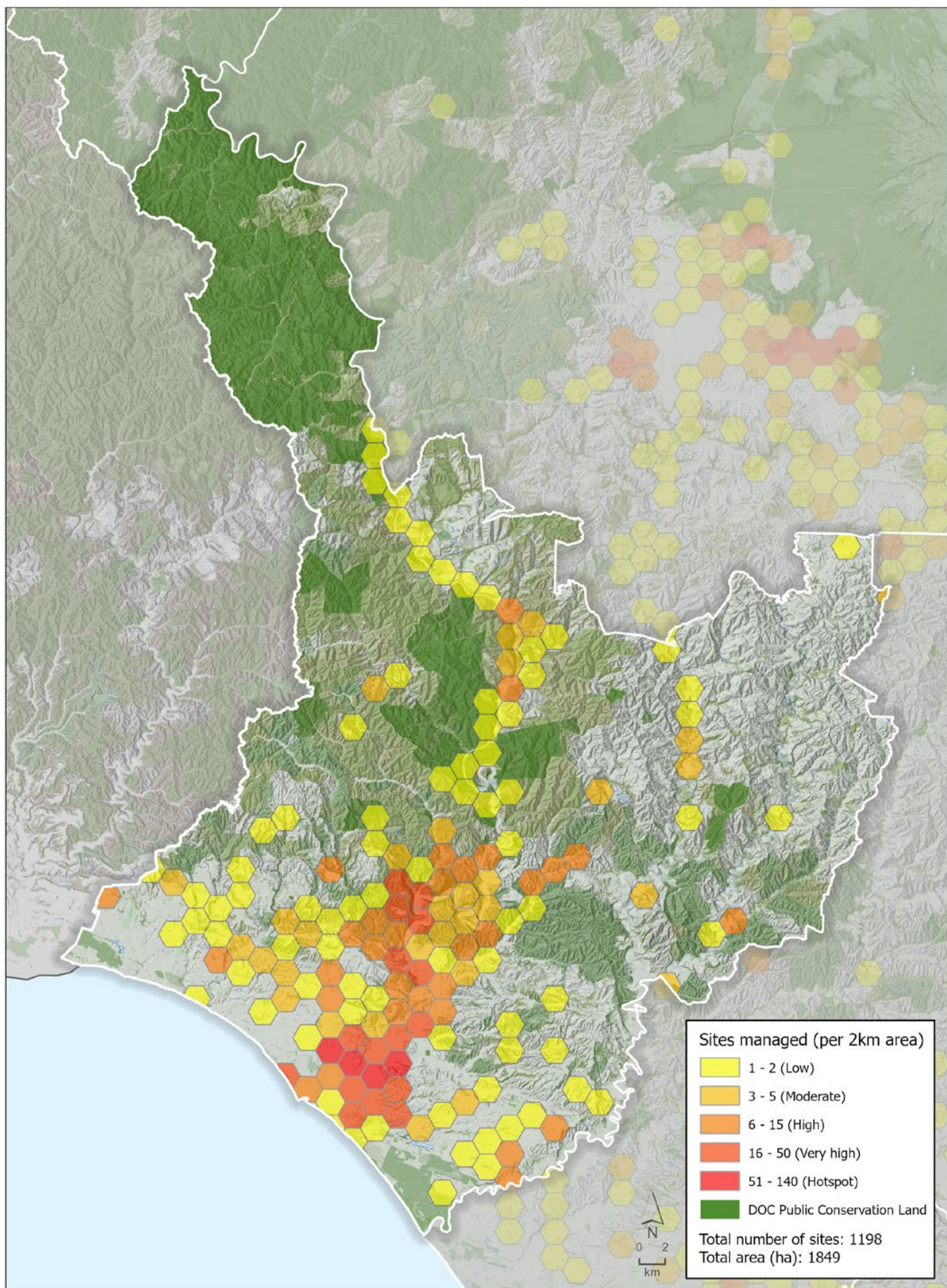
Income
Spend



Possum Control Income and Spend by TLA

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



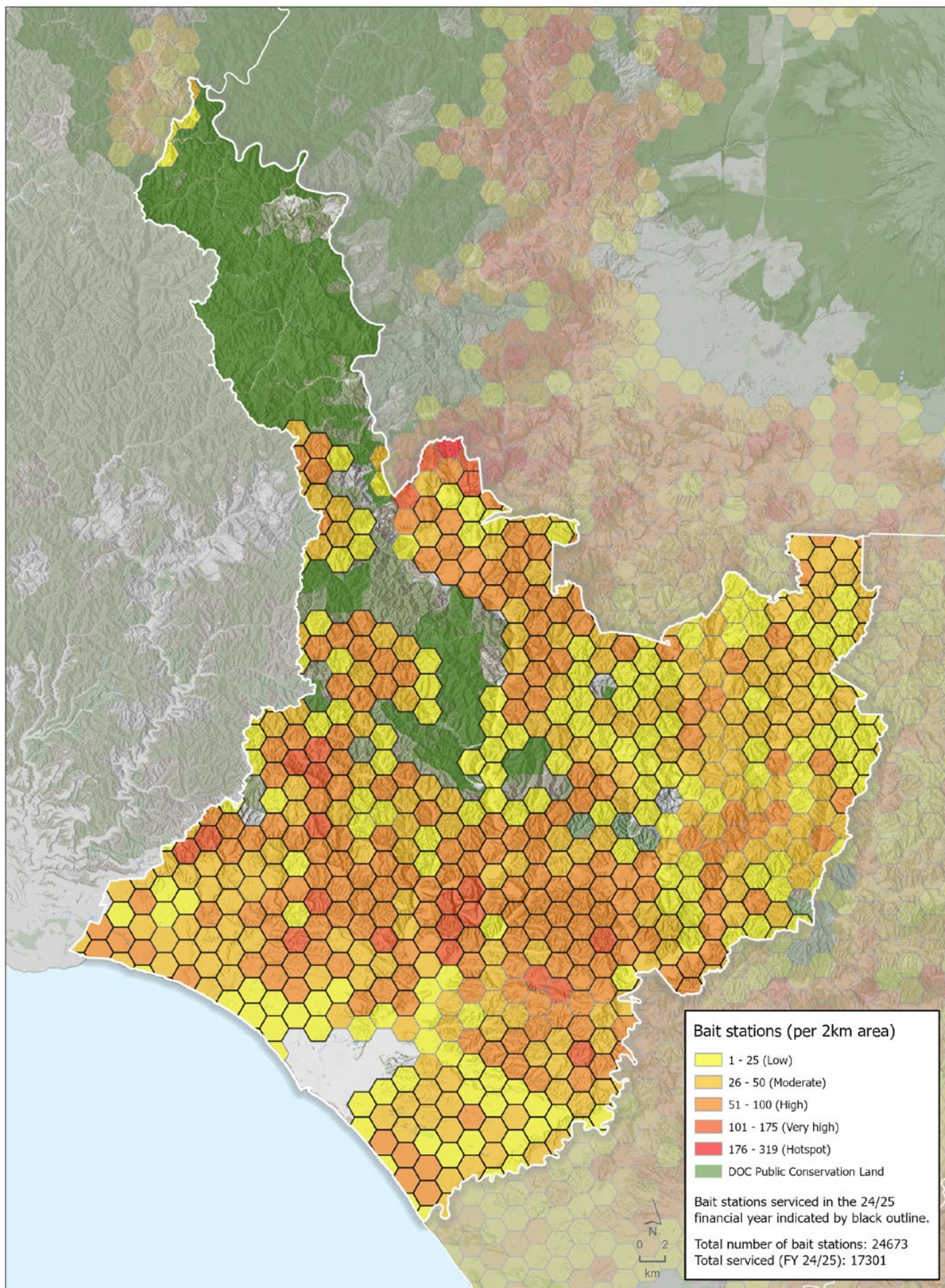


Biosecurity Pest Plants - Managed Sites

Whanganui District

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

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Possum Control Programme - Bait Station Coverage

Whanganui District

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

River Management and Flood Protection Activity

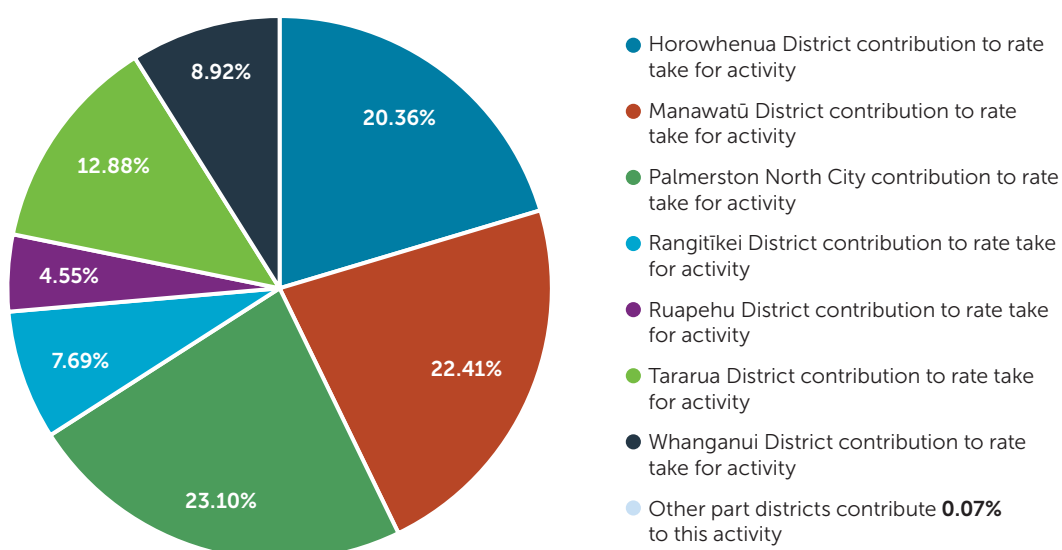
River Management and Flood Protection at a glance

- The aim of this activity is to protect people and property from **weather events**, enabling the regional economy to continue.
- Flood risk in Whanganui is shaped by what happens across the **entire catchment** as it is the recipient of both localised flood waters and that which has travelled from multiple territorial authority areas. There are also a network of detention dams that help manage the flood risk around a number of communities within the district.
- **34** river and drainage schemes across the region, including **3** in the Whanganui District which are a mix of channel maintenance, flood protection and drainage.
- **3,844** assets across all schemes are valued about **\$1.2 billion**, with Whanganui District having two schemes with assets and one scheme that is channel maintenance only. The schemes have **134** assets with a replacement value of about **\$19.3 million** (**2%** of the regional total, as of June 2025).
- **54** dams (managed in **5** schemes) across the region. The additional costs for the dam safety regulations are impacting scheme budgets.
- Budget for the region: **\$20.89 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: **\$1.59 million**, which is a **8.92%** contribution to the rate take for the operational budget
- River Management and Flood Protection activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$1.17 million**.
- River and drainage schemes are generally funded on an 80/20 split, with **80%** of funding via targeted rates and **20%** via a general rate contribution to recognise the regional benefit of supported economy.
- Research shows every **\$1** of investment in flood protection provides **\$5 to \$8** of benefit in avoided costs (Source: Before the Deluge 2.0 report).
- Horizons advocated for **\$26.9 million** in 2020 for Infrastructure Climate Resilience Projects – management of the lower reach of the Whanganui River benefitted from this via Te Pūwaha
- An **integrated catchment approach** to river management and flood protection is critical to consistent decisions about infrastructure investment, gravel management, and flood response.
- Horizons' **30-year Infrastructure Strategy** guides the long-term programme for this activity.



North mole, Whanganui

River Management and Flood Protection



Protecting people, property and the regional economy

Horizons' River Management and Flood Protection activity provides a range of services to protect people and property from weather events and to support the regional economy. The activity is primarily delivered through the 34 river and drainage schemes, which have developed over time since the 1940s. The levels of service and activities vary between and within the schemes. The main work types include flood protection for cities, towns, houses, infrastructure, and rural land; erosion control; channel maintenance, and gravel management; vegetation planting and management; drainage activities; and amenity and environmental enhancement works.

Across the schemes, there were 3,844 assets with a total estimated value of approximately \$1.2 billion in June 2025. These assets include approximately 500km of stop banks, more than 509 floodgates, more than 800km of river channel, and more than 1,070km of drains. A large component of the work programme focuses on maintaining and repairing these assets. The programme also includes a capital upgrade programme to increase levels of service and to respond to and recover from storm events. The investigation and design aspect of the activity provides technical design

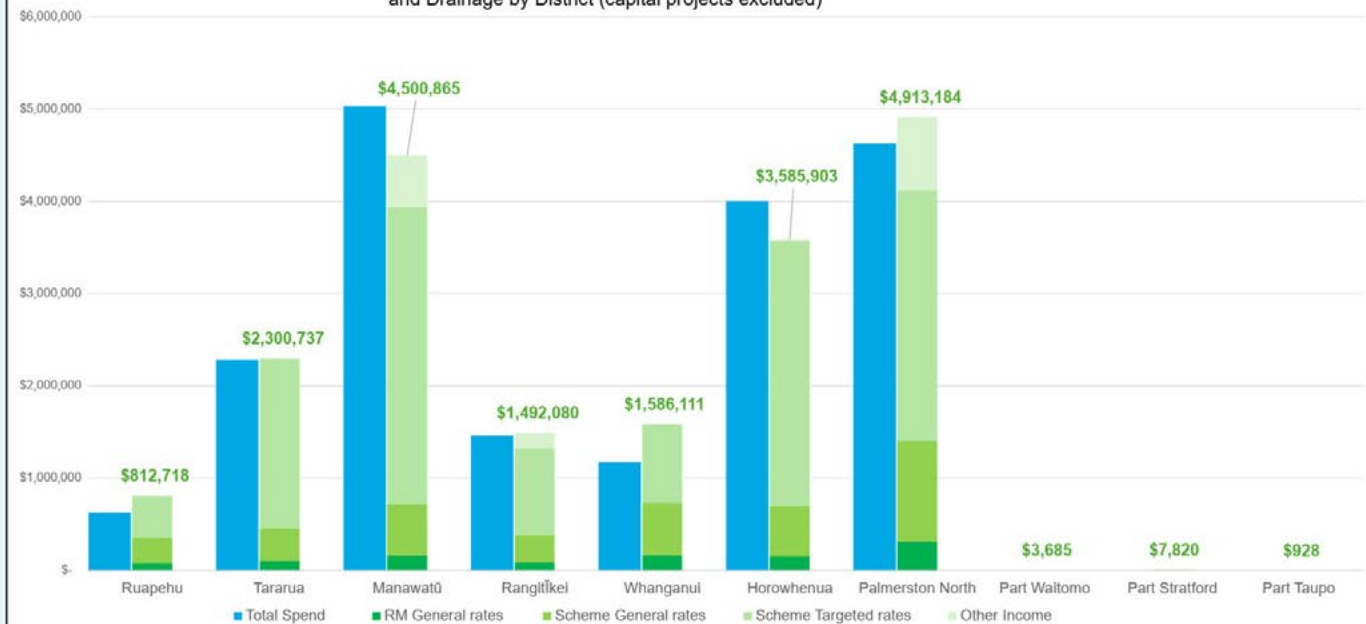
and advice, produces gravel resource studies, and supports works outside of schemes via environmental grants.

