



Waimakariri Natural Environment Strategy Our Environment - Our Future Summary







Photo Credit: David Baird

Vision

Our healthy and resilient natural environment sustains our ecosystems, our communities and our future.

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Strategic Goal We work together to ensure Waimakariri's natural environment is valued, protected, restored and celebrated.

 Strategic Direction 1 Prioritise nature	 Strategic Direction 2 Connect people and nature	 Strategic Direction 3 Improve our knowledge	 Strategic Direction 4 Sustain and create resilient ecosystems
<p>Desired Outcome The District's natural environment is valued as critical infrastructure, essential to our wellbeing and the survival of other species we share Earth with.</p> <p>Natural ecosystems are a significant feature of the Waimakariri District.</p> <p>There is better integration of the natural and built environment.</p>	<p>Desired Outcomes Living in a healthy natural environment enriches our everyday life and we work together to achieve and maintain this.</p> <p>People understand and value indigenous biodiversity and natural ecosystems.</p> <p>Residents have a 'sense of place' or connectedness to the District's natural landscape.</p> <p>Our community understands how it can contribute to and become actively involved in protecting, restoring, and recreating natural ecosystems.</p>	<p>Desired Outcomes Tangata Whenua knowledge and practices are recognised, respected and encouraged.</p> <p>We have the knowledge to effectively protect and restore our natural ecosystems.</p>	<p>Desired Outcome The District's natural ecosystems are self-sustaining, healthy, resilient, and connected from the mountains to the sea.</p> <p>A greater proportion of vegetation cover in the District is indigenous.</p> <p>There is no further loss or degradation of Significant Natural Areas (SNAs).</p> <p>Urban vegetation, including street trees, is valued by the community as making a significant contribution to urban resilience, human health, and environmental sustainability.</p>
<p>Strategic Actions Integrate planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the circle of influence in infrastructure and district planning • Advocate for a holistic approach <p>Mainstream biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure biodiversity is prioritised as a key Council activity • Move from grey to green • Create spaces for nature 	<p>Strategic Actions Make it easy to connect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities to bring together people and biodiversity. • Ensure education programmes, activities, and resources are available. • Look for opportunities to partner with and support others. • Encourage people to physically connect with the natural environment. <p>Rediscover and make our indigenous landscape visible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the proportion of indigenous planting on Council reserves and streetscapes. • Support the achievement of 10% indigenous biodiversity in the wider landscape. 	<p>Strategic Actions Know what we have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the assessment, monitoring, and reporting of biodiversity values on public and private land. <p>Understand future challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out research, and work with research partners, community groups and landowners to fill knowledge gaps and understand challenges • Identify the impacts of key trends on the natural environment. 	<p>Strategic Actions Protect what we have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a climate change natural environment mitigation and adaptation programme. • Reduce the pressure in high value indigenous ecosystems by improving the wider environment. • Provide support for SNA landowners and incentivise SNA protection. <p>Rebuild nature - more, bigger, better, and joined</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MORE - Create new natural environment sites to provide for future wellbeing. • BIGGER - Increase the size of existing indigenous flora and fauna sites. • BETTER - Improve the quality of the natural environment by better habitat management and promoting fauna-friendly practices. • JOINED - Enhance connections between, or join up sites.

Guiding Principles | Lead by example | Engage with others | Use best practice | Commit to action

About the Strategy

The Waimakariri Natural Environment Strategy (WNES) is Council's local response to the degradation of important natural ecosystems and species being reported across the world, including within our District.

Current global biodiversity loss is so great it is called the 'sixth extinction'. The biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis are acknowledged to be closely linked and healthy and diverse ecosystems can adjust more effectively to climate threats. The contribution nature-based solutions can make to buffering climate impacts by sequestering carbon and protecting built up areas is also reflected in the strategy.

All aspects of life in Aotearoa New Zealand rely on a thriving natural environment including our physical and mental health, economy, and culture. This strategy seeks to restore our connection to the natural world we are a part of so that we feel inspired to better protect it. We need to prioritise the protection and restoration of the natural environment not only for the ecosystems benefits it provides us and those who follow, but also for its own intrinsic worth. A world without dolphins, kiwi, tuatara and Kauri trees seems unimaginable but could become a possibility.

