

Mahere Whānui

2024-2034

Long Term Plan

A guide to the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan and
the mahi we do at Waikato Regional Council

To be read in conjunction with the consultation document

10

He taiiao mauriora

Healthy environment

He hapori hihiri

Vibrant communities

He ōhanga pakari

Strong economy

Tuatahi ake, kia tau iho mai te manaakitanga
o te wāhi ngaro ki runga ki tēnā, ki tēnā o tātou

Whakahōnoretia te Kīngi Māori a Tūheitia me te
whare kāhui ariki nui tonu – paimārire

Kia tau tana manaakitanga ki ngā rangatira puta
noa i te motu

Tangihia atu rā ngā mate o te wā, haere, haere,
haere atu rā

E mihi kau atu ana ki ngā tūtohu whenua, me
ngā tūtohu wai

Ngā hau marangai ki uta, ngā ngarungaru e
papaki ana ki tai

E ngā reo, e ngā mana, e rau rangatira mā

Tīhei mauri ora ki te whei ao ki te ao mārama.

May the protection and life force of the spiritual
realm reside with each and every one of us

We honour the Māori king, King Tūheitia and his
lineage – goodness and peace

May his token of regard reach the esteemed
across the land

We mourn those who have passed, as they
depart to the next world

We acknowledge the paramount landscapes
and waterscapes

The eastern winds that flow across the land, the
coastal waves the crash on the shores

To one and all, the esteemed and the prestige

Behold, the breath of life, from the dawn to the
world of light.

Toitū te taiao, toitū te rohe o Waikato

Growing a resilient Waikato region

We love where we live in the mighty Waikato and we want to make it even better by working with iwi and hapū across our rohe.

Every three years we develop a long term plan, which sets the budget and the areas of work we will focus on for the decade ahead.

It's guided by our strategic direction – [Takatū Waikato | Making a stand for the Waikato](#) – and the feedback we receive through public consultation.

Other influences that guide its development include the changing needs and expectations of communities as well as central government legislation.

Our rohe has also faced some big challenges in recent times, including COVID-19, extreme weather events and a cost-of-living crisis.

While we have been able to navigate these challenges, we know we need to be ready to face fresh challenges and to seize new opportunities.

So, we've developed a long term plan with growing the resilience of our rohe in mind: for a healthy environment, vibrant communities and a strong economy.

Mō te Mahere Whānui

About the long term plan

Our 2024-2034 Long Term Plan – known as the LTP for short – sets our direction for the next 10 years, with a focus on the first three.

It's where we set out the mahi we're going to do, the money we're going to spend to get it done and the impact this will have on rates.

That's why we've produced this document. It shares some of the mahi we have planned to enable iwi and hapū to get involved.



Find out more about the LTP on our website waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp

Mō te whakawhiti

kōrero ā-tūmatanui

Public consultation

The LTP proposes mahi that will impact on rates, so everyone has an opportunity to have their say.

This year, there are five specific kaupapa we're seeking feedback on, including increasing our natural heritage rate; collecting a regional rate for public transport; discontinuing the Regional Development Fund; reviewing funding for Te Waka – the region's economic development agency; and, making changes to the funding of primary industry compliance.

For further details on what we're proposing and to share your views, go to waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp. Consultation is open from 2 April to 2 May.

The whakaaro and kōrero shared with us will be used by councillors to make a final decision on the mahi we will focus on over the next 10 years and how it will be paid for.

Mō tēnei tuhinga

About this document

While you can find the details on what we're proposing and the rates implications on our website, waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp, the intent of this document is to share information on some of the mahi we're planning to do over the next 10 years and in particular, activities that may be of interest to you and how to get involved.

Not everything you read here is a consultation topic, but there's a section in the submission form which gives you the chance to provide feedback on any aspect of the LTP.

To make it easier, we've divided this mahi into groups of activities which we'll explain further.