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

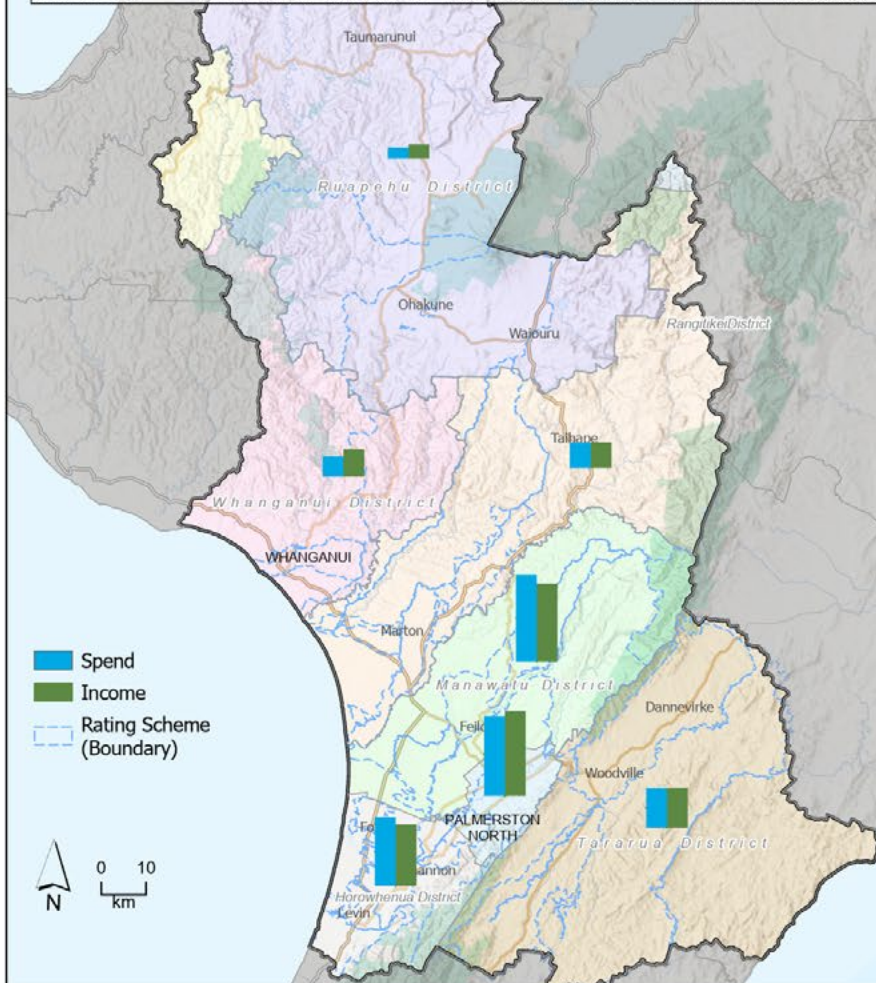
Horizons' 30-year Infrastructure Strategy (2024 to 2054), which forms part of Horizons' Long-term Plan 2024-2034, provides the strategy for Horizons' River Management activity. The Infrastructure Strategy overviews Horizons' river management schemes, asset management, the key issues for infrastructure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

The Whanganui District is served by 3 river and drainage schemes containing approximately \$19.3 million in assets. These schemes protect areas containing state highways, Crown assets, productive land, lifeline utilities, population centres including Whanganui city, and wildlife habitats. The district's position at the lower end of the Whanganui River catchment means it receives water that has travelled

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

River Management, Flood Protection and Drainage Spend and Income

2024 - 2025 Financial Year

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



through the Ruapehu District and beyond, making flood risk in Whanganui directly shaped by rainfall and catchment conditions far upstream. The Whanganui River – one of New Zealand’s longest rivers – has a long history of significant flooding, with major flood events recorded dating back to the early 1900s. The city of Whanganui and surrounding communities have been protected by river management infrastructure developed over many decades, and maintaining and upgrading that infrastructure is an ongoing priority. Research done by Te Uru Kahika, the collective of regional and unitary councils, presented in the Beyond the Deluge 2.0 report shows every \$1 invested into this activity saves \$5 to \$8 in avoided damage.

A prime example of central government investment in flood protection infrastructure in the Whanganui District is the Te Pūwaha port revitalisation project in Whanganui city, which received funding through the Budget 2020 decision to invest \$26.9 million into Horizons’ Infrastructure Climate Resilience Projects. This project has improved flood resilience alongside delivering amenity and community benefits for the city.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$20.89 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$1.59 million

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

People and relationships

Whanganui District schemes sit within Horizons’ Northern operational area, which also covers schemes in the Ruapehu and Rangitikei districts. Within these teams, there are 4.5 river management operations engineering staff responsible for managing and maintaining assets across these areas. Support is provided on an as-needed basis through regionally organised support services: a River Management Asset Management Information team (6 FTE), Investigations and Design team (5 FTE), Projects team (3 FTE), Environmental and Regulatory team (3 FTE), administrative support (1 FTE), and management support (3 FTE). Staff from across the wider organisation also support this activity, including corporate functions (e.g. finance, communications, HR), science and policy, and information services. The activity also has strong internal relationships with Horizons’ Environmental Data and Emergency Management teams, both of which are essential to the effective delivery of flood protection work and coordination during flood responses

Some schemes have scheme committees that provide governance input on the scheme’s activities and funding arrangements, meeting at least annually. Key relationships for this activity include landowners and rural communities within scheme areas, scheme committee members, territorial authorities, iwi and hapū – including those with interests in the Whanganui River under the Te Awa Tupua framework – NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, KiwiRail, and central government agencies involved in infrastructure funding and emergency management.

Key considerations for delivery models

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

The Whanganui District's position at the lower end of the Whanganui River catchment means flood risk is fundamentally a catchment-wide issue. Channel maintenance, and flood response decisions made upstream in the Ruapehu District directly affect conditions downstream in Whanganui. This reinforces the importance of a regionally coordinated approach to river management and flood protection, enabling consistent decisions about infrastructure investment and flood response across catchment boundaries regardless of how many territorial authorities those boundaries cross. Having an integrated approach to catchment management could become complex in a post-amalgamation environment. Scheme boundaries should consider river flood and drainage fluvial dynamics, including the source of water for addressing flooding or drainage needs within the area being treated by the scheme.

The Te Awa Tupua framework, which recognises the Whanganui River as a legal person, adds a further dimension to river management. River management decisions affecting the Whanganui River must be made in a way that gives effect to the rights and interests of Te Awa Tupua. This obligation requires sustained partnership with iwi and a coherent, regionally coordinated approach to managing the river along its full length. How this obligation would be maintained across potentially multiple post-amalgamation entities will be an important consideration.

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

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



Newly built stopbank to provide flood protection

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

This group is made up of the following activities:

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

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

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

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

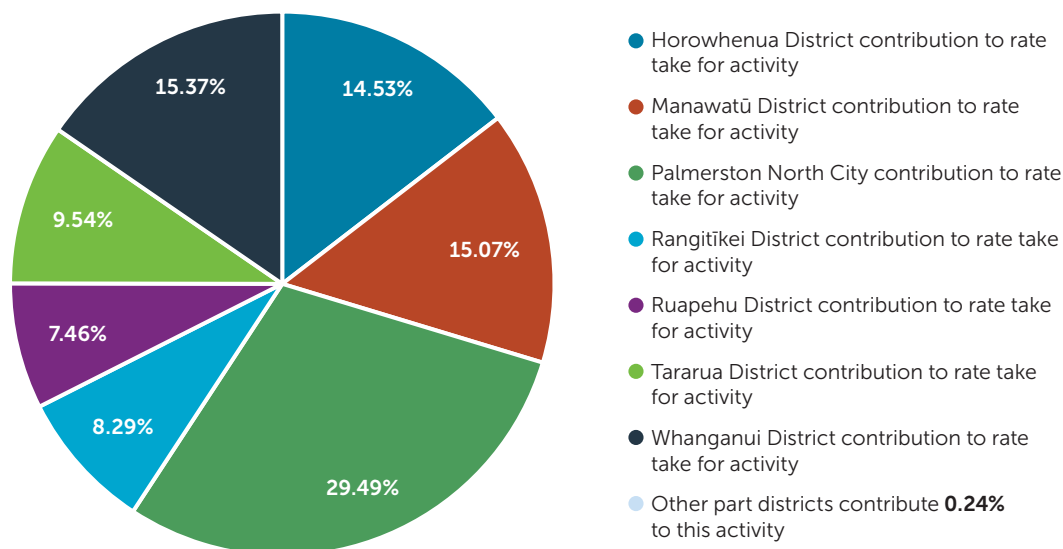
	Regulatory Management	Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience	Science and Environmental Reporting
Regional rates	3,605,571.97	4,669,015.16	4,992,501.62
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	4,142,295.55	-	1,947,405.18
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	389,980.00	752,101.13	-
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	6,425.36	-1,152,723.73	8,950.52
Total Operational Expenditure	8,131,422.16	6,573,840.02	6,930,956.27
Whanganui District rates	554,297.42	717,784.33	769,061.82
Whanganui District contribution of rate take to activity	15.37%	15.37%	15.40%

Regulatory Management Activity

Regulatory Management at a glance

- Aim of the activity is to ensure activities affecting the region's **land, air, and water resources** are managed in a way that is consistent with Horizons' One Plan and national environmental regulations.
- Funded by **user fees and charges**, and **general rates** which recognise the regional benefit of the public receiving general permitted activities/consents advice.
- Budget for the region: **\$8.13 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: **\$554,297** which is a **15.37%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **5,609** consents administered across the region.
- **2,573** resource consents were monitored for compliance (including repeat assessments) across the region.
- **904** environmental incidents reported and responded to across the region in 2024-25.
- **16** formal warnings, **115** abatement notices, **80** infringement notices, **1** enforcement order, **4** prosecutions completed and **7** prosecutions before the courts across the region in 2024-25.
- **1,920** authorised consents and permitted activities administered by Horizons in the district, which is **13.2%** of the region's 24-25 year total.
- **361** applications lodged, **229** applications granted which in turn have enabled **413** activities to occur, across the region.
- Key projects for the Whanganui District include work undertaken through the **Te Pūwaha project**, consents related to subdivisions to enable growth and industrial activities..
- The Whanganui River's status as a legal person under **Te Awa Tupua** creates specific obligations for how Horizons exercises its regulatory functions in relation to the river.
- Many of the consented activities Horizons regulates are connected to **wider catchment dynamics** that extend well beyond the district's boundaries.

Regulatory Management



Keeping development and the environment in balance

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

Consents managed by Horizons in the Whanganui District are varied, reflecting the diverse mix of land uses, which include horticulture, agriculture, industrial processing, water takes for towns and villages, and activities affecting the district's significant coastal and wetland environments. Compliance monitoring is conducted on a risk-based programme, as doing in-person monitoring every consent annually would require significantly more resources. Some key projects in Whanganui include work undertaken through the Te Pūwaha project, consents related to subdivisions to enable growth and industrial activities.

A distinctive feature of regulatory management in the Whanganui District is the Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act, which recognises the Whanganui River as a legal person with its own rights and interests. When Horizons exercises regulatory functions relating to the Whanganui River (e.g. processing consents for water takes, discharges, and activities affecting the river), it must do so in a way that gives effect to Te Awa Tupua and recognises Te Kawa o Te Awa Tupua (the intrinsic values of the river). This requires close engagement with Ngā Tangata Tiaki and shapes how consenting and compliance decisions affecting the Whanganui

River are approached. This is not a relationship management consideration, but a statutory obligation that sits alongside and interacts with the RMA framework.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$8.13 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$554,297

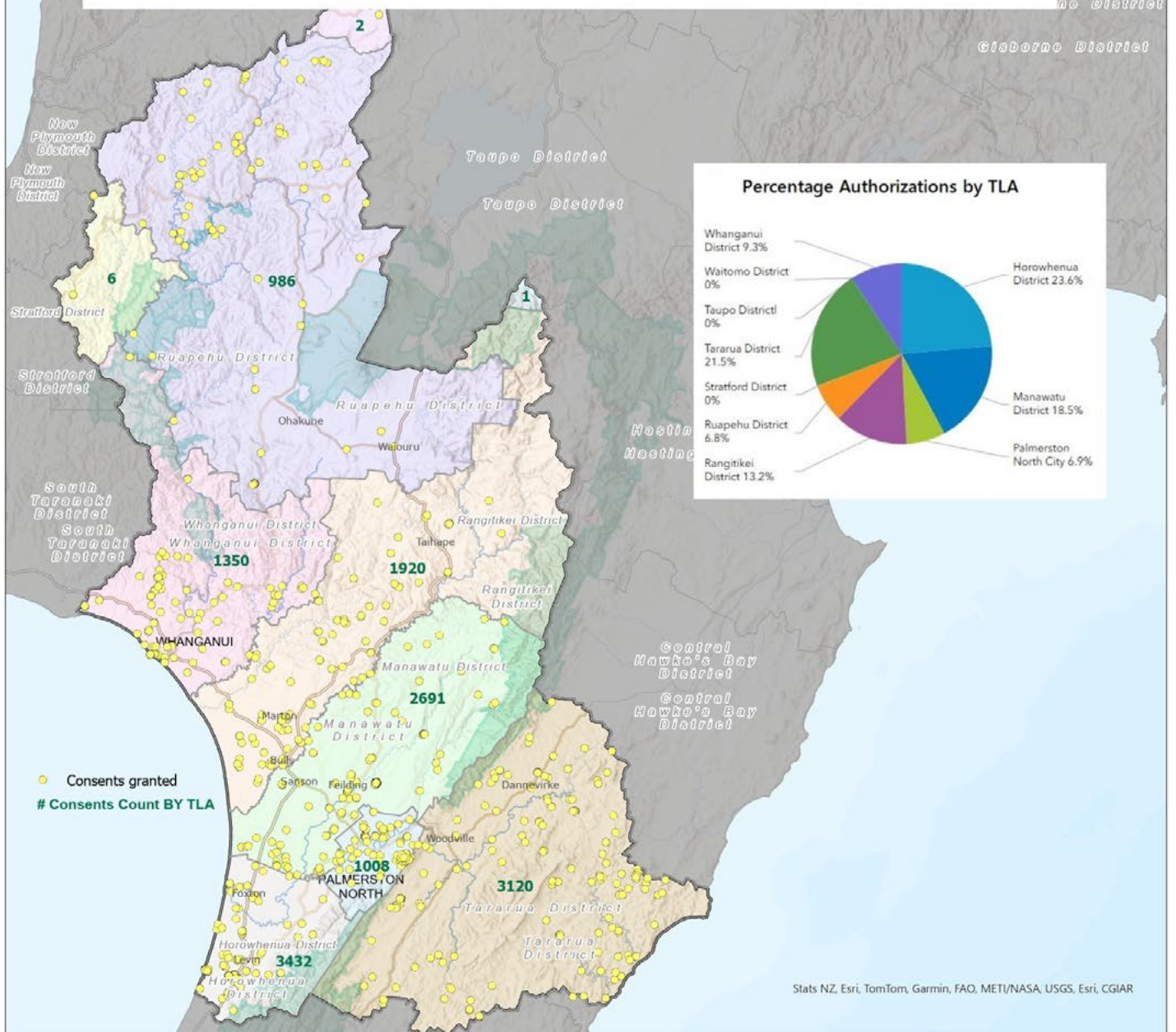
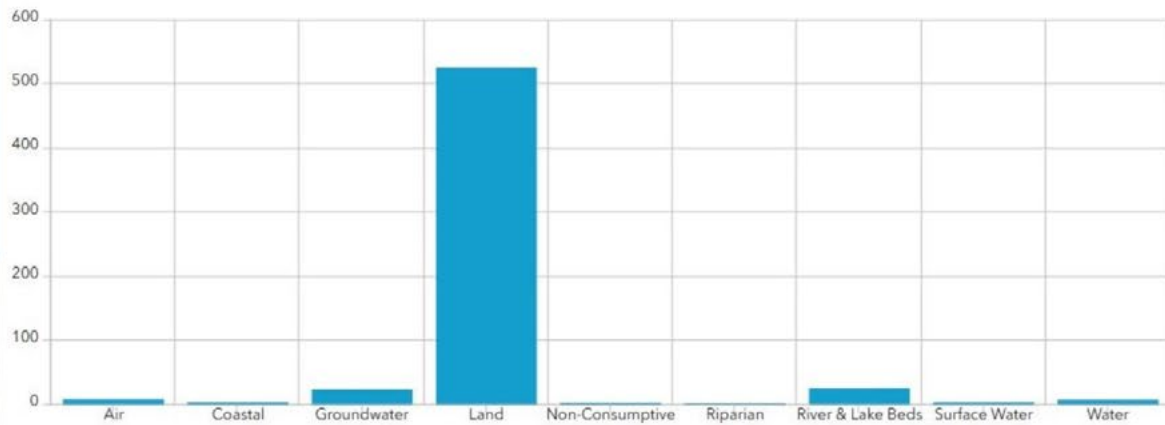
This activity's funding is divided into two sub-activities: RMA advice and regulatory management. RMA advice is entirely funded by general rates, as the public's need for general advice around permitted activities and consents has ongoing regional benefits. Regulatory management is funded by fees and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

People and relationships

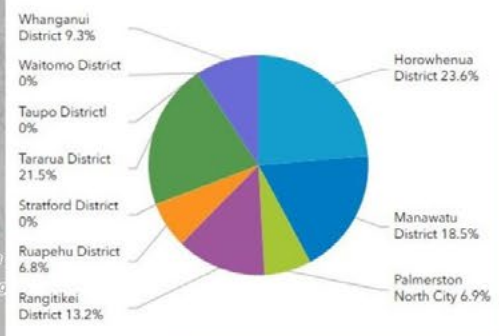
About 45 FTEs directly contribute to the Regulatory Management activity across the region. This activity does not allocate FTE roles to specific districts. Rather, staff work across activities to ensure their specialist knowledge on different areas (e.g. dairy sheds, industry, earthworks) is maximised. Staff from across the wider organisation also support the Regulatory Management activity, including, but not limited to, corporate functions (e.g., finance, communications, HR), science and policy, and information services.