The strategy takes into account strategic directions outlined in the Local Government Act 2002 (4 wellbeings), National Adaptation Plan, National

Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, Aotearoa Biodiversity Strategy and others. It also compliments the work of other organisations such as Environment Canterbury's Zone Implementation Plan Addendum (ZIPA), Forest and Bird's 'Make Every Wetland Count' campaign, QEII Trust and the Waimakariri Biodiversity Trust.

The strategy currently consists of three documents plus a summary document which should be read in conjunction with one another.

Background documents



A Biodiversity SOE report describes the current state of indigenous biodiversity within the District and the challenges and opportunities foreseen over the next 30 years. It also provides an overview of biodiversity concepts and relevant legislation.

A review of Council reserve provision also informs the strategy. This will form part of a Reserves SOE report that identifies opportunities, in collaboration with local residents, for increasing natural values in reserves and streetscapes.

Strategy

Provides a high-level strategic framework to guide Council's work in protecting and restoring the natural environment over the next 30 years. Roles range from developing plans and carrying out the work, to supporting the efforts of others, educating people about the issues and opportunities, and advocating for change, both at a national and local level.

Action plan

Contains specific costed actions to be included in the Council's Long Term Plan for implementation between 2024 and 2034.



Purpose

The Waimakariri Natural Environment Strategy provides direction for the Council's future investment in protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems within the District, particularly its own business, plans and practices. It:

- Gives effect to international agreements and national legislation to protect indigenous biodiversity and mitigate/adapt to the effects of climate change
- Allows for kaitiakitanga and stewardship for future generations
- Enhances the natural values of Council's extensive reserve portfolio and other land owned and/or managed by the Council
- Recognises and supports the cultural practices of Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga
- Recognises and supports landowners as stewards for the natural environment, particularly those who have significant natural areas (SNAs) on their land
- Supports community organisations who are actively engaged in delivering the desired outcomes of this strategy.

White Road Reserve, Ohoka
This gravel extraction pit was developed as a wetland by the local community in the 1990's and now provides an important feeding and roosting area for waders and protected waterfowl such as Grey Teal, Scaup and Brown Teal.

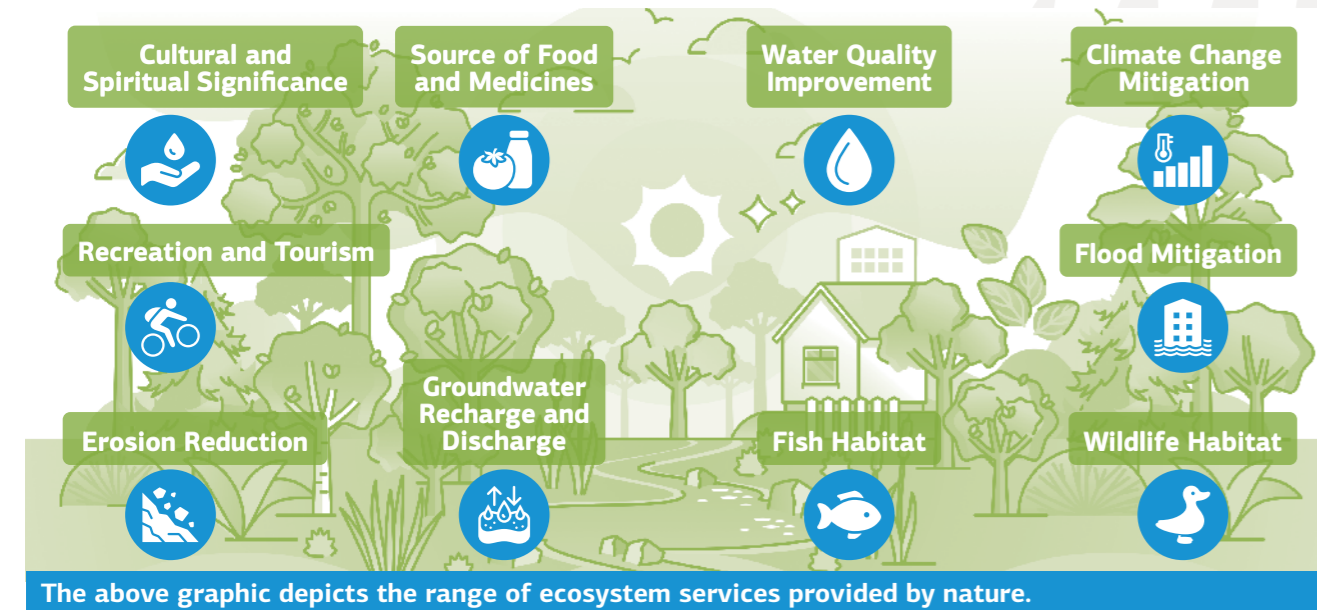


Matawai Park, Rangiora
Designed in the 1970's and developed by passionate and knowledgeable locals, this nationally recognised Scenic Reserve is an excellent example of the indigenous vegetation habitats found within the District.