The LTP presents an opportunity for us to work together to make the Waikato even better.

Tō Waikato, kia wana.

Mō ngā mahi e haere ake nei

What's happening and when

Our proposals

- Increasing our natural heritage rate
- Collecting a region-wide public transport rate
- Discontinuing the Regional Development Fund
- Funding for Te Waka – the region's economic development agency
- Changes to the funding of primary industry compliance

**2 April
to
2 May**

Consultation

Consultation is open for you to tell us what you think about our proposals.

Hearings

You can present your feedback to councillors in person (if you wish).

Details will be available online at waikatoregion.govt.nz/council-meetings/council. All meetings are open to the public.

**14-17
May**

**24-29
May**

Decision making

Councillors make decisions on the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan.

Your feedback will be taken into account along with other submissions from across the region.

Final decision

The 2024-2034 Long Term Plan is adopted.

A copy will then be made available online at waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp.

**25
June**

Kiritaki, hapori me ngā ratonga

Customer, community and services

The *Customer, community and services* group of activities aims to empower our communities to participate in the work that we do.

At Waikato Regional Council, we recognise that iwi and hapū have perspectives, values and obligations that approach natural resource management in a different way.

These perspectives need to be considered as part of resource management policy development and decision making as well as in activities that protect and enhance our taiao.

Whai wāhi ai a Ngāi Māori Iwi Māori participation

We support a Treaty of Waitangi-based partnership approach in our engagement with iwi and hapū throughout the rohe.

The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) requires local authorities to consider how they can foster the development of Māori capacity to contribute to their decision making processes. **Our commitment** is captured by our co-governance and co-management agreements with various iwi as a result of Treaty of Waitangi settlements with the Crown. In some instances, this includes joint management agreements between iwi and Waikato Regional Council on the way we will work together.

We've also established Te Hōtaka Manaaki, a council-led programme designed to address the increasing demands for iwi engagement while recognising the growing gaps in the ability of iwi to respond effectively to these demands. Its primary objective is to facilitate meaningful and effective engagement between the council and iwi, improve collaborative decision making processes and foster better relationships and outcomes for all parties involved.

Iwi environmental management plans – documents developed by iwi to address resource management activity of significance in their tribal area – also provide a formal way for iwi interests to be incorporated into the council's decision making.

Ā mātou mahi

We're enabling iwi Māori participation in the work that we do with an extra resource in our internal **Tai-ranga-whenua** team.

As a council, we're focused on building the capability and confidence in our organisation to effectively partner with iwi Māori. By strengthening these relationships, we increase the ability of iwi Māori to input into strategy and policy development, leading to better outcomes for iwi and hapū and the wider community.

We'll also continue to implement strategies, frameworks and education programmes designed to increase staff and councillor capability to effectively engage with iwi Māori.

Ngā mahi whakamahere, whakamōhio Planning and reporting

We will produce high-quality and fit-for-purpose long term plans and encourage participation by our communities.

A long term plan is one of the main planning tools we use to help shape and improve our rohe. It's also an important mechanism for engaging with our communities and ensures accountability and transparency.

For iwi and hapū, providing input into the development of a long term plan is an opportunity to influence decision making and to assess whether our policies and services are achieving their intended objectives.

However, we know participation in council processes takes time and effort, and your ability to get involved varies depending on time and resources.

So in line with our requirements under the Local Government Act and our commitment to a partnership approach, we will ensure different methods of engagement are utilised to make participation as easy as possible.



He mana tō reo, make sure to share your views on what we're proposing in this LTP at [waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp)

Ngā mahi hei ārai, hei ārahi hoki i ngā waipuke

Flood protection and control works

The *Flood protection and control works* group of activities is focused on safeguarding public and private assets while maintaining our natural environment.

River and stream stability, soil stability and flooding are influenced by natural events and human activity over an entire catchment. As a regional council, we're responsible for managing multi-million dollar flood protection and land drainage assets that safeguard communities and support a thriving economy.