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

Consent Authorizations by Type



Percentage Authorizations by TLA



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

Authorized Consents and Permitted Activity

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

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

horizons
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Regulatory staff inspecting a site

cultural, spiritual, and legal significance of the river to mana whenua. The same applies to the Whangaehu River catchment, although this relationship and relevant processes is at an earlier stage than those for the Whanganui River.

Key considerations for delivery models

Many of the consented activities Horizons regulates in the Whanganui District are connected to wider catchment dynamics that extend well beyond the district's boundaries. The Whanganui River catchment spans multiple territorial authority areas — regulatory decisions made about activities upstream in the Ruapehu District can have direct consequences for the river environment in Whanganui, and vice versa. Maintaining a coherent, regionally consistent approach to consenting and compliance will be a critical consideration in any structural change arising from the amalgamation process.

The Te Awa Tupua framework adds a further and significant dimension to this consideration. The statutory obligations Horizons holds under Te Awa Tupua – to recognise the legal personhood of the Whanganui River and give effect to its intrinsic values when exercising regulatory functions – apply across the full length of the river, which crosses multiple

district boundaries. Any post-amalgamation arrangement would need to carefully consider which entity or entities would hold these obligations, how they would be exercised consistently across the catchment, and how the relationship with Ngā Tangata Tiaki and others would be maintained through a period of structural change. The same can be said of regulatory matters when it comes to the Whangaehu catchment.

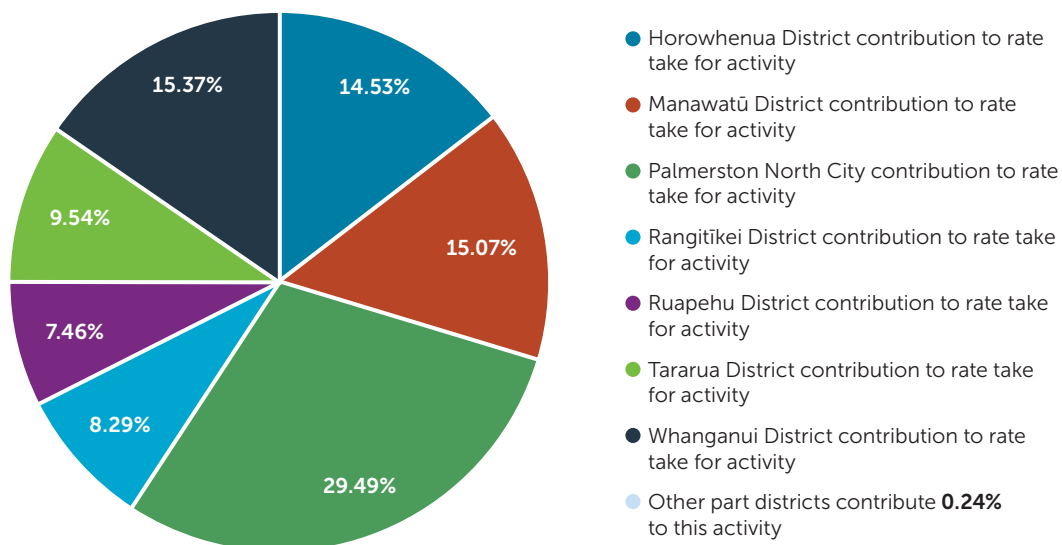
As part of wider resource management system reforms, central government has signalled it was reviewing whether regulatory functions should be taken from councils and put into a national body. No decision has yet been made, but a decision either way would impact resourcing requirements for post-amalgamation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

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience Activity

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience at a glance

- Aim is to provide regional **policy direction**, statutory **resource management** planning, **climate change** coordination, and **rural advice** to benefit the region now and into the future.
- Budget for the region: **\$6.57 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District is **\$717,784** which is a **15.37%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **2** rural advice engagements occurred specifically for the district in 2024-25, with **22** region-wide engagements including industry meetings, farm visits and central government meetings, on freshwater regulation.
- This activity is funded through **general rates** and the **Universal Annual General Charge** given it benefits the entire region equally both now and into the future.
- **60** submissions on central government policies and bills in the past five years.
- Involved in **13** plan changes across the region.
- **3** Pūtea Hapori Urupare Āhuarangi – Community Climate Response Fund project in Whanganui District.
- Policy, strategy, and planning functions are foundational to the proper management of **natural resources**.
- Catchment scale delivery of policy and plan development for natural resources is key as they typically occur across **multiple territorial boundaries**.

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience



Planning for our region's future

The Whanganui District sits within a varied planning environment, with natural hazard, urban, freshwater, and rural land use pressures directly guided by Horizons' policy and planning framework. This framework is itself shaped by central government policy and legislation. Horizons' Policy, Strategy, and Climate Resilience activity is responsible for regional policy direction, statutory resource management planning, coordination of climate change work, and provision of rural advice across the region. This includes developing, reviewing, and maintaining Horizons' One Plan, responding to national direction and legislative changes, supporting regional planning processes, and engaging with system reform developments that may affect Horizons' functions and responsibilities. The activity also coordinates climate mitigation and adaptation work across the organisation and region. In 2024-25, there were three Pūtea Hapori Urupare Āhuarangi - Community Climate Fund projects administered by Horizons in the Whanganui District (one was the final year of a multi-year project). Additionally as a result of the Deep South Living with Uncertainty project (which concluded in 2023, Horizons entered into Ohotata Tākai Here Pūtiki with NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, Whanganui District Council and Te Hapori me ngā hapū Pūtiki. Under that commitment, the river management function of Horizons funded the Pūtiki Flood Resilience Project that was undertaken in the 2024-25 financial year. This work was largely coordinated through the climate action coordination team within Horizons Regional Council.

A rural advice function, providing technical advice and practical solutions to all farmers in the region, is embedded in this activity. Rural advice staff specialise in helping farmers improve effluent and nutrient efficiency, including effluent discharge consenting and compliance requirements, as well as advice on waterway management and nutrient management planning. This function also provides significant support to rural professionals and industry groups by preparing documents and advice that support understanding of Horizons' regulatory framework for all agricultural practices. The team works across dairy, sheep and beef, deer,

horticulture, and other sectors, including the development of best practice guidelines and assistance at field days and training events.

In the Whanganui District, the policy team has engaged heavily in Treaty settlement requirements, and growth strategies with Whanganui District Council. Across the region, the policy team engaged in 13 proposed and/or private plan changes and provided feedback on five growth strategies in 2024-25. Over the same period, the rural advice team attended or ran 60 engagements across the region, including 2 in the Whanganui District and 22 region-wide engagements that benefited all districts, including Whanganui.

A core workstream for the policy team in the Whanganui District context is meeting the Treaty settlement obligations of the Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act and the Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act. This includes undertaking secretariat functions for the governance groups implementing the settlements. This work is delivered in tandem by the policy team and iwi and hapū relationships team.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$6.57 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$717,784

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

People and relationships

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

Relationships for this activity are broad. Farmers, primary industry companies such as Fonterra, agricultural organisations such as DairyNZ, iwi and hapū, community groups interested in climate adaptation, territorial authorities, other regional councils, and central government ministries all feature in the network. In the Whanganui District, key relationships include iwi authorities and hapū collectives, farmers and rural industry representatives, and Whanganui District Council. There are also strong internal relationships, with the policy team aiding other parts of Horizons in their work. A prime example is policy providing advice and support to the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity as part of the Regional Pest Management Plan review process, and the climate resilience function providing Horizons with advice on how to reduce its own carbon emissions.

Key considerations for delivery models

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

The Treaty settlement obligations under Te Awa Tupua and the Ngāti Rangī Claims Settlement Acts add a distinctive and significant dimension to policy work in the Whanganui District context. These are legally binding obligations requiring sustained secretariat and planning capacity that cannot simply be contracted out or absorbed into a general district planning function. Any structural change would need to carefully consider how these obligations would continue to be met, and by whom.

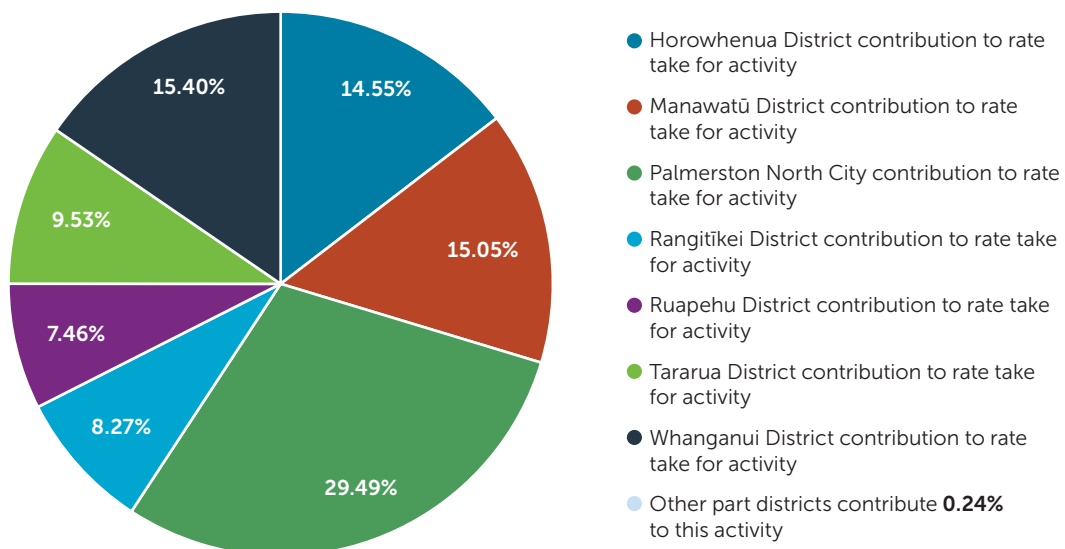
To deliver this activity at a district scale, Whanganui District would need to either resource their planning and climate resilience teams with in-house expertise able to prepare rural and environmental policy, and engage in the rural sector space, or they would need to contract this resource. Sub-regional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

Science and Environmental Reporting Activity

Science and Environmental Reporting at a glance

- Aim is to provide robust **scientific support** to direct monitoring of **natural resources**; support **development of policy** to sustain those natural resources; and **assess those policies** to ensure they are working as intended.
- Budget for the region: **\$6.93 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$769,061** which is a **15.4%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through a **general rates** due to regional benefit of the information, as well as **targeted charges applied under section 36** of the Resource Management Act for consent holders.
- Funding from resource consent holders in the Whanganui District: approximately **\$206,000**.
- Monitoring activities in the Whanganui District cost about **\$232,000**.
- **13** swim spot sites in the district are tested weekly from November to April for water quality, with results available on LAWA.org.nz.
- The district's position at the lower end of the Whanganui catchment also makes it an important location for understanding **cumulative effects across the catchment**.
- Data collected in Whanganui feeds into **regional-scale analysis** that informs resource management decisions benefiting not only Whanganui, but the whole region.
- This activity generates **strong economies of scale**: by delivering science and monitoring collectively across the region, the cost to any one district is substantially lower than it would be if each district were to fund its own equivalent capability.
- Horizons employs **single specialists** in key roles such as land science, groundwater and water allocation.
- Sub-regional delivery would likely increase costs through **duplication** of software, databases, equipment and processes.

Science and Environmental Reporting



Understanding our environment today to protect it for tomorrow

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

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

Additional monitoring is undertaken beyond the core network, covering water quality in rivers and streams, lakes, groundwater, coastal environments and estuaries, contact recreation swim spots, fluvial systems, and air quality. These various forms of monitoring in the Whanganui District cost approximately \$232,000. An example of a Science and Environmental Reporting monitoring programme is shown in the map below. This is the surface water (rivers and streams) water quality monitoring network which is funded through both general rates, and targeted Section 36 charges to consent holders. The network is used to inform policy decisions at a regional scale. The information within any one district would likely be insufficient to inform

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

The Whanganui District's diverse environments – coastal margins, dune lakes, lowland streams, and large river catchments – provide a range of landscapes and associated resource management considerations. Water from the volcanic Plateau flows through this district via the Whanganui, Mangawhero and Whangaehu Rivers. These bring unique water quality challenges to be considered and addressed, particularly the naturally high levels of phosphorus, and low level of pH in the Whangaehu River. Data collected in Whanganui feeds into regional-scale analysis that informs resource management decisions benefiting the whole region, not just the district itself.

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

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

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$6.9 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$769,061

Funding from resource consent holders in Whanganui District: approximately \$206,000

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

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

People and relationships

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

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



Science team collecting water samples

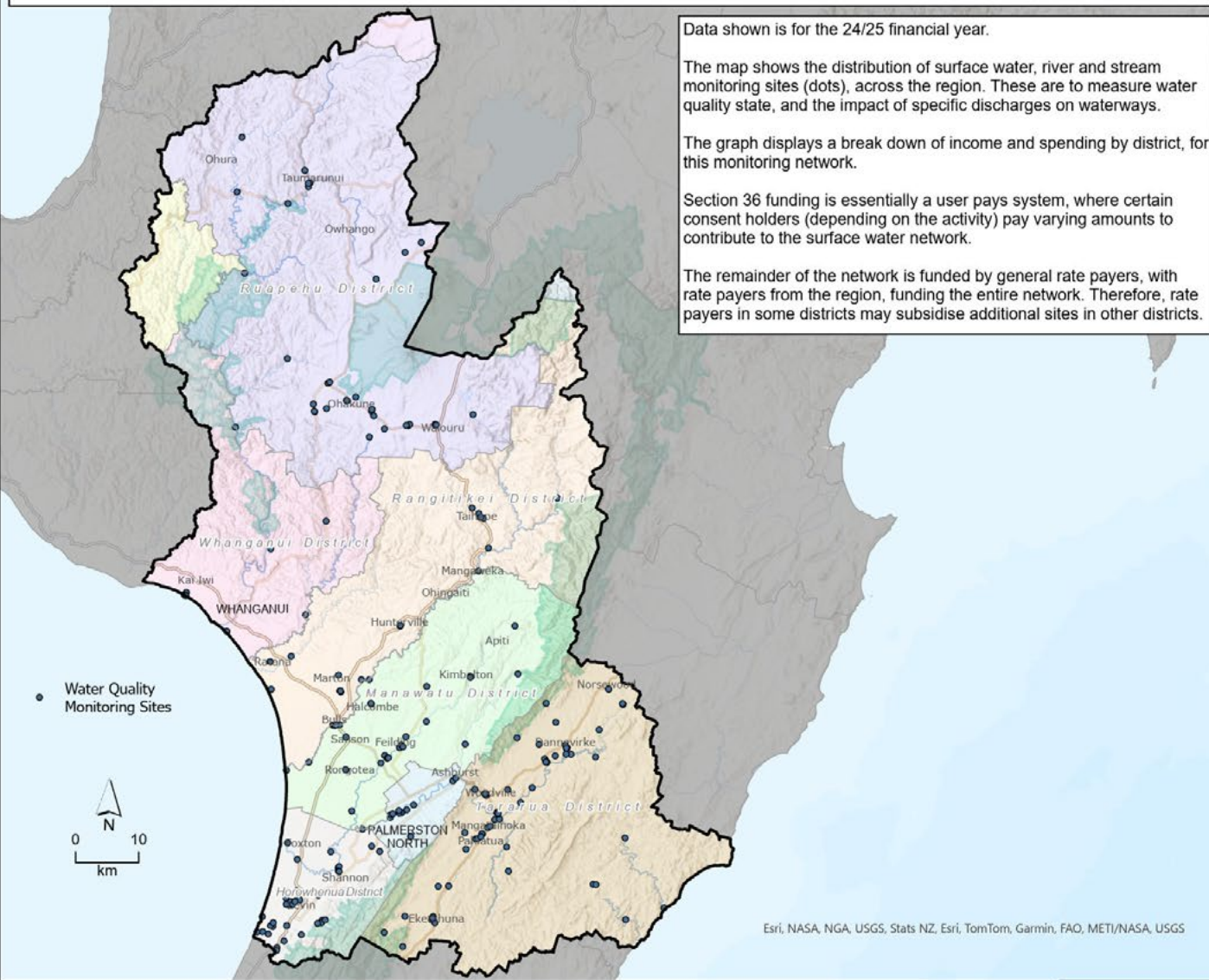
Key considerations for delivery models

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

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

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

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



horizons
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Providing connections and information – Transport and Regional Services