Why it matters

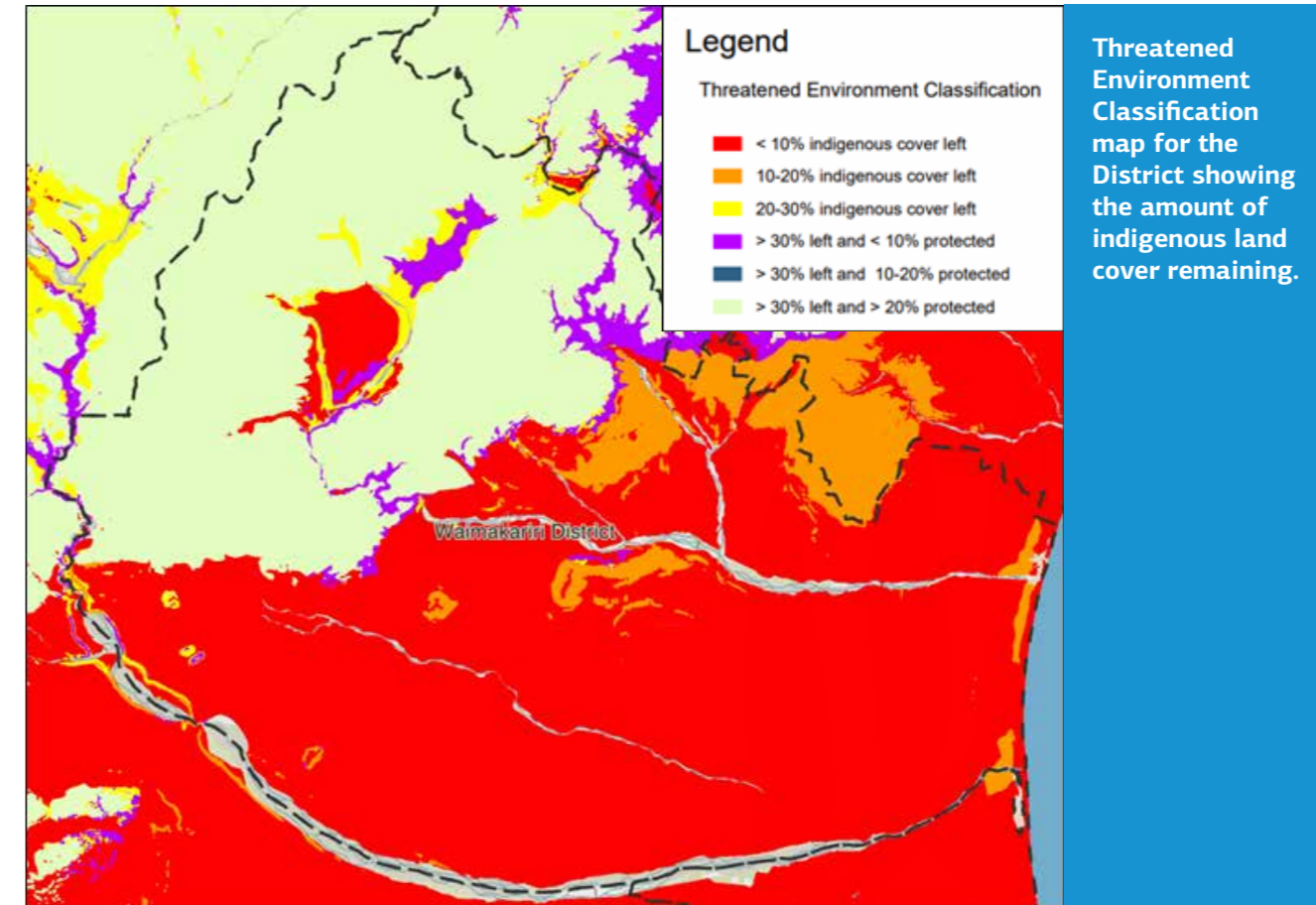
The natural world provides us with clean air and water, food, medicines, energy, materials, recreation, creative inspiration and a sense of place. This means our wellbeing and the wellbeing of those who follow us relies on the Earth's ability to sustain its life-supporting processes.