Replacing some of these assets and the ongoing operating and maintenance costs will require significant investment in the years ahead. But doing so will also require consideration of the effects of climate change and the protection of ecological, cultural, social and economic values.

With our future generations in mind, this work will require working with others, including iwi and hapū, landowners, other councils and central government agencies to develop nature-based solutions that address climate change risks and to lobby for funding.

Ārai waipuke Flood protection

We will continue to manage our flood protection infrastructure while ensuring our taonga species can continue to thrive.

Our **flood protection schemes** have an important job. They protect our people, schools, marae, roads and other vital resources by helping to minimise the risk of flooding, erosion and other hazards associated with rivers, streams and their catchments.

Protection is achieved through a network of stopbanks, floodgates, pump stations, spillways and channels. We know some of these schemes can have a negative effect on our taiao, such as preventing the safe passage of native fish species, particularly tuna.

Investment through the LTP will help us to come up with ways to help build resilience in the system and continue our work with communities to deliver initiatives that enable the rehabilitation and preservation of our river ecosystems and their taonga species.

Ā mātou mahi

We're giving native tuna safer pathways to the sea by replacing old flood pumps with fish-friendly versions.

Our latest pump, installed at the council's pump station at Huntly golf course, successfully passed a 1.2-metre-long shortfin eel with seven more tuna passing through.

The installation of fish-friendly pumps is an outcome of our **Pathways to the Sea Programme**, which is part of our regional fish passage strategy for flood protection infrastructure. The strategy helps councils plan their approaches to managing the downstream impediments to fish migration, guide decision making around future investment in flood protection assets and meet current and future legislation.

Two more fish-friendly pumps are due to be put in at the council's Churchill East pump station and at Hampton Downs this year.

Awakeri hekenga wai Land drainage

We will enhance the draining schemes in our rohe with transformational thinking and innovation.

Waikato Regional Council provides a drainage service for flat rural land in the Lower Waikato, Waipā, Central Waikato, West Coast and Waihou-Piako zones. This service covers approximately 1493 individual drains, totalling 2063 kilometres across 84 separate drainage areas.

These drainage networks are essential for sustaining pastoral farming, benefiting approximately 172,000 hectares of land (about 7 per cent of the region's total area) by taking water from the land to river channels.

The council is responsible for maintaining drains on behalf of the landowners – a service funded by targeted land drainage rates.

Te whakahaere riuwai

Integrated catchment management

The *Integrated catchment management* group of activities focus on improving our natural environment and preventing the loss of natural amenity for the benefit of our region's communities.

Our natural environment and its native plants and animals are an important part of our way of life. But these environments and taonga species are being threatened.

That's why we've focused a lot of attention and mahi on the restoration and enhancement of our indigenous habitats and ecosystems as well as in the appropriate control of pest species. This mahi is seen in policy creation, environmental monitoring and research, compliance and enforcement activities as well as restoration activities with our communities.

Rerenga rauropi

Biodiversity

We will work with our communities to protect, maintain and enhance our unique taonga species.

Biodiversity helps clean our air and water, provides food security, protects us from flooding and also helps to regulate our climate. Unfortunately, the basic information we've collected tells us we are still losing some of our indigenous biodiversity that is unique to our rohe. This is due in part to human activity, the degradation of habitats as well as urban creep.

But we also know reversing biodiversity loss is possible, but it requires increased and concerted action by the council and everyone who calls the Waikato rohe, home. In this LTP, we're seeking greater investment in our **biodiversity** efforts so we can go further in protecting and restoring our region's unique plant, animal and marine life. But most importantly, we can empower communities to safeguard the taonga they cherish.

To further enable this mahi, we are looking to develop a biodiversity accord with our iwi partners, local councils and central government agencies. The accord seeks to formalise a commitment from all parties to work together to coordinate and align activities and to develop an overarching biodiversity strategy for the region.