This group is made up of the following activities:

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

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



Installing environmental data monitoring equipment

Transport and Regional Services Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

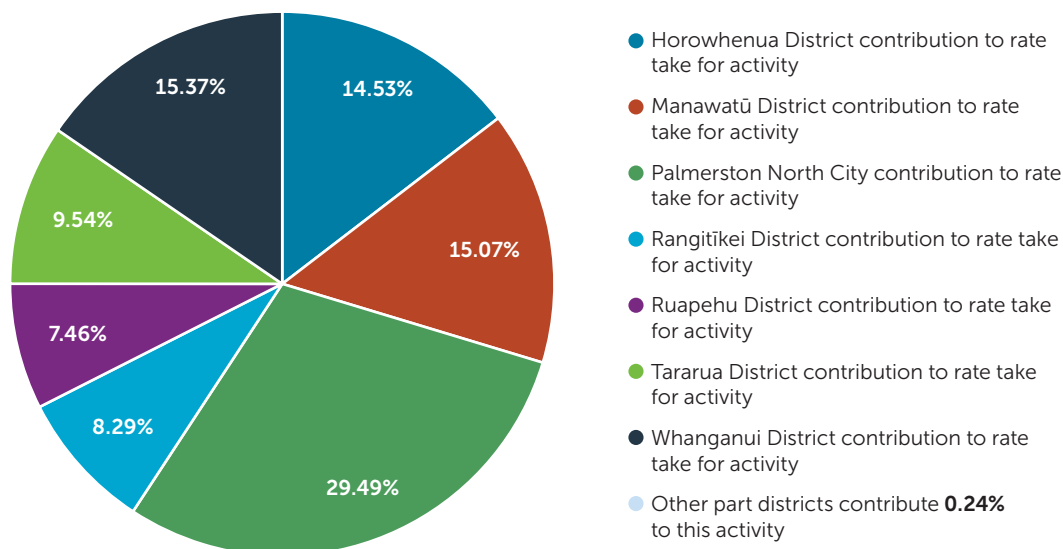
	District Advice	Emergency Management	Environmental Data	Information Management	Road Safety	Transport Planning	Passenger Services
Regional rates	425,179.58	2,304,614.26	-	1,797,786.28	220,959.77	172,360.90	8,234,416.17
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-	-	576,178.93	160,341.61	10,513,999.61
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	-	-	420,435.05	-	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	-	54,330.95	405,196.29	-	163,333.00	-	1,774,666.00
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	757.68	4,106.98	-3,012,882.03	-510,981.60	173.43	307.16	-174,337.38
Total Operational Expenditure	424,421.90	2,354,838.22	3,838,513.37	2,308,767.88	960,298.27	332,395.34	20,697,419.17
Whanganui District rates	65,364.37	354,296.56	-	276,380.09	33,968.93	26,497.65	1,384,998.85
Whanganui District contribution of rate take to activity	15.37%	15.37%	0.00%	15.37%	15.37%	15.37%	16.82%

District Advice Activity

District Advice at a glance

- Aim is to provide **property information, natural hazard guidance** and **land development advice** to support informed decision-making by landowners and territorial authorities.
- Budget for the region: **\$424,000**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$65,364**, which is a **15.37%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded mostly through **general rates**, with a small amount of revenue collected from dam owners for **dam safety regulation requirements**.
- **1,076** requests for land development or property information and advice across the Horizons Region in 2024-25, with **81** property requests in the Whanganui District.
- Horizons coordinates natural hazard information for inclusion in **LIMs** issued by Whanganui District Council.
- **6** classifiable dams in the Whanganui District are subject to the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.
- Dam safety regulation presents a **specific structural consideration** in any post-amalgamation environment as any entity would need to become a Building Consent Authority for dams.
- **Achieving and maintaining that accreditation would carry cost**, and the relatively small number of classifiable dams in any single district makes it difficult to justify the investment or maintain the specialist expertise required at a smaller scale.

District Advice



Helping communities make informed decisions about land and properties

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

The District Advice team responded to 1,076 requests for land development or property information and advice across the Horizons Region in 2024-25. The activity coordinates Horizons' initial feedback on potential growth areas, draft proposed plan changes, private plan changes, and fast-track applications, working closely with territorial authorities and developers. It also ensures there is accurate and publicly accessible information available online, including through the Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer and the District Advice Public Viewer Property Enquiry map, supporting transparency and enabling the public and councils to gather information for themselves.

The Whanganui District's coastal location, river systems, and the presence of the Whanganui River – with its significant flood and erosion history – mean natural hazard considerations are particularly relevant for land use and development decisions in the district. The Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer and associated technical reports are important tools for landowners, developers, and council staff navigating these risks.

On the dam safety side, Whanganui District contains 6 classifiable dams subject to the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022. District Advice maintains the regional dam register, manages safety requirements, monitors compliance, and implements Horizons' policy on dangerous, earthquake-prone, and flood-prone dams across the region including in Whanganui District.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$424,000

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$65,364

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

People and relationships

There are 3.25 FTEs supporting this activity across the region, with 0.5 FTE allocated to the Whanganui District. Other support is provided by corporate staff (e.g. communications).

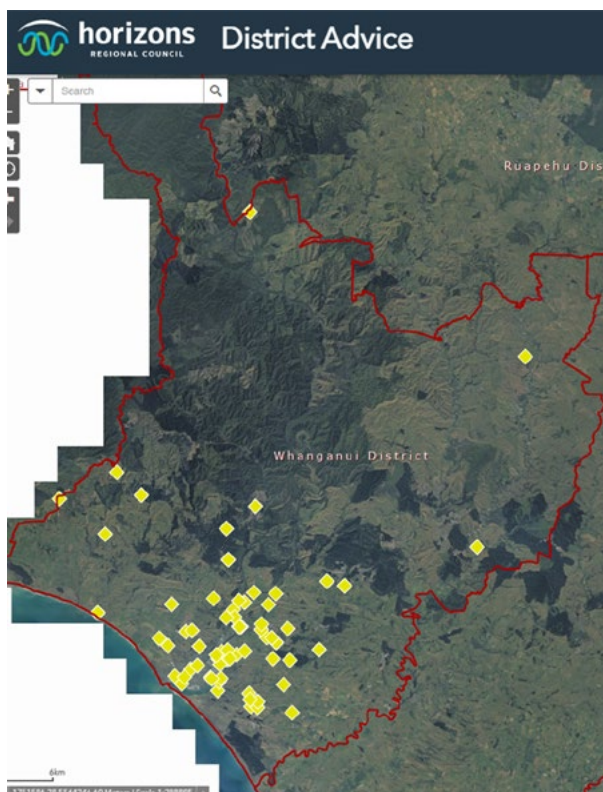
Key relationships in the Whanganui District include Whanganui District Council staff working in planning, policy, building, infrastructure, GIS, and LIM teams. Other key relationships are with members of the public, landowners, consultants, and developers; and dam owners and their consultants.

Key considerations for delivery models

Although District Advice is one of Horizons' smaller activities by budget, it plays an important connecting role between regional council functions and the day-to-day decisions that communities and territorial authorities make about land and property. In the Whanganui District, where flood risk, coastal hazards, and the dynamics of the Whanganui River all factor into property and development decisions, the value of having accurate, regionally consistent hazard information feeding into those decisions is significant.

More broadly, the natural hazard and land development advice functions of this activity benefit from being delivered at a regional scale, where data, expertise, and systems can be shared efficiently. The Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer is a good example — a tool that took investment to build and that now serves the public and multiple councils across the region. Replicating equivalent capability at a district scale would cost significantly more for the same or lesser result.

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



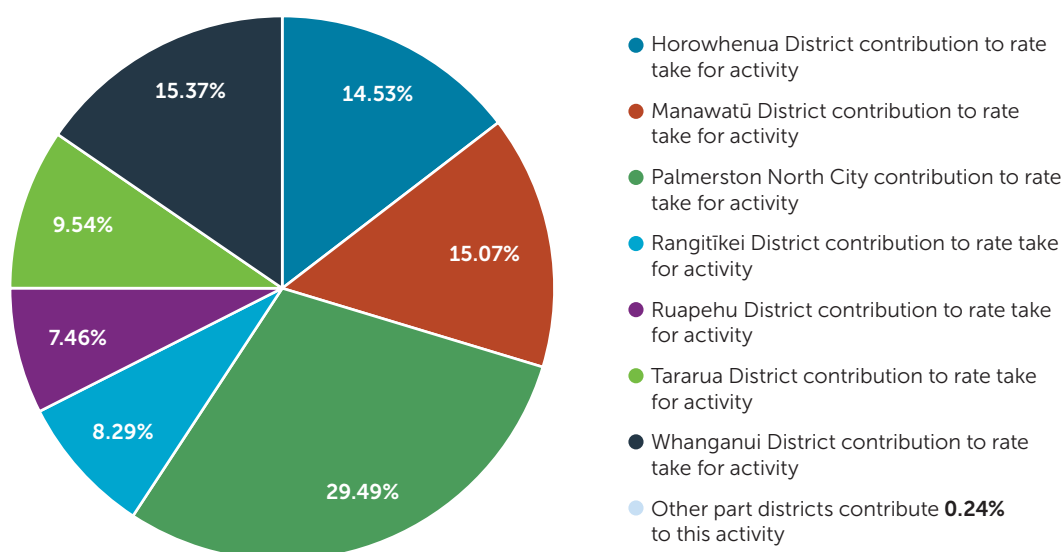
District Advice Land Development Enquiries within Whanganui District

Emergency Management Activity

Emergency Management at a glance

- Aim is to take a regional approach to **reducing the risk of emergencies** and disasters, and **preparing for, responding to, and recovering** from those that do occur.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.35 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$354,296**, which is a **15.37%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- Emergency Management is funded primarily through **general rates** to recognise the regional benefit of protecting people, homes and livelihoods before, during and after an emergency.
- Upstream rainfall in the Whanganui and Whangaehu catchment creates downstream flooding risk in Whanganui District, requiring **coordinated response across multiple councils** simultaneously.
- Whanganui District Council is a member of the **Manawatū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group**.
- The Group office has **fulltime Emergency Management staff** and draws on Horizons staff before, during and after emergencies, including to deploy to support other Councils.
- Horizons operates a **service centre and depot** on Guyton Street — the second largest regional office — supporting operational delivery in the district.
- Also covers **maritime safety and harbourmaster functions** on the Whanganui and Whangaehu rivers, as well as oil spill response capability.
- **Oil spills** are low-frequency but high-consequence events requiring specialist capability.
- **River flooding**, our most likely and most frequent form of emergency, often crosses multiple district boundaries, often combined with other weather impacts such as high winds and thunderstorms.
- Emergency management outcomes in the region rely on a **coordinated regional system**, including access to an IL4-rated Group Emergency Coordination Centre and shared specialist capability.
- Fragmentation of this model through reform would likely **reduce response effectiveness** and require **significant additional investment** to replicate existing capability at a local level.
- Whanganui District's integration into a regional system gives its communities **efficient access to surge workforce capacity, specialist expertise, and coordination infrastructure**. Funding this independently as a sub-unitary could come at a high cost.
- Emergency Management is **deeply dependent** on other Horizons activities which must be carefully considered in any structural change.
- It relies on **integrated functions** across Environmental Data, Catchment Operations, River Management, and Science to operate effectively, and separating these in a post amalgamation structure risks undermining this coordination.
- Any amalgamation process would need to carefully consider how the Emergency Management Group model would be maintained in a restructured environment, and what the **implications would be for community safety** if regional coordination capability was fragmented.

Emergency Management



Ready for whatever comes

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

The activity provides a Group Emergency Coordination Centre (GECC) capability housed in Te Ao Nui, the only IL4-rated building in the region, providing highly resilient and secure coordination capability during major emergencies. It ensures staff across the region — especially council staff — can support response and recovery functions, delivers community preparedness and resilience engagement across urban and rural communities, undertakes hazard-specific planning, and coordinates response and local coordination during local and regional events. Horizons maintains a service centre and depot on Guyton Street in Whanganui — the second largest regional office — supporting operational delivery within the district.

While some of this work is visible locally, much of its value lies in the regional coordination capability. Access to a shared regional workforce, common operating picture systems, intelligence functions, and specialist planning support means ratepayers get far more capability than could be maintained at a district level alone without significant investment.

Whanganui District faces a complex, multi-hazard environment. The Whanganui River runs through the heart of the city, bringing significant flood risk shaped by rainfall across the entire upper. The district's coastline is exposed to storm surge and tsunami risk requiring rapid evacuation and coordinated response. The combination of an urban population, surrounding rural communities, and interconnected infrastructure means that hazard events in Whanganui can affect large numbers of people simultaneously and rapidly. Multiple hazard types can also occur concurrently, requiring coordinated management across emergency management, river management, and lifelines functions.

In addition to civil defence functions, another key role Horizons' Emergency Management activity covers maritime safety and oil spill response. The Harbourmaster function currently only administers the Manawātū River Bylaw. However, in addition to this, navigation safety is supported along all

navigable waterways across the region, in particular the Whanganui River through advice and support to Iwi, Whanganui Port, River user groups and other key stakeholders. The river mouth and bar conditions in Whanganui present particular navigational challenges, and the high recreational use of the river makes this an ongoing and important function. Oil spill response capability covers preparedness planning, trained responders, coordinated response arrangements, and equipment deployment at regional scale, integrated with Maritime New Zealand at a national level. Oil spills are low-frequency but high-consequence risks requiring specialist capability and equipment that it would not be cost-effective for a single territorial authority to maintain alone.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.35 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$354,296

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

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

People and relationships

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

The harbourmaster function is delivered through contracted and shared resources, while the oil spill response function is supported by Emergency Management staff and regionally trained responders.

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

Key considerations for delivery models

Emergencies do not respect territorial boundaries. Flood risk in the Whanganui District is directly shaped by rainfall and catchment conditions across the entire upper Whanganui and Whangaehu river catchments. A major flood event on either river requires coordinated response across multiple councils simultaneously, with the Whanganui at Pipiriki monitoring station providing critical early warning data for evacuation decision-making in Whanganui city. Coastal hazards including tsunami and storm surge can require rapid evacuation and support arrangements that extend beyond district boundaries. Multiple hazard types can occur simultaneously, requiring coordinated management across emergency management, river management, and lifelines functions at a regional scale.

This is the fundamental reason emergency management is structured as a regional system. The Emergency Management Group model exists because effective preparation, response, and recovery require consistent standards, shared capability, and coordinated command structures. Whanganui District's integration into a regional system gives its communities efficient access to surge workforce capacity, specialist expertise, and coordination infrastructure. Funding this independently as a sub-unitary could come at a large cost.