Ā mātou mahi

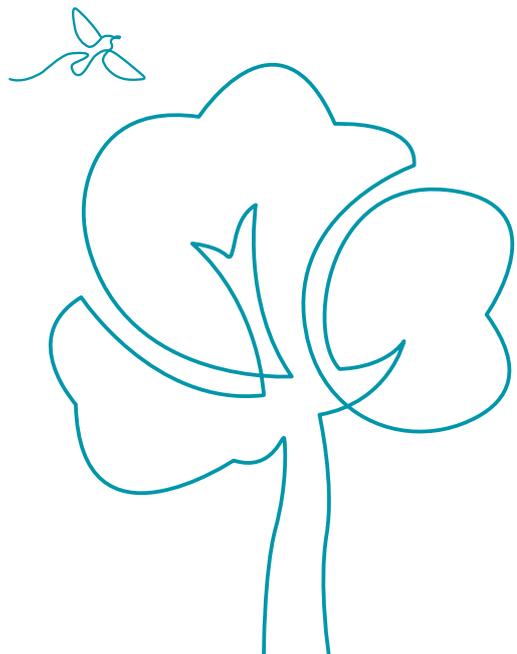
We're investing more in our region's biodiversity through our **Natural Heritage Partnership Programme**.

Since the programme's inception, its three contestable funds have supported a number of worthwhile community-led conservation projects, including planting projects, predator control, community engagement, sustainability programmes and marae-based social enterprises. Some bigger ecological restoration projects have also received funding from us too.

We're proposing to increase the funding available to community groups carrying out work to protect and restore our region's unique plants, animals and marine life, and the indigenous ecosystems they live in.



We're proposing to increase our natural heritage rate. Find out more and share your views online at waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp



Tiakitanga taiao

Biosecurity

We will carry out activities designed to prevent, mitigate or minimise the impacts of pest species.

Biosecurity is our strategic and integrated approach to protecting our taiao and its taonga species from harmful organisms, like pests and diseases. As a regional council, we are responsible under the Biosecurity Act 1993 for providing biosecurity leadership within the Waikato rohe to ensure we protect our way of life, our natural and productive resources, and our biodiversity from the effects of harmful organisms.

To fulfil our role and ensure the regional biosecurity system is cohesive, we work closely with mana whenua, communities, central and local government, and other key agencies and groups. Some of the multi-stakeholder mahi that will be boosted by the LTP include koi, wilding pine and kauri management programmes as well as activities to stop the spread of invasive species like caulerpa (invasive seaweed), alligator weed and corbicula (freshwater clam).

There will also be additional support across a range of biosecurity and biodiversity programmes in specific areas of our rohe, such as Taupō and the Coromandel Peninsula.