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

Maritime safety and oil spill response reinforce the case for regional coordination. The Whanganui River, port, and coastline are interconnected environments where oil spills and navigation safety incidents can spread rapidly and affect sensitive ecological, cultural, and economic assets. Maintaining a regional response capability, with equipment able to be quickly deployed to and operated by trained staff from a central location, would likely be more cost-effective than duplicating this across districts or sub-unitary councils.

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



Staff training for oil spill response

Environmental Data Activity

Environmental Data at a glance

- Aim is to deliver and maintain the **hydrological and environmental monitoring networks** and data systems that underpin Horizons' core functions — from flood protection and emergency management to water allocation, regulatory compliance, and state of the environment reporting.
- Budget for the region: **\$3.8 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: approximately **\$477,000** from general and targeted rates.
- The estimated cost to deliver this activity at a Whanganui District-only scale is **\$174,000**, but does not include establishment, specialist systems, equipment, and technical input costs.
- Environmental Data is internally funded through **general rates** recovered from the activities it supports, reflecting its role as an enabling function for service delivery.
- Whanganui District has **2** major catchments that pose a flood risk to the communities living close to the Whanganui and Whangaehu rivers, as well as a large number of critical sub-catchments i.e. Matarawa and Kai iwi.
- More than **600** monitoring points from the Whanganui District are in Horizons' environmental archives, with **30** key continuous stations.
- Key challenges for this activity in this district include the **acidic nature** of the Whangaehu River catchment and lahars.
- Rainfall gradient ranges from **650mm** to **6,500mm** within the central high country, and convective thunderstorms move in from the coastal Taranaki.
- Continuous monitoring of the **Coastal Lakes** has increased over the last decade.
- The systems, infrastructure, and specialist capability that make this activity function at a **regional scale** to allow for the cross-boundary nature of data cannot be easily replicated at a smaller one.
- The costs of establishing and maintaining the systems required are **largely fixed** and must be incurred whether the system serves one district or eight.
- Fragmenting delivery across post-amalgamation entities would require **duplication of these systems and costs**, likely increasing the overall expense to ratepayers for equivalent or lesser capability.
- Any structural change would need to carefully consider how **capability would be maintained**, who would hold responsibility for **cross-boundary data sharing**, and what the **implications would be for flood forecasting** and emergency response if that capability were fragmented.

The data behind the decisions

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

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

Horizons invested significantly into the Whanganui District post-2004, re-opening a significant number of stations previously closed by the Rangitikei Whanganui Catchment Board and DSIR/NIWA. The increase in monitored locations reflects the district's complex hydrology and flood risk profile. There are more than 600 monitoring points in Horizons' environmental archives within the district, seven primary river level and flow stations, and four lake monitoring sites. The district also has 10 primary rainfall stations, five live webcams and more than 150 consent authorisations.

The Whanganui District has limited national weather radar coverage. The rainfall gradient across the district is not extreme, ranging

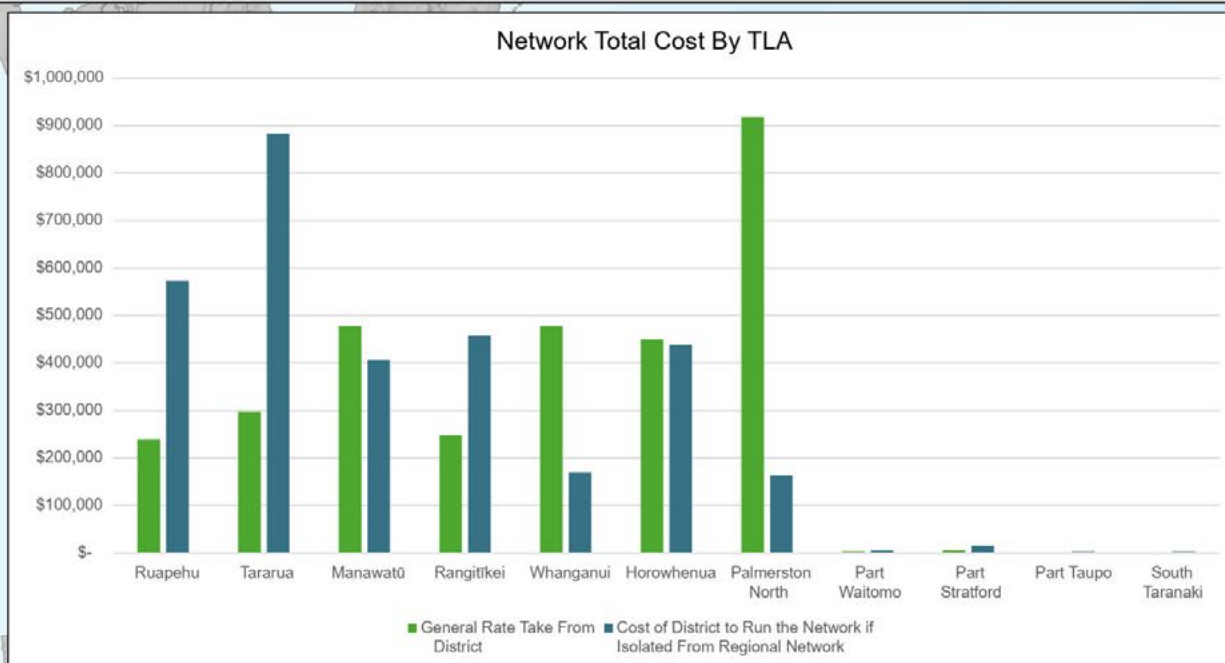
from 650mm to 1000mm within the mid-catchment high country. However, summer thunderstorms build off of the southern Taranaki coastline and regularly make landfall close to Whanganui (the Matarawa catchment is of critical concern in these situations). This makes accurate monitoring and forecasting particularly challenging, but also particularly important. The Whanganui catchment is a complex flood forecasting environment due to its size and terrain, requiring real-time data from neighbouring councils, including Taranaki and Waikato regional councils. The Whanganui at Te Rewa (Paetawa) station is one of the older monitoring sites in the region, with flood history dating back to the early 1900s and continuous data has been collected since 1957. NIWA closed the Paetawa station in the mid-2010s. Horizons had a sediment monitoring site at Te Rewa (1km upstream) and fully instrumented this location to ensure robust flood capability existed for Whanganui. The Whanganui catchment requires data from more than 80 sites across the entire wider catchments, including data from Horizons, Taranaki and Waikato regional councils, to provide an accurate flood forecasts. The largest flood (15.7m) on the continuous data at Pipikiri occurred in 2015 (15.7 metres), but this event was dwarfed by flood events of the early 1900s (1904 19.6m & 1940 20.8m). The largest event took place in the late 1830s, thought to be caused by an earth dam rupture in the mid-catchment area after significant earthquakes in the late 1830s. The continuous monitoring stations down the catchment are critical to support early decision making and evacuations in Whanganui city.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$3.8 million

Rates collected from his activity from Whanganui District: approximately \$477,000 from general and targeted rates.

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

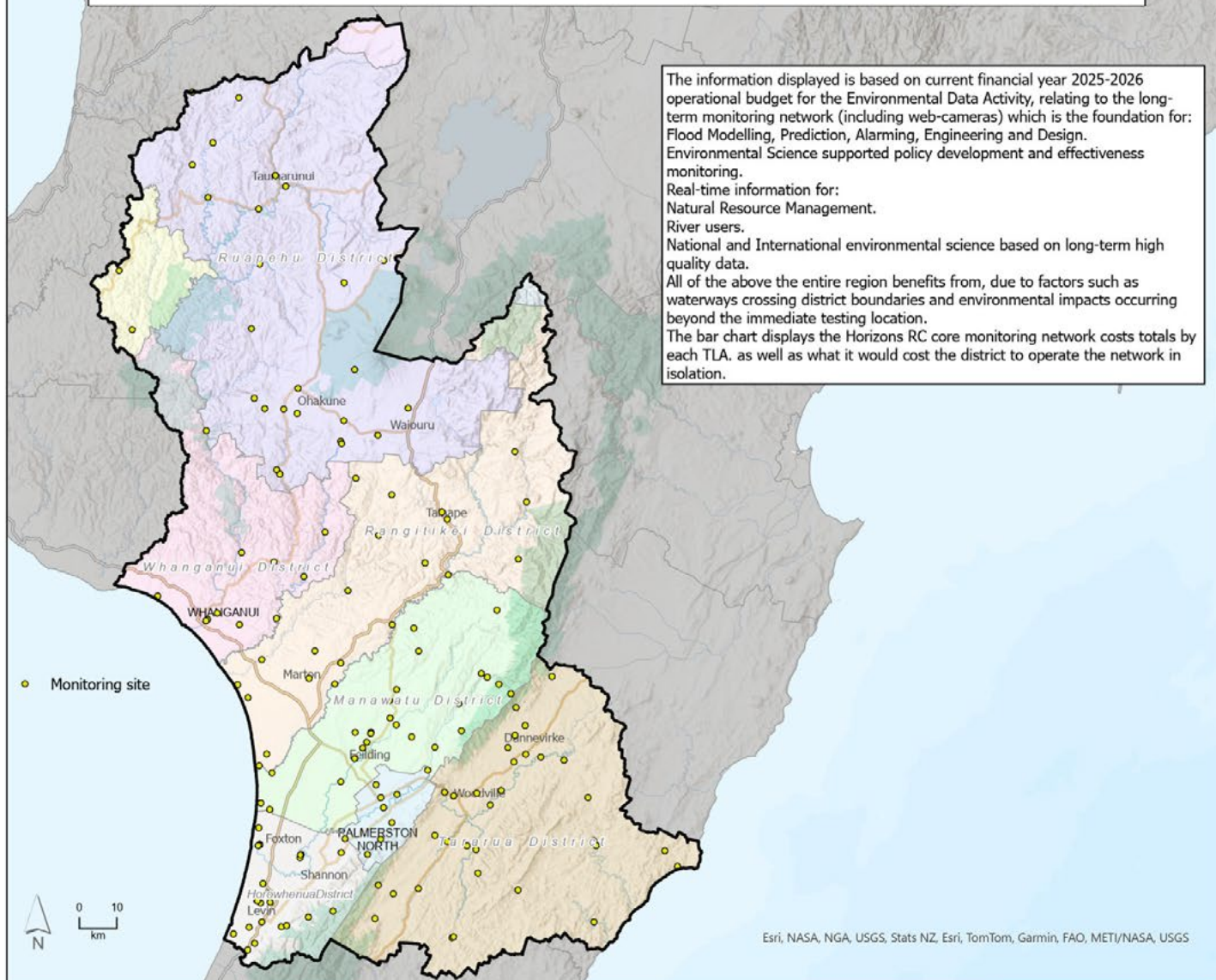


The information displayed is based on current financial year 2025-2026 operational budget for the Environmental Data Activity, relating to the long-term monitoring network (including web-cameras) which is the foundation for: Flood Modelling, Prediction, Alarming, Engineering and Design. Environmental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

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

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

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



Horizons Environmental Data Long-term Monitoring Network 2025-2026

Prepared by: Phil H,
 Information Mngt
 team,
 Date: 30/01/2026.
 Contains Crown
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 Data



Note: Network running costs in this map do not include establishment costs and the additional costs for specialist systems, equipment, and technical input.

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

People and relationships

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

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

Key external relationships in the Whanganui District include the district council. Broader relationships include the Department of Conservation, New Zealand Defence Force, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the Ministry for the Environment, MetService, Genesis, neighbouring regional councils whose data is essential to cross-boundary flood forecasting, and national and international standards bodies.

Key considerations for delivery models

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

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

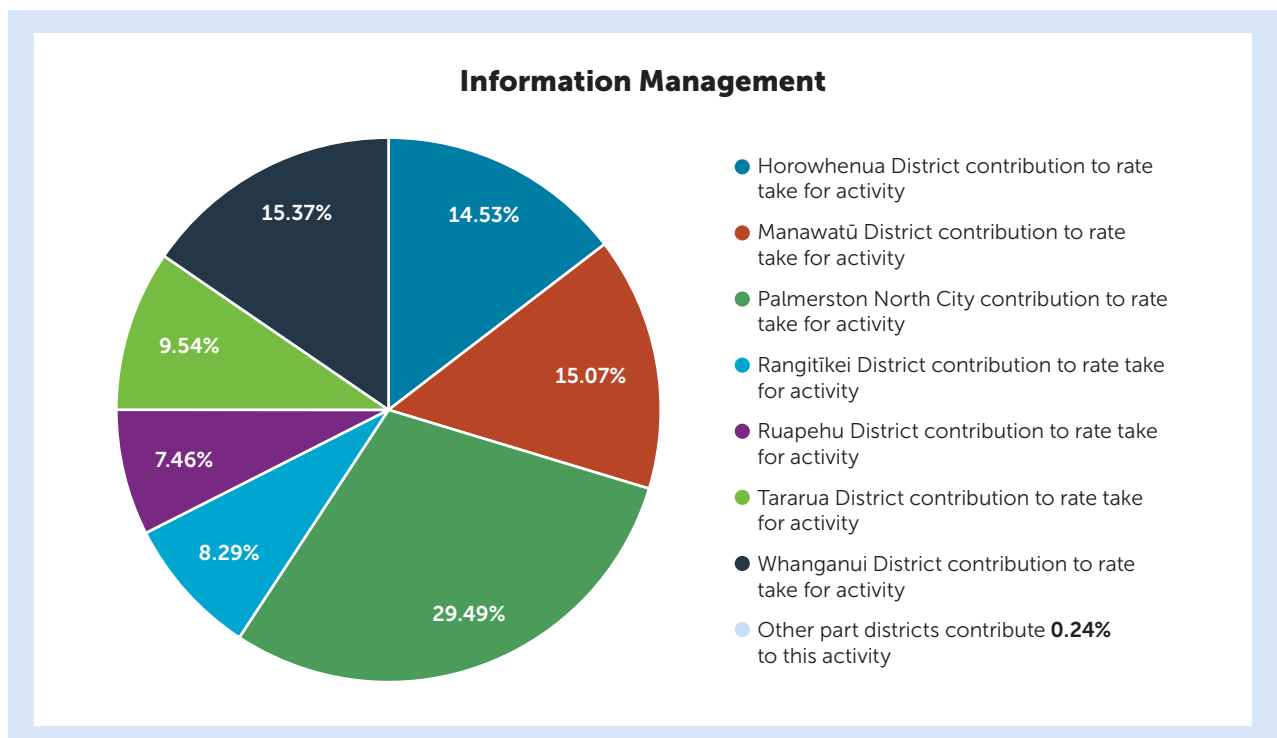
The cross-boundary nature of the data itself reinforces this point. Flood forecasting for these catchments requires real-time data from over 80 sites spanning multiple regional council jurisdictions. The Whanganui District catchments are reliant on data from Taranaki Regional Council and Waikato Regional Council. This activity does not operate in an isolated environment. It requires sustained, formalised data-sharing relationships with neighbouring councils and a credible entity to maintain them.

The estimated cost to deliver this activity at a Whanganui-only scale is \$174,000. While this is less than the approximately \$477,000 Whanganui ratepayers currently contribute to the regional system, this figure does not include the additional costs for specialist systems, equipment, and technical input. Crucially, it does not account for the monitoring infrastructure upstream in the Ruapehu and Rangitikei districts. Much of the data that makes reliable and timely flood forecasting possible for Whanganui comes from stations well outside the Whanganui District boundary. A district-only model would either need to fund that upstream monitoring itself, negotiate data-sharing arrangements with whatever entities held those functions, or accept significantly degraded flood forecasting capability. The current contribution to a regional system buys access to an integrated network extending far beyond the district's boundaries. Any structural change arising from amalgamations would need to carefully consider how this capability would be maintained, who would hold responsibility for cross-boundary data sharing, and what the implications would be for flood forecasting and emergency response if the current integrated network was fragmented.

Information Management Activity

Information Management at a glance

- Aim is to provide the **digital systems, data, GIS, cybersecurity, information management, and digital infrastructure** needed to deliver Horizons' services across the district and wider region.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.3 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$276,380** which is a **15.37%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through **general rates** to recognise the support it provides for other functions that benefit the region as a whole.
- **River height alerts** are available to the public through a system maintained by Information Services and the Environmental Data team.
- **Regional geospatial products** — including aerial imagery, and digital terrain and surface models — support flood modelling, hazard mapping, and emergency management across the district boundaries.
- Collaborating with regional councils across the motu to stand up **IRIS NextGen**, a modern cloud-based regional regulatory platform, delivered with other councils through Regional Software Holdings Ltd.
- Whanganui District Council will already have **digital infrastructure and capability** to meet their own statutory and operational obligations, the question is how the regional council-specific layer would be maintained, separated, integrated, or transitioned under any future model.
- The regional council-specific layer of information includes systems and services that simply **do not map neatly onto district boundaries**.



The technology keeping regional services ticking

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

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

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

Information Services maintains the technology layer enabling the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and river height alerting

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

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.3 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$276,380

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

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

People and relationships

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

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

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

Key considerations for delivery models

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

GIS provides a useful illustration of the complexity involved, but the lesson applies across the broader Information Services environment. Combining GIS platforms involves far more than merging maps. It requires data analysis, harmonisation, metadata and lineage management, integration rebuilding, public service continuity,

cybersecurity, identity and access controls, testing, dual-running, and decommissioning. Those same issues apply across regulatory systems, customer channels, records, telemetry, public alerting, cloud platforms, and cybersecurity.

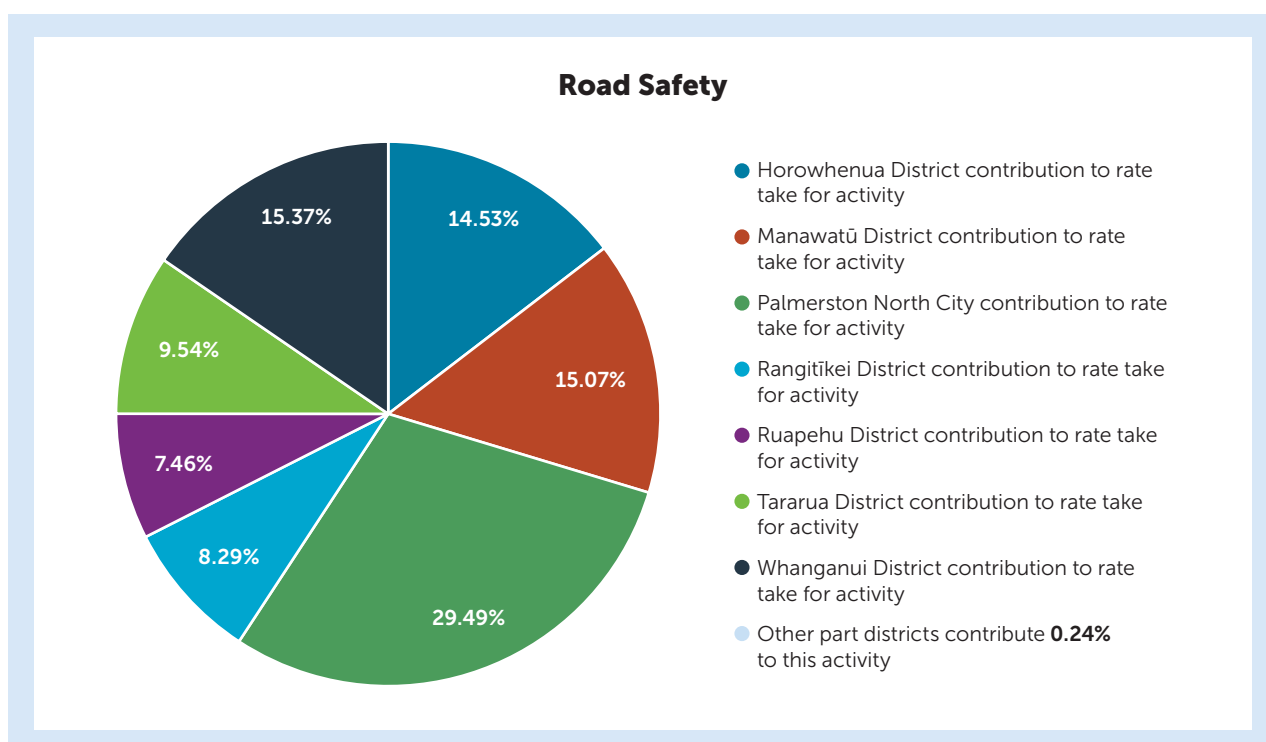
The regional council-specific layer that Information Services supports includes systems and services that simply do not map neatly onto district boundaries. These include IRIS and IRIS NextGen for regional regulatory functions, telemetry and river monitoring infrastructure, the public river height alerting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

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

Road Safety Activity

Road Safety at a glance

- Aim is to **reduce deaths and serious injuries on the region's roads** through targeted education, engagement, and behaviour change programmes.
- NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi co-fund **58%** of this activity with the rest funded by general rates.
- Budget for the region: **\$960,298**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$33,968**, which is a **15.37%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **Drivers do not stay within district boundaries**, with this activity bringing benefits across the region and beyond.
- Drivers do not stay within their home district, and road safety risk **does not concentrate neatly within territorial boundaries**.
- Fragmenting this into smaller programmes could **reduce coordination and could jeopardise access to NZTA co-funding** if the scale of individual programmes fell below what is required to attract subsidy.



Safer roads for everyone

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

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

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



Road safety team engaging with members of the public

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$960,298.

Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: \$33,968

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

People and relationships

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

Key considerations for delivery models

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

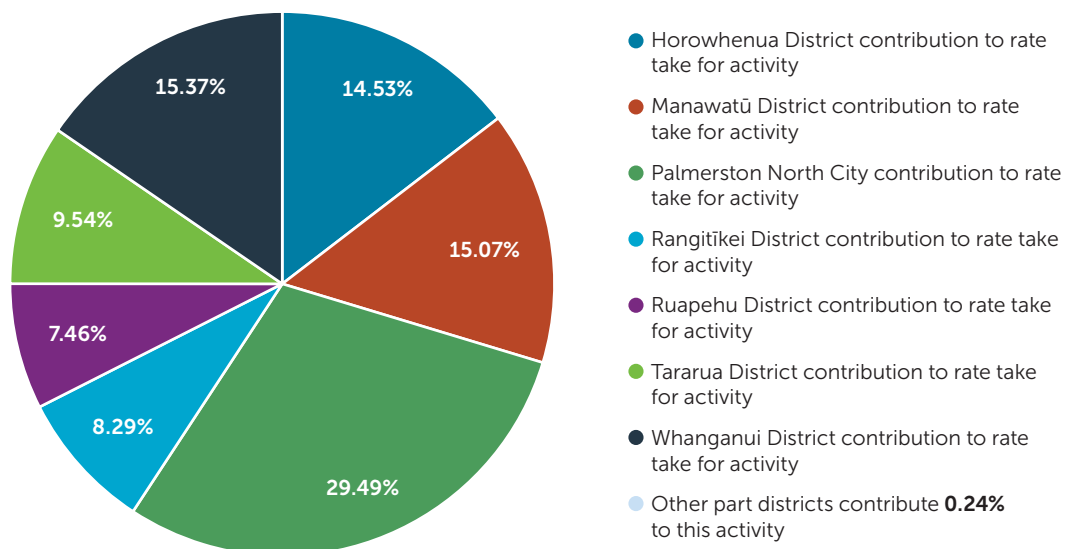
Drivers do not stay within their home district, and road safety risk does not concentrate neatly within territorial boundaries. This is why the programme is structured and funded at a regional level, and why inter-regional coordination with neighbouring regions is a feature of its delivery. Fragmenting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

Transport Planning Activity

Transport Planning at a glance

- Aims to set the **strategic direction for land transport** across the region, identifying **priorities, investment needs, and long-term outcomes** for a connected, efficient, and resilient transport system.
- Budget for the region: **\$332,395**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$26,497**, which is a **15.7%** rate take contribution to the operational budget .
- NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi co-fund **51%** of this activity with the rest funded by general rates.
- The Regional Land Transport Plan is the primary gateway for **central government funding** for transport coming into the region.
- The **Regional Public Transport Plan** sets the framework for public transport services and infrastructure.
- Most transport investment relies on **co-funding** from the National Land Transport Fund.
- The transport system crosses district boundaries, meaning investment decisions in one area affect travel times, freight efficiency, and safety elsewhere, so planning is **structured and funded regionally and overseen by regional committees**.
- Sub-regional scale of transport planning would **duplicate effort and increase costs** while reducing coordination and weakening influence with NZTA.

Transport Planning



Working on the ways we'll move

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

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

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$332,395

Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: \$26,497

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

People and relationships

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

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

Key considerations for delivery models

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

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

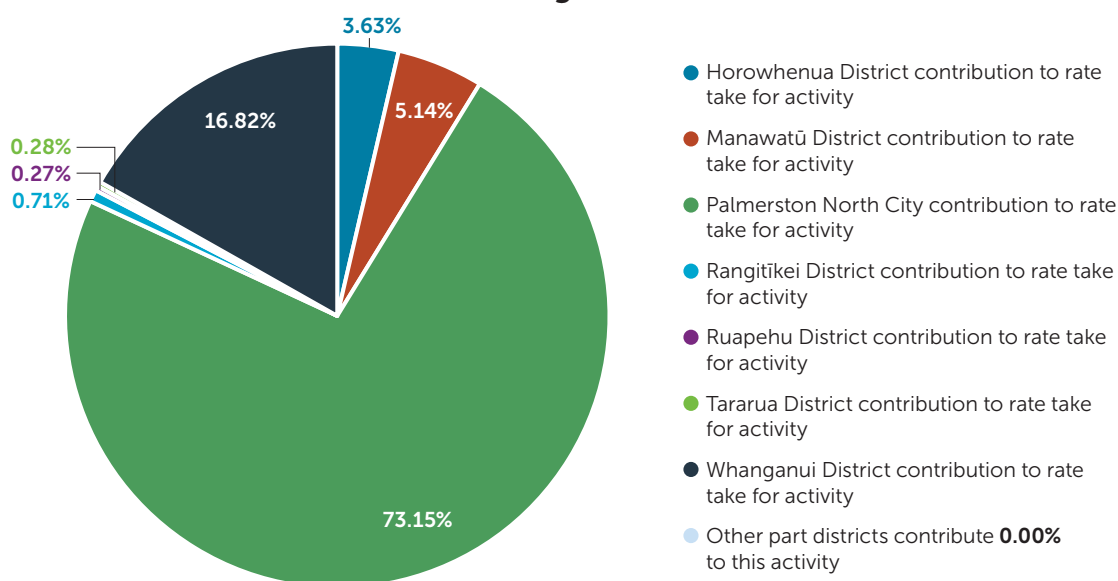
Delivery transport planning at a sub-regional scale could create significant uncertainty and duplication. If each post-amalgamation entity were required to produce its own equivalent of the RLTP or RPTP, the same quantum of planning work would need to be replicated multiple times, at greater overall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

Passenger Services Activity

Passenger Services at a glance

- Aims to deliver **public transport services** that enable access to employment, education, healthcare, and social activities.
- Public transport services are not just buses – **Total Mobility and community transport services** are also a part of this activity.
- Budget for the region: **\$20.7 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$1.38 million**, which is a **16.82%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- A **new bus network** launched in Whanganui on 17 April 2026, recording more than double the passenger trips in its first month compared to the same month in 2025.
- Whanganui District has **2,098** Total Mobility registered users, with **77,210** trips delivered annually including **5,566** hoist trips for mobility-impaired passengers.
- Community transport services including St John Whanganui delivered more than **1,700** passenger trips in 2024-25.
- **New rail services** coming online from 2030 will quadruple weekday train trips between the region and Wellington, and introduce weekend services.
- Delivering passenger services at a district level would **duplicate key functions, reduce efficiencies, and likely increase costs** for the same or lower level of service compared to the current regional model.

Passenger Services



Creating community connections

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

Whanganui District has one of the more established urban public transport networks in the region, reflecting the size and concentration of its city population. In recent years, the urban area has seen progressive investment in new services and infrastructure – the infrastructure part taking place thanks to central government co-investment – including the launch of Te Ngaru The Tide in 2023. A new urban bus network launched on 17 April 2026, and in its first month recorded more than double the number of passenger trips compared to the same month in 2025. While early days, this is a strong early indicator of community uptake and demand. Scheduled services connect residential areas with key destinations including the city centre, health services, education providers, and employment areas. Regional and inter-district connections also support access for work, education, and services beyond the district.

The Total Mobility scheme provides subsidised transport for people with disabilities and mobility issues, enabling access to essential services and community participation. In Whanganui District, there are 2,098 registered Total Mobility users, with 77,210 trips delivered in 2024-25, including 5,566 hoist trips for mobility-impaired passengers. This is the highest Total Mobility usage of any district in the Horizons Region, reflecting both the size of the urban population and the significant transport access needs of Whanganui's community.

The Community Transport scheme funds health and community vehicles to assist people in accessing services they may otherwise be unable to reach. In Whanganui, St John Whanganui received \$2,200 in 2024-25, supporting 1,734 passenger trips in 2023-24 – providing a vital safety net for residents unable to access scheduled services.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$20.7 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$1.38 million

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

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

People and relationships

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

Key considerations for delivery models

Public transport does not stop at district boundaries. Many of the connections which serve Whanganui District residents cross boundary, such as bus services to Palmerston North. Cross-boundary public transport services require a level of coordination which benefit from a regional outlook.

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

Delivering Passenger Services at a sub-regional scale would create duplication across a number of areas, including public transport and Total Mobility operations, monitoring and reporting, ticketing systems, and real-time bus information infrastructure. These systems and functions generate efficiencies at regional scale and become more expensive per ratepayer when fragmented. For a district like Whanganui, where Total Mobility usage is among the highest in the region and a newly launched bus network is generating strong early ridership, the current regional funding model delivers clear value. A district-level alternative would likely mean higher costs for the same or lesser level of service.