Ā mātou mahi

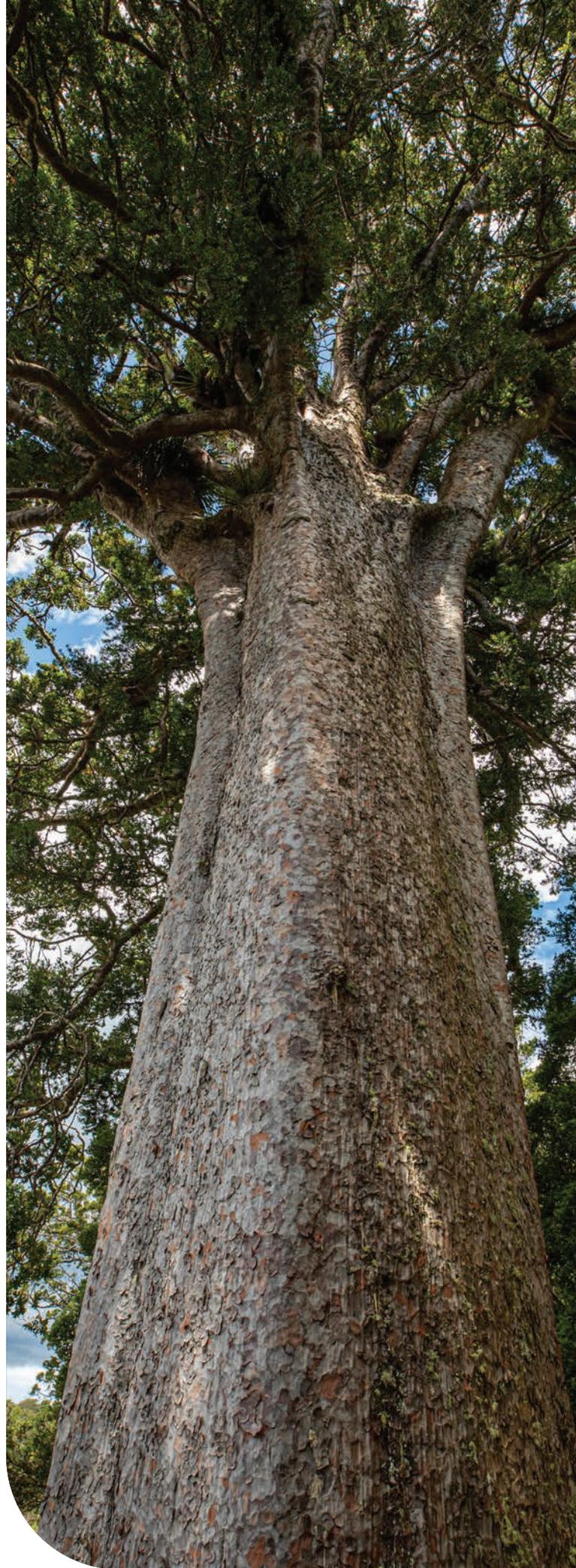
We're helping to protect kauri – a nationally significant taonga, in the Waikato rohe.

Living between 1000-2000 years and growing to immense proportions, kauri are 'ecosystem engineers', creating habitats and homes for our native species, including plants, birds and insects.

The kauri of the Waikato are found in the Coromandel Peninsula and Kaimai, Hunua and Hākarimata ranges as well as Kāwhia and surrounding areas. These remnant and regenerating populations of kauri have survived past logging and clearance but are now under threat from a kauri disease (formally referred to as kauri dieback disease).

Our **Kauri Protection Programme** promotes and advocates for the protection of this taonga through a wide scope of work that includes science and research, behavioural change and on-the-ground works and operational activities.

The overall aim of the programme is to engage with specific communities, including rural landowners, schools and kura, iwi and hapū, community group members, stakeholders and industry groups, to spread the key messages around kauri protection in a positive way.



Te whakamahinga o te taiao

Resource use

The *Resource use* group of activities enable the use of natural resources to support a strong economy while also protecting their intrinsic value and ensuring their enjoyment by future generations.

At Waikato Regional Council, we are responsible for regulating the use of the region's natural resources by granting and monitoring resource consents to ensure any environmental impacts are minimised or managed appropriately.

We also respond to complaints and pollution incidents and look after our region's harbours and waterways.

While this mahi enables the council to meet its statutory obligations, it's also supported by community-led education programmes that are delivered to encourage behavioural change and foster sustainable thinking communities.

Ngā whakaaetanga me te tūtohutanga

Regional consents and compliance

We will provide efficient and effective consenting and ensure monitoring enables lawful use of natural and physical resources.

As you know, **resource consents** are permits that allow the use or take of water, land or coastal resources. They also allow the discharge of water or wastes into air, water or onto land.

When considering consent applications, we take into account the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the special relationship Māori have with the whenua or the natural resources affected.

Resource consents include conditions to protect people and the environment. At Waikato Regional Council, we monitor consented activities to ensure compliance and consent conditions are being met.