WHANGANUI BUS SERVICES PERFORMANCE

Patronage trips in Whanganui bus services in last 5 FY to Jan FY 2025/26

■ Whanganui - PN Commuter ■ School ■ Urban

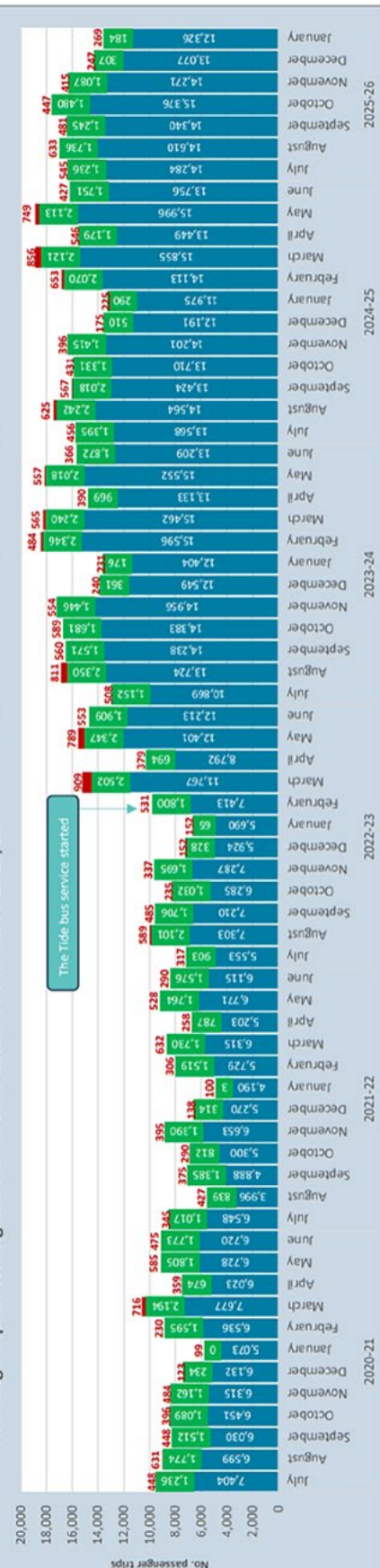


Figure 06: Whanganui bus services monthly performance in last 5 FYs to FY 2025-26 (Jan 2026)

Income and Spend for Transportation Per TLA



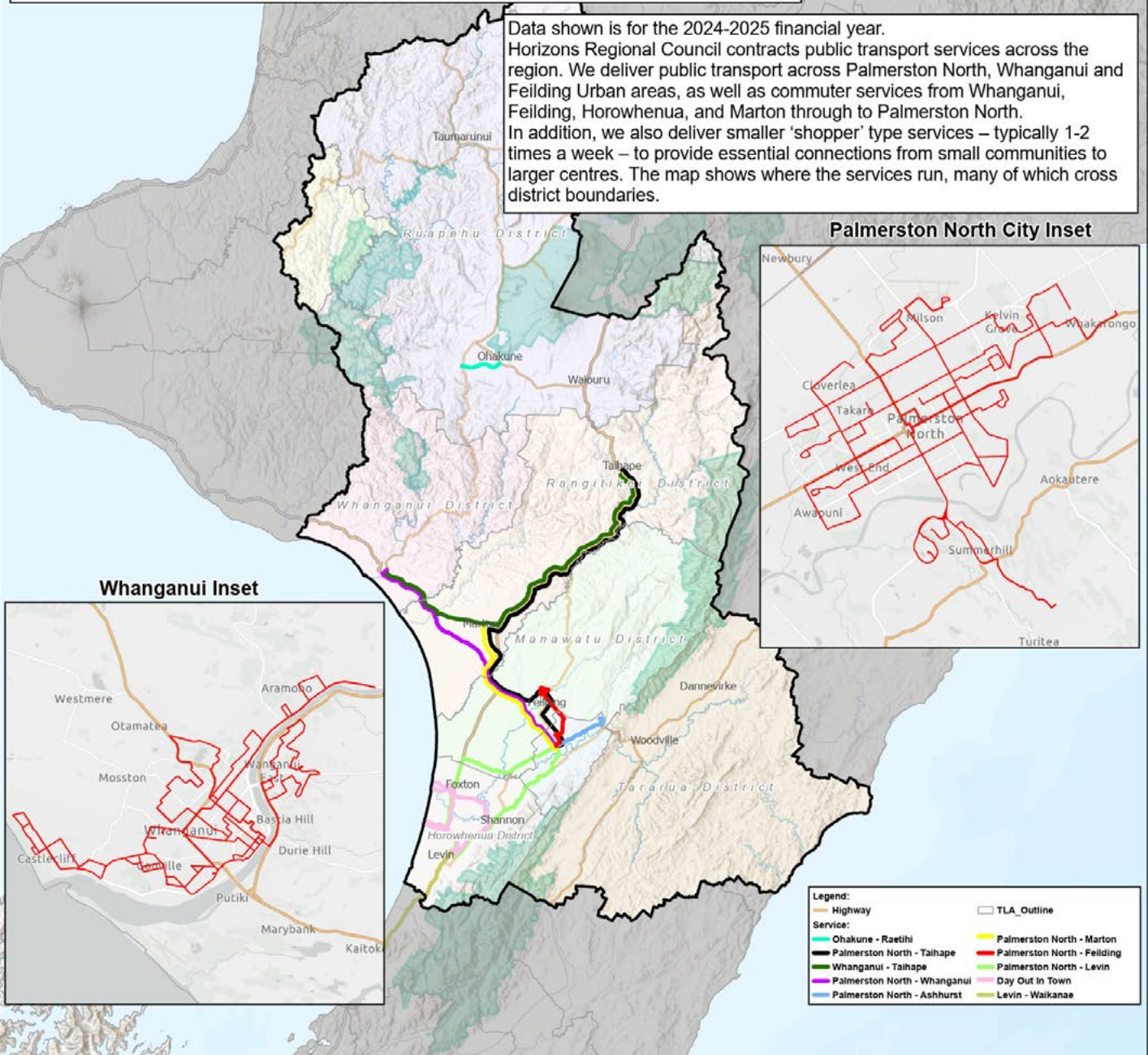
Total Transportation Income and Spend



Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.

Horizons Regional Council contracts public transport services across the region. We deliver public transport across Palmerston North, Whanganui and Feilding Urban areas, as well as commuter services from Whanganui, Feilding, Horowhenua, and Marton through to Palmerston North.

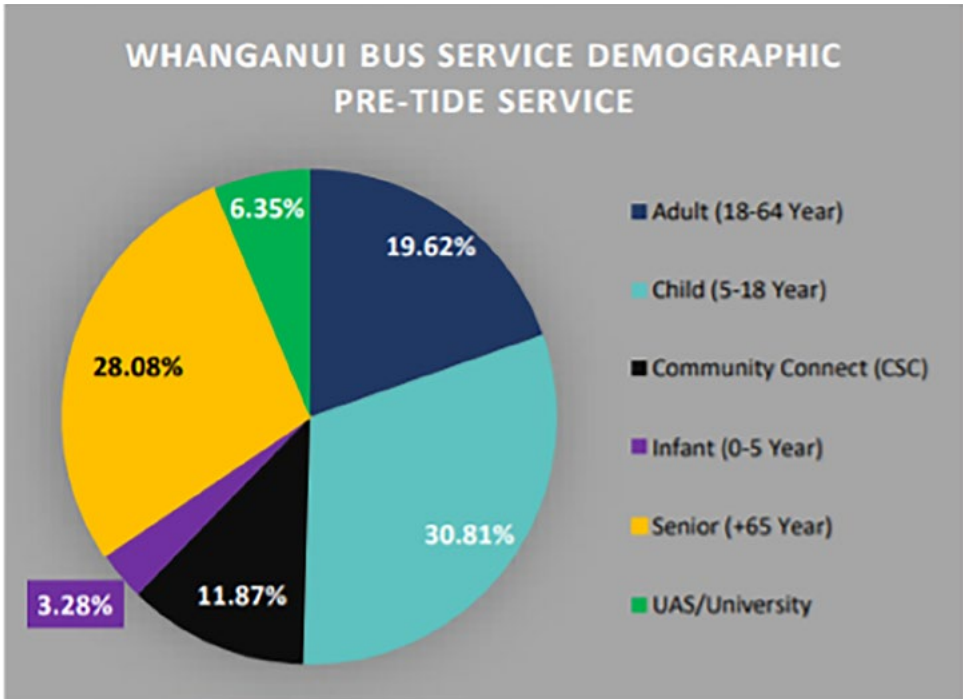
In addition, we also deliver smaller 'shopper' type services – typically 1-2 times a week – to provide essential connections from small communities to larger centres. The map shows where the services run, many of which cross district boundaries.



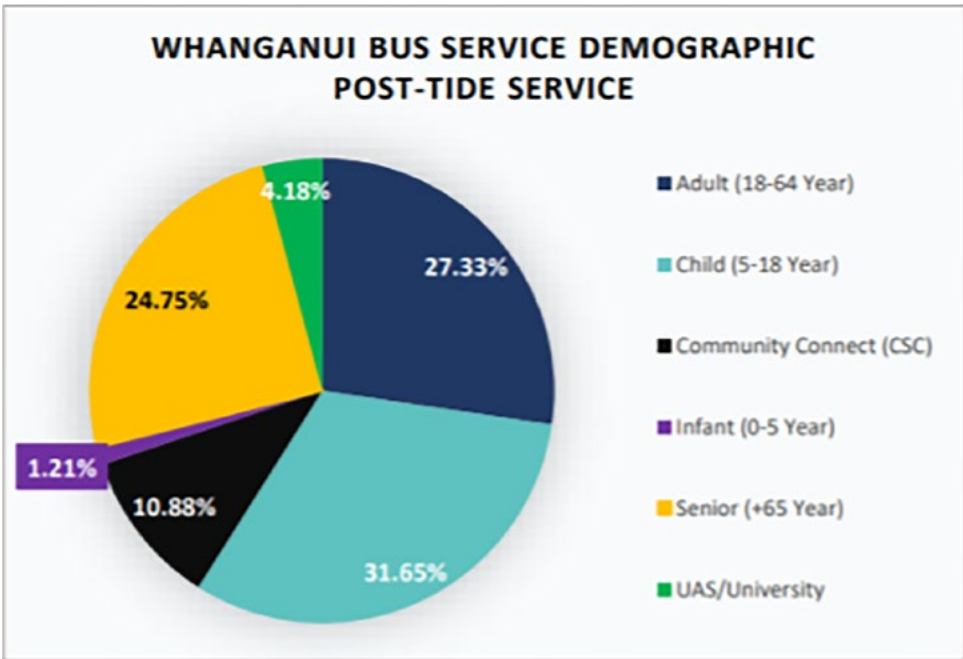
Transport Revenue and Expenditure

Funding Figures from 2024-2025 financial year

Prepared by: Information Management
Date: 30/01/2026
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Whanganui bus demographic for pre-Tide services operated



Whanganui bus demographic for post-Tide services operated

NETWORK MAP

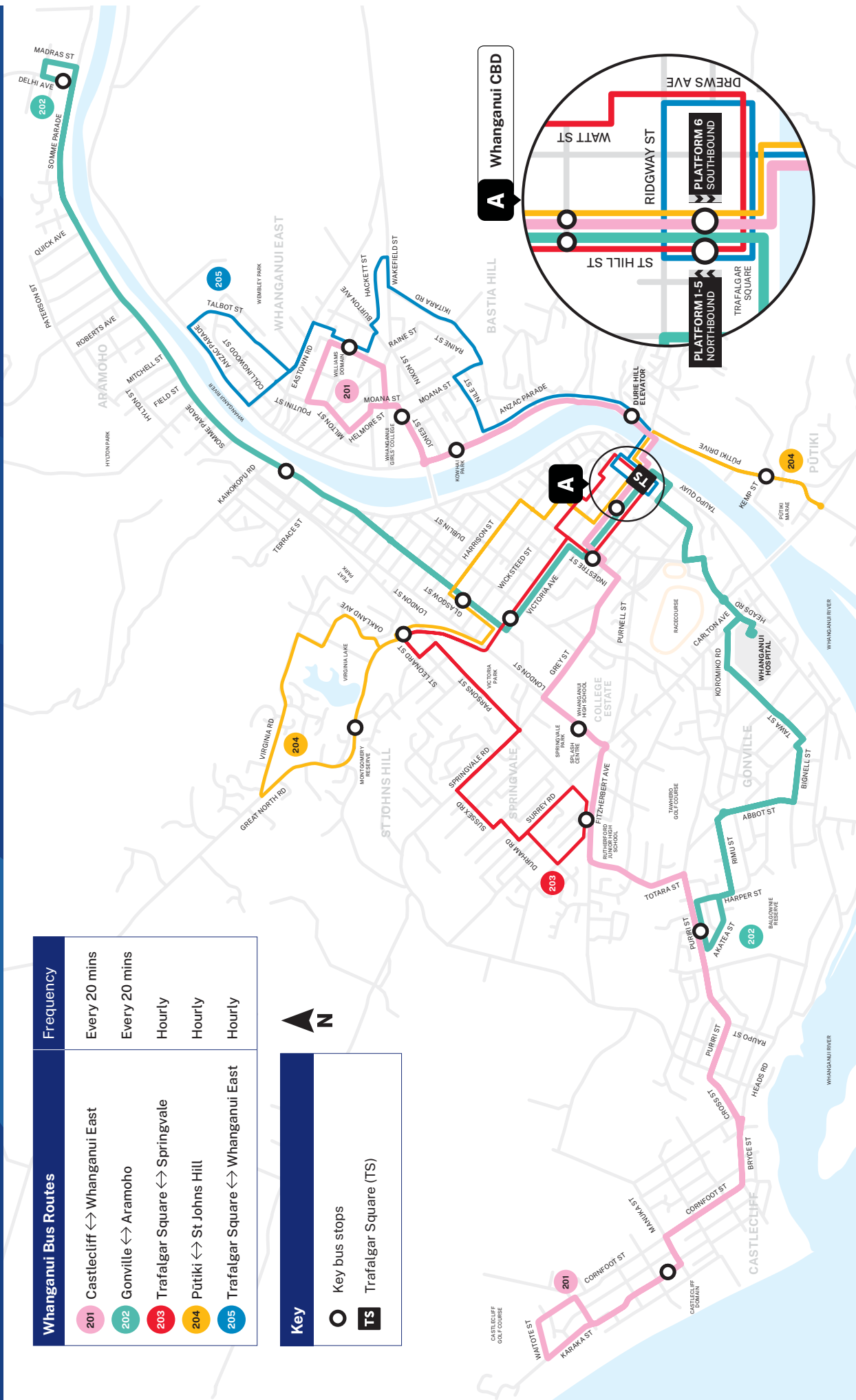
From 17 April 2026

HORIZONS
REGIONAL
TRANSPORT
CONNECT

Whanganui Bus Routes		Frequency
201	Castlecliff ↔ Whanganui East	Every 20 mins
202	Gonville ↔ Aramoho	Every 20 mins
203	Trafalgar Square ↔ Springvale	Hourly
204	Putiki ↔ St Johns Hill	Hourly
205	Trafalgar Square ↔ Whanganui East	Hourly



Key	
	Key bus stops
	Trafalgar Square (TS)



Working together – Partnerships, Governance and Leadership

This group is made up of the following activities:

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

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

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

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

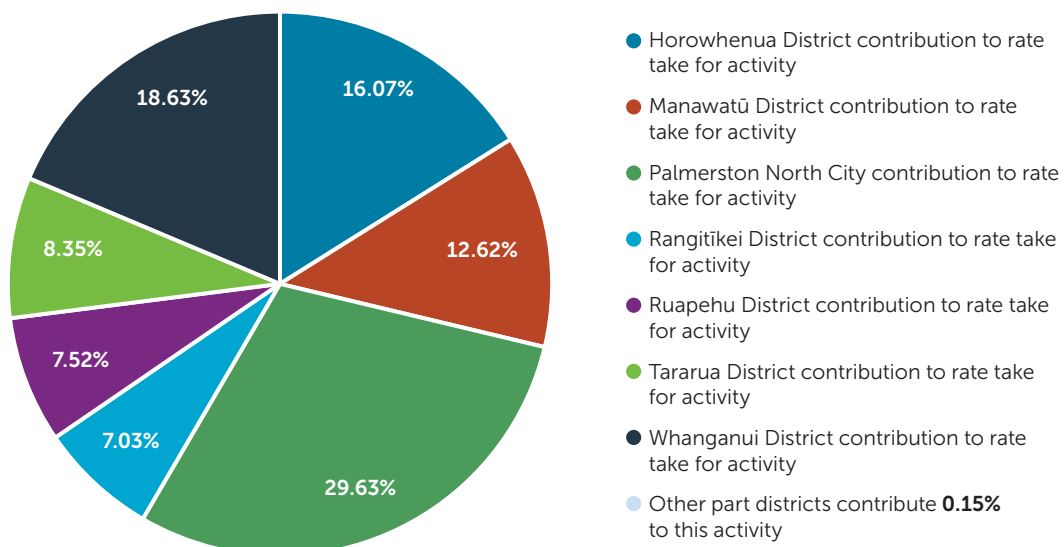
	Community Wellbeing and Relationships	Governance	Iwi and Hapū Relationships
Regional rates	1,977,687.80	3,629,622.15	508,216.82
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	80,000.00	5,000.00	220,000.00
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	5,818.44	180,345.00	1,448.49
Total Operational Expenditure	2,051,869.36	3,454,277.15	726,768.33
Whanganui District rates	368,451.73	676,214.18	94,682.98
Whanganui District contribution of rate take to activity	18.63%	18.63%	18.63%

Community Wellbeing and Relationships Activity

Community Wellbeing and Relationships at a glance

- Aim is to **inform, educate, and empower communities** by being a trusted and credible source of meaningful information.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.05 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$368,451** which is a **18.63%** contribution to the operational budget.
- Activity is funded **100% through the Universal Annual General Charge** as the benefits of community engagement, public information, and environmental education are shared across the entire region.
- Team well connected with **Whanganui District Council** peers, particularly during emergencies.
- **25** regional media releases relevant to Whanganui District in 2024-25.
- **48%** of all Horizons media releases in 2024-25 were relevant to the Whanganui District.
- **15** Enviroschools in the district, with **208** students and teachers engaged in education and professional development sessions.
- **7** Enviroschools facilitators region-wide, **1** works specifically in the Whanganui District.
- **The Enviroschools programme** relies on regional coordination, where shared facilitation, training, and curriculum delivery create efficiencies, smaller scale delivery would be more costly and less consistent.
- **1** community events attended in the district in 2024-25.
- Consistent regional delivery ensures **clear, unified messaging and services across boundaries**, while fragmentation risks confusion for communities using cross-district services such as public transport and swim spot monitoring.
- Regional delivery also **allows lessons and messaging from one area to be applied across the region** for services that span multiple districts and spreads staff subject matter knowledge more widely.

Community Wellbeing and Relationships



Telling our stories and keeping our communities informed

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

Due to the regional scale at which this activity operates, it also serves as the communications lead for partnership projects, including the Manawatū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group, Te Pūwaha and the Accelerate35 (regional economic development) partnership. This includes media releases, website updates, and general administration support as required.

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

The Communications team, alongside other PIM-trained staff across the organisation, provides support and resourcing to territorial authorities during emergency events, primarily through the Public Information Management function within the CIMS structure at the

Emergency Coordination Centre level. The team helps provide consistent messaging across the region through the MWCDEM website, the Manawatū-Whanganui Civil Defence Facebook page, and by providing and receiving advice from territorial authorities and partner organisations. The Group PIM function, which every region across the motu has, is held by Horizons' Media and Communications Manager. This employee ensures all PIMs across the region at a variety of institutions – not just councils – are equipped to respond in emergencies. For example, the communications team hosted a hui for city and district council and partner organisation PIM representatives, focused on sharing knowledge, experiences and running through some exercises, to grow skills and develop PIM capability within the region.

In the Whanganui District, Horizons delivers bespoke communications campaigns alongside business-as-usual support across all activities. For example, each year, communications staff support the Science and Environmental Reporting activity to deliver a regional campaign which benefits the Whanganui community, raising awareness of swim spot monitoring undertaken and encouraging residents to check water quality results online before taking a dip.

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

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.05 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$368,451

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

People and relationships

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

The team works closely with subject matter experts across Horizons to forge relationships. A prime example includes the work with the River Management team relating to the Te Pūwaha – Whanganui Port Revitalisation project, a highly collaborative project led by local iwi and hapū and involving many partner organisations. The environmental education function has key relationships with schools and early childhood education centres participating in Enviroschools. There are also relationships with district council communications staff and media organisations with interests in stories in the Whanganui District.

Key considerations for delivery models

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

There is also the benefit of applying lessons across boundaries. Public transport is a prime example. Horizons has launched multiple new or improved public transport networks in recent years, alongside public transport planning campaigns such as the Regional Services Review. Lessons learned during a campaign in one territorial authority area are applied to a campaign in another area, then another, and another, and then across the region. This ensures local voices are used where they are most effective, while lessons are efficiently applied across the region without requiring cross-entity debriefs or education.

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

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

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



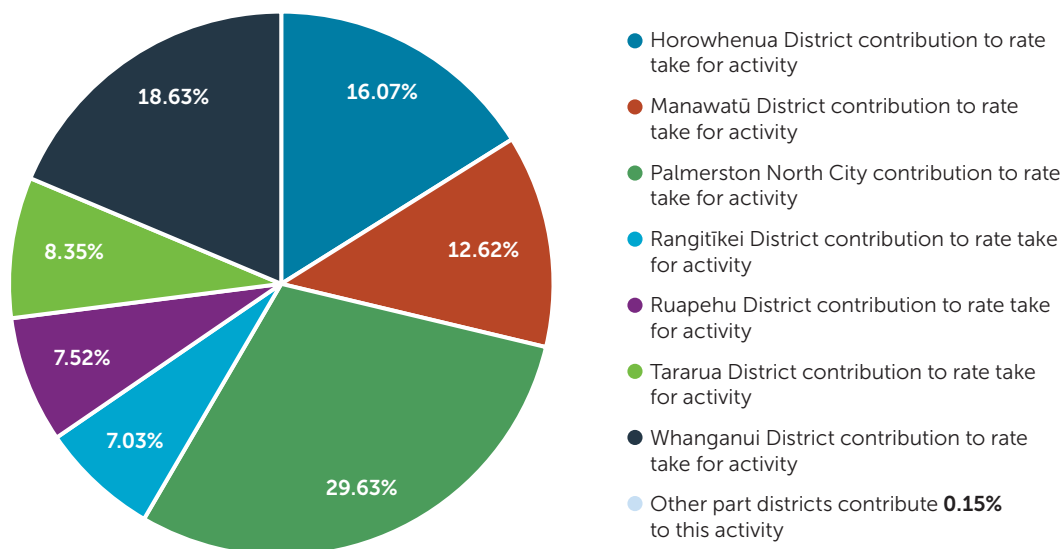
Environmental education session at Castlecliff beach, Whanganui

Governance Activity

Governance at a glance

- Aims to provide the **structure, process and support required for elected members** to carry out their statutory decision-making and oversight responsibilities.
- Budget for the region: **\$3.45 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from the Whanganui District: **\$676,214**, which is **18.63%** contribution to the operational budget.
- Activity is funded **general rates**, reflecting the fact effective democratic oversight of the organisation benefits the entire region.
- **36** council and committee meetings, **36** workshop days held in 2024-25.
- Council meets with each **territorial authority** across the region at their place to discuss current issues, concerns, and priorities.
- Outside of **Council committees**, the activity supports the **Mayoral Forum and MWCDEM Joint Standing Committee**.
- Regional council governance **differs fundamentally from district and city governance**, as it operates across the entire region with councillors elected on a regional basis to make decisions on cross-boundary issues, reflecting a distinct role and relationship with communities and the environment.
- The amalgamation process raises complex questions about **structuring regional governance, requiring careful design to ensure fair representation across areas**, particularly given the scale and cross-boundary challenges of the Horizons Region.
- Following the October 2025 referendum confirming **Māori wards**, how this democratically supported representation would be maintained under amalgamation remains uncertain and requires careful consideration.

Governance



Democracy at a regional scale

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

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

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

Finances and contract

Budget for the region: \$3.45 million

Rates collected for this activity from Whanganui District: \$676,214

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

People and relationships

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

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

Key considerations for delivery models

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

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

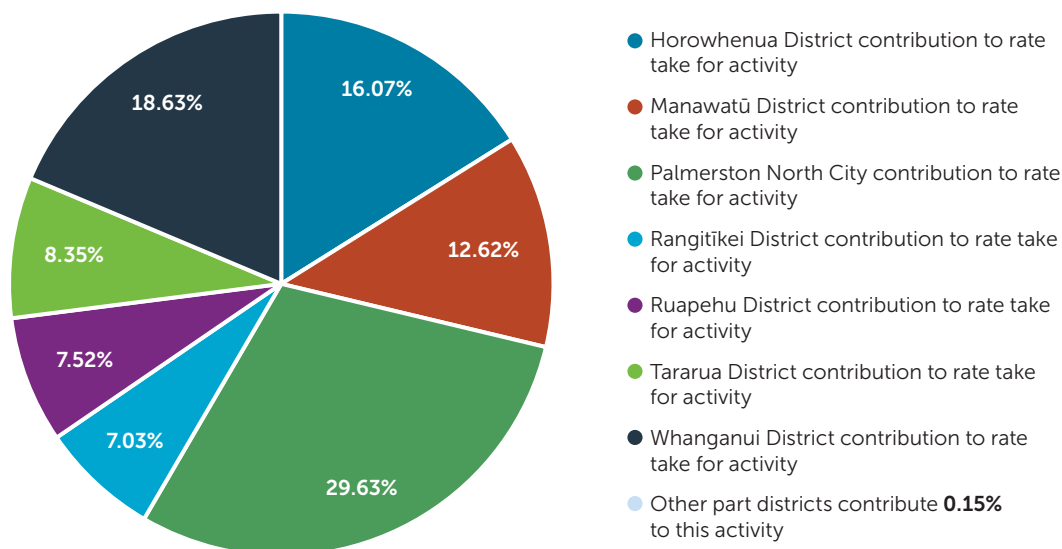
Finally, in the October 2025 referendum to determine if Māori wards should remain, the option to retain these for the region received the most votes. The poll result was binding and would apply for Horizons Regional Council elections to be held in 2028 and 2031. How this representation, that communities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

Iwi and Hapū Relationships Activity

Iwi and Hapū Relationships at a glance

- Aims to build and **maintain relationships with iwi and hapū across the rohe**, enabling meaningful engagement and participation in regional decision-making to ensure Horizons meets its responsibilities to Māori and legislative obligations.
- The Horizons Region is home to more than **35 iwi** and more than **100 hapū**.
- Budget for the region: **\$726,768**.
- Rates collected for this activity in the Whanganui District: **\$94,682** which is an **18.63%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through the **Universal Annual General Charge**, reflecting the fact the whole region benefits from Horizons upholding its statutory obligations and maintaining strong relationships with tangata whenua.
- The Whanganui District sits within a **rich and complex iwi and hapū landscape**.
- Horizons has **3** Memoranda of Understanding/ Partnership, **4** iwi environmental management plans, and **3** Mana Whakahono ā Rohe initiated in the Whanganui District.
- The **Te Awa Tupua Treaty Settlement Act** provides a strong legislative foundation for the Whanganui District which guides and influences much of our work.
- **34** iwi and hapū engagements undertaken in the Whanganui District in 2024-25.
- Iwi and hapū areas of interest and mandate often **traverse multiple district boundaries**.
- **Treaty settlement obligations and Mana Whakahono ā Rohe are legally binding** arrangements, and any amalgamation must consider how these obligations would be carried forward, which entity or entities would hold them, and how continuity of relationship would be maintained through a period of significant change.
- The main risk is **damaging established iwi and hapū relationships** during a critical period, as organisational disruption could undermine long-standing trust and progress, requiring new partnerships to be rebuilt post amalgamation.

Iwi and Hapū Relationships



Honouring our obligations, building lasting partnerships

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

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

The Whanganui District sits within a rich and complex iwi and hapū landscape. Horizons maintains relationships with various iwi, hapū and associated entities in the district, including Ngā Tangata Tiaki, Ngā Rauru Kītahi, Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa, Te Korowai o Wainuiārua, Te Nehenehenui, Ngāti Rangī, Te Atihānui a Pāpārangi, Ngāti Maru, Ngāti Maniapop, Te Runanga o Tūpoho, Tamaūpoko Rūnanga, and Whanganui Lands Settlement Trust.

In 2024-25, the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team (named Te Pae Kōuka) undertook 226 engagements with iwi and hapū across the region, with 34 of these — 15% — in the Whanganui District.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$726,768

Rates collected for this activity in the Whanganui District: \$94,682

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

People and relationships

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

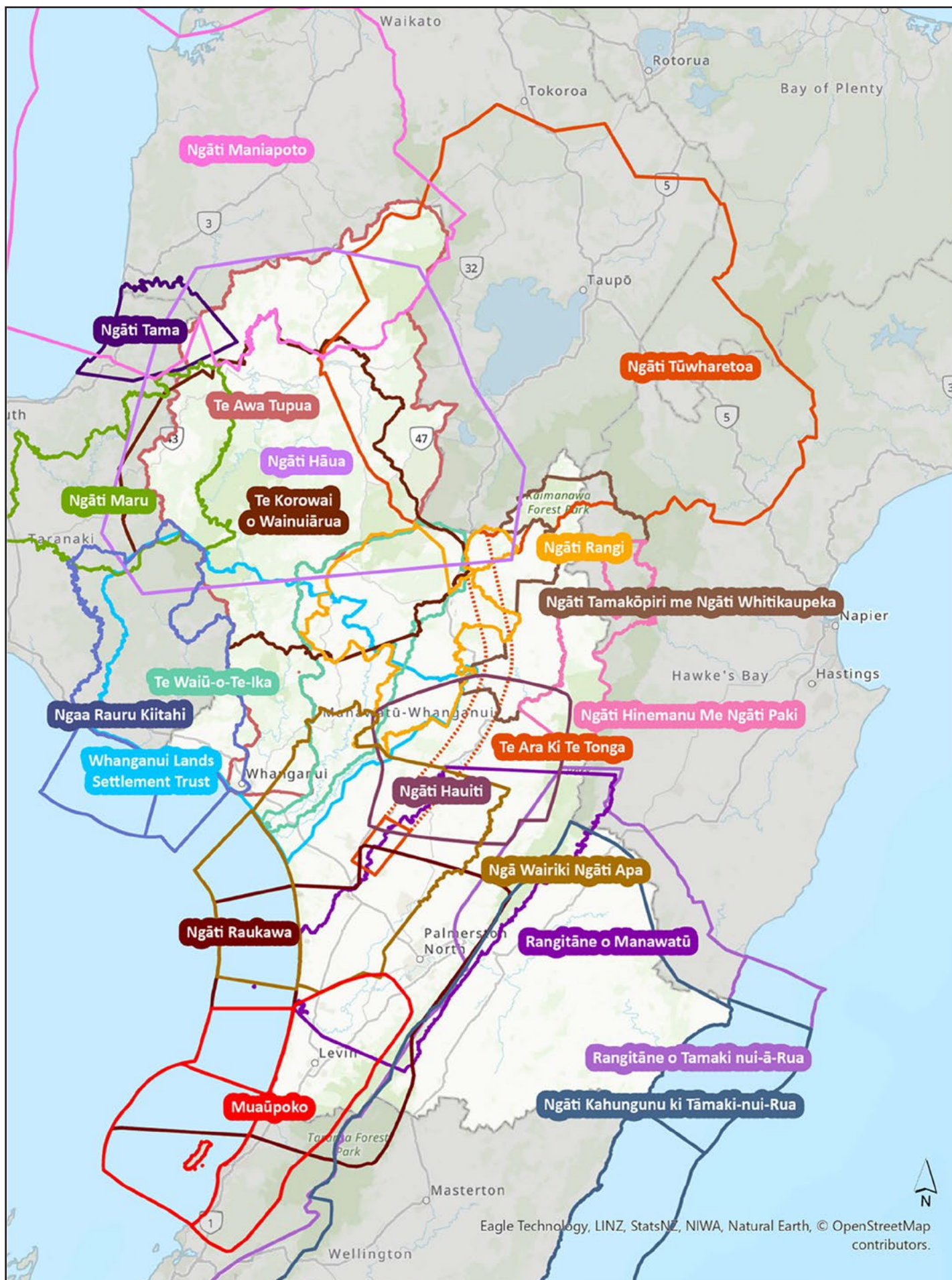
Key relationships in the Whanganui District include iwi and hapū (including hapū collectives), Ngā Tangata Tiaki, Te Kopuka and Whanganui District Council's iwi relations, emergency management, and policy teams.

Key considerations for delivery models

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

A key legislative requirement within the Whanganui district is the Te Awa Tupua Treaty Claims Settlement Act, which places specific administrative requirements on Horizons Regional Council relating to the administration of Te Kōpuka and development of an Action Plan to give effect to Te Heke Ngāhuru. In addition to Te Awa Tupua, the Whanganui District is also within the rohe of the Ngāti Rangi Claims Treaty Settlement Act, which also places specific secretariate requirements on Horizons Regional Council. These obligations include administering Ngā Wai Tōtā, supporting development of Te Tāhoratanga, and endeavouring to fund unbudgeted requests from Ngā Wai Tōtā to support its operation. Treaty settlement obligations and Mana Whakahono ā Rohe arrangements – a tool designed to assist tangata whenua and local authorities to discuss, agree and record how they will work together under the Resource Management Act (RMA) – are formal, legally binding commitments. Any structural change arising from amalgamations needs to carefully consider how these obligations would be carried forward, which entity or entities would hold them, and how continuity of relationship would be maintained through a period of significant organisational change.

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



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



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