>> We're proposing a change to the way we fund our primary industry compliance activities. If you have a property 20 hectares or greater, find out more and share your views online at [waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/ltp)

Ratonga waka moana

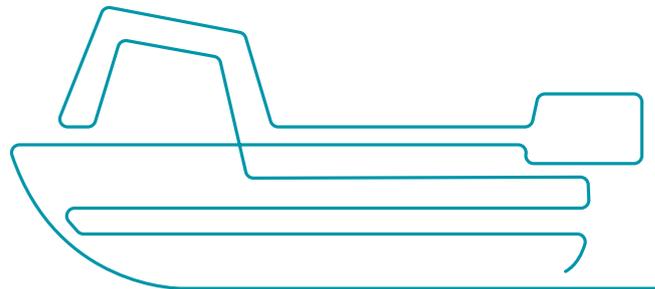
Maritime services

We will continue to maintain safe and navigable waterways, protecting the people who use them.

It's really important recreational boaters, including jet ski and paddle craft users, know and follow water safety rules. Through the LTP, we're increasing the capability of our **Maritime Services** team to enhance the safety of water users enjoying the coastal and inland waterways of our rohe.

There are an estimated 160,000 recreational boaters using our waterways so with more maritime officers on hand, we can promote boating best practice and enforce the safe and navigable use of waterways.

Our maritime officers also help remove hazards like logs and drifting vessels, maintain navigation aids and markers, and dispose of wrecks and derelict vessels, ensuring our waterways are safe for everyone to enjoy.



Whakaakoranga i te hapori Community education

We will deliver education programmes that enhance environmental learning to bring about behavioural change.

Environmental education plays a vital role in fostering a more environmentally conscious and sustainable society.

For us at council, it provides the opportunity to raise community awareness of environmental issues, foster a sense of responsibility for environmental stewardship, and promote sustainable practices and lifestyles.

Our environmental education programmes – **Kura Waiti ki Kura Waitā** and **Waikato EnviroSchools** – are delivered in kura and schools across our rohe. We also work in partnership with community groups like **landcare** and **coastcare** to further support the wellbeing of our taiao.

Ā mātou mahi

We're continuing our mahi to advance mātauranga Māori in environmental education to help retain, revitalise and share the wisdom and tradition of tangata whenua with rangatahi.

Delivered in te reo Māori, our **Kura Waiti ki Kura Waitā programme** has involved 13 kura so far and reached nearly 200 rangatahi who have experienced a place-based learning programme on the Waikato River and Hamilton Lake. By delivering unique environmental learning with a strong Māori cultural lens, we are helping to build confident, resilient and proud advocates for te taiao.

This year, we'll be expanding the programme by delivering one day wānanga on the moana in Whāingaroa on the west coast.



Pūtaiao, kaupapahere me te mōhiohio

Science, policy and information

The *Science, policy and information* group of activities focus on preserving and improving the health of our taiao through the gathering of robust data and designing of effective policy.

A significant aspect of the work we do involves building a collective knowledge base about our environment that can help decision makers, both in the council and in other parts of the community. By enhancing our understanding, we can collectively manage things more effectively and ensure sound decisions are being made.

Our teams are dedicated to collecting, analysing, interpreting and translating information on our natural resources, communities and economy. The insights gained are then used to shape policy and guide the use of natural resources while enabling us to address emerging issues and tackle new challenges as they arise.

Ngā mahi tūtohu

Environmental monitoring

We will provide decision makers and the community with high quality and timely data.

Monitoring and reporting on the **state of the Waikato environment** is a core activity for the council as it helps to maintain ecological balance, safeguard human health and ensure the sustainable use of our natural resources for future generations.

The work we do covers air quality, water quality, soil health, biodiversity and more. The LTP will provide a boost to this work with increased investment in specialised monitoring equipment and new work programmes, as well as additional staff.

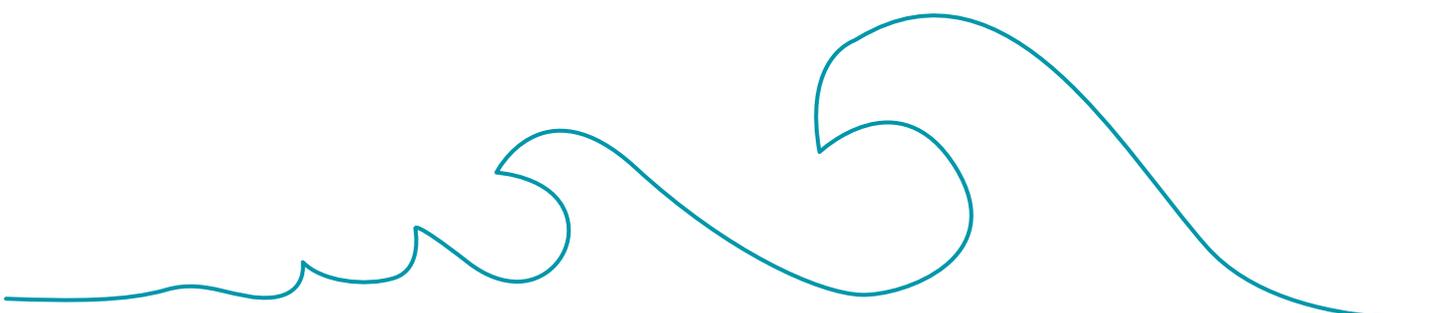
The areas of work we'll focus on include the region's coastal marine areas and peat soils. We'll also be able to up our reporting on the current state of the environment to ensure environmental changes are quickly identified and evidence-based solutions are implemented.

Ā mātou mahi

We're stepping up our **coastal water quality monitoring** in the Firth of Thames to help us better understand links between the state of estuarine and river systems.

The Firth has been classified as degraded and in the **Proposed Waikato Regional Coastal Plan** it will become a statutory responsibility to ensure that it doesn't degrade any further. To aid its recovery, regular monitoring will generate data and wider understanding on how the Firth changes over time, leading to more effective decision making. This mahi also provides an opportunity to partner with local iwi and hapū to explore mātauranga Māori in the context of environmental reporting.

We'll also expand the current focus on estuaries to include rocky reefs and other subtidal habitats that are impacted by human activities. This programme will cover both coasts of the Waikato rohe and provide baseline data essential for comparison over time.



Ngā mahi pūtaiao me te mōhiohio

Science and information

We will provide decision makers and the community with insights and evidence to support appropriate responses to existing and emerging environmental issues.

Science is the backbone of what we do at Waikato Regional Council. It provides objective information on the health and wellbeing of our rohe, including the environment and it's people.

The insights gained are then used to develop policy to preserve and improve the health of our taiao and guide the sustainable use of natural resources for future generations. Insights are also used to develop consent conditions, flood warning systems and thresholds for water allocation.

Our rohe has about 83,000 hectares of **peat soils** – of which about 65,000 hectares have been drained, mostly for productive purposes such as pastoral agriculture, cropping, horticulture and peat mining.

Drainage of peat results in land subsidence and carbon dioxide emissions. It also impacts management and sustainability of the council's flood protection and drainage infrastructure, and how the land can be used.

We recognise tangata whenua as being key to effective peatland management as they hold mātauranga of traditional peatland uses.

Our mahi to incorporate these perspectives will be supported through the LTP as we look to engage with local iwi and hapū to understand and incorporate traditional peat uses into future peatland management opportunities. This mātauranga, along with robust science information, will also inform meaningful discussions around land use.

Ā mātou mahi

We're looking into our region's peat soils to identify ways to help preserve this taonga.

Peat soils are an important natural resource and represent a significant store of soil carbon for the Waikato.

We know the **drainage of peat** results in land subsidence and carbon dioxide emissions, but the long term cultural, social, economic and environmental consequences of this activity remains unknown.

So to better understand the resource, we've been probing the region's peaty soils and at the same time, looked at traditional knowledge and international literature to identify opportunities to reduce and stop subsidence and greenhouse gas emissions.

Through the LTP we'll be able to build on this mahi as we'll be testing some of the identified opportunities, in collaboration with iwi and hapū, landowners, scientists, and experienced land and drainage managers. Then we'll use the data to develop an updated, science-based good practice guide and decision-support tool to promote improved long term management of drained peatland in the Waikato.

Ā mātou mahi

We're continuing our mahi with communities to improve the health and wellbeing of Whangamarino Wetland and Lake Waikare – a site of international significance.

Poor water quality and sediment and nutrient loads to the lake and wetland are affecting these special areas. Pest plant and animal species have also invaded these environments causing further degradation, a loss of biodiversity and reduced cultural and recreational value.

Over the next two years, we'll define and test options to reverse degrading trends and support long term rehabilitation of Whangamarino Wetland and Lake Waikare through development of a multi-stakeholder agreement on a catchment action plan.

Our work supporting landowners to reduce erosion will continue with funding for fencing and planting. We are also continuing to work with the Department of Conservation and Te Riu o Waikato on koi initiatives in the lower Waikato, including Lake Waikare.

He whakaraupapa o ētahi mahi kē

Other mahi you may be interested in

The below information provides an overview of other mahi that will continue as part of this LTP.

➤ Rautaki Tiaki Wai Water Security Strategy

Protecting and improving water is consistently the number one environmental concern for our communities. The [Water Security Strategy for the Waikato Region](#) builds on national and local water security initiatives to identify a roadmap for a coordinated regional response to changing water security. It recommends the development of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder and regional-scale water security management plan to identify roles and responsibilities in addressing the significant water security challenges facing our rohe, and to establish partnerships to implement appropriate solutions.

➤ Mahere Whaitua ā-Rohe Regional Spatial Plan

We're taking the first step towards a spatial plan for the whole region with the aim of providing a strategic approach to planning that coordinates policies across local boundaries and enables greater efficiencies, ensuring that development is sustainable, balanced and meets the needs of our rohe. The mahi will require pulling together a cross-section of people to get an integrated view of the region, encompassing things like housing, transportation, climate change impacts, economic development, environmental and cultural aspirations, health, infrastructure, and more.

➤ Te Arotake Kaupapahere Waimāori Freshwater Policy Review

In December 2023, the new National-led coalition government amended the statutory timeframe for notification of the [Freshwater Policy Review](#) from December 2024 to December 2027. The Government also indicated that there will be changes to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM), including rebalancing the hierarchy of obligations in Te Mana o te Wai. Our staff are currently assessing the impact of these amendments on the review and will make recommendations in the coming months.

➤ Te Mahere Takutai Moana ā-Rohe o Waikato e Marohitia Nei Proposed Waikato Regional Coastal Plan

Public submission on the [Proposed Waikato Regional Coastal Plan](#) closed in November 2023 and we anticipate a hearing of submissions to be held in late 2024, meeting our legislative requirements. Over the last five years, the council carried out a review of its coastal plan to respond to issues that have emerged since it became operative almost 30 years ago and to address legislative changes and national and regional policy direction. Feedback was sought from iwi and hapū, coastal residents and users, central and local government agencies, and industry to update and further refine plan provisions.



He taiao mauriora ▲ **Healthy environment**

He hapori hihiri ▲ **Vibrant communities**

He ōhanga pakari ▲ **Strong economy**

ISSN 2230-4339 (Print)
ISSN 2230-4347 (Online)
March 2024 #7502

Private Bag 3038, Waikato Mail Centre,
Hamilton 3240, New Zealand
0800 800 401 waikatoregion.govt.nz