“Maintaining planetary health is essential for human and societal health and a pre-condition for climate-resilient development.”
 IPCC Chair, 2nd World Ocean Summit Asia-Pacific 2022

In Aotearoa New Zealand
 10% of wetlands remained in 2010 compared to pre-human existence.
 More than 3,200 of our known indigenous species are **threatened or at risk of extinction** partly due to habitat loss.
 MFE briefing for incoming ministers November 2023

Transforming our relationship with nature is the key to a sustainable future.



This map shows over half of the Waimakariri District has less than 10% indigenous cover left, reducing to less than 0.5% in some areas. Much of the indigenous biodiversity in the District is contained within small and fragmented sites that are “acutely threatened”. Entire ecosystems can collapse below a 10% threshold, putting our indigenous flora and fauna, and the ecosystem services they provide, at

significant risk. Extreme weather events and shifting climatic zones can also cause local extinctions. Planting new sites is expensive and they take a long time to mature. The protection and expansion of our naturally occurring, rare and special ecosystems is extremely important as it is difficult to reproduce the unique character and richness of the habitat that has been lost.

We need to reclaim our unique identity by protecting what remains and recreating degraded and lost ecosystems.

Jewelled gecko
 The Waimakariri is home to the threatened and stunning green jewelled gecko, *Naultinus gemmeus*. It can be found in trees or on the ground, in a range of habitats including forests, kanuka shrublands and tussock grasslands.



The Vision 2023–2053

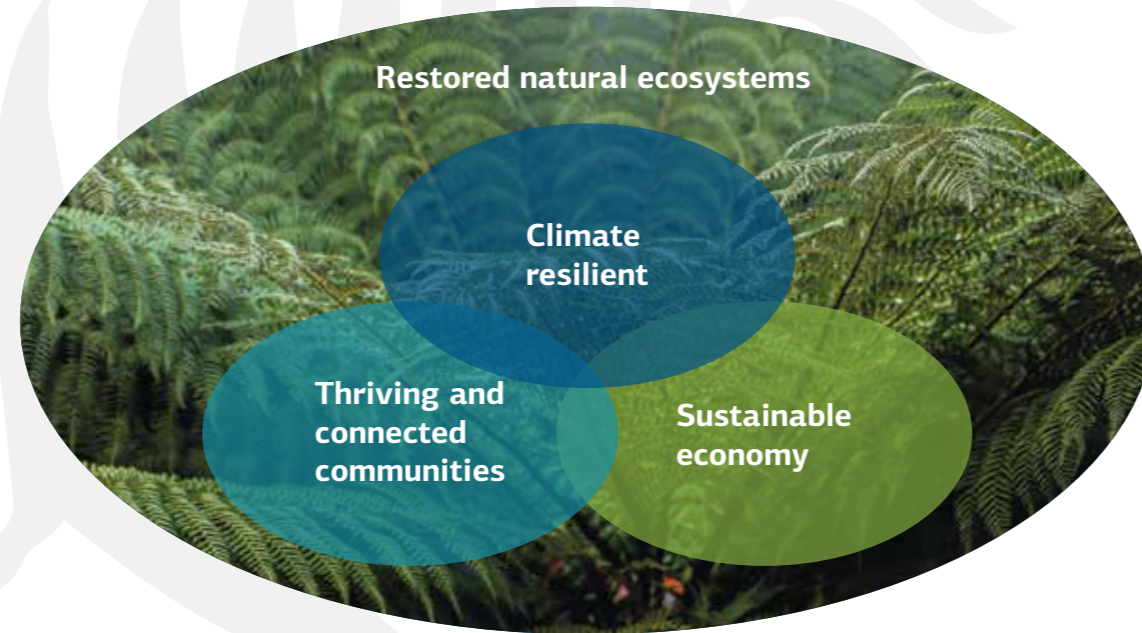
In 2001 the Council adopted a strategy for the District called Vision 2020. This document contained a vision for ‘a high-quality natural environment’ where natural ecosystems were a significant feature of the District and the land, water and air were healthy. A key strategic action was to ‘preserve natural ecosystems’ by:

- Supporting Kaitiakitanga – the duty of the tangata whenua to safeguard the life supporting capacity of the community’s natural resources
- Recognising that biodiversity is a highly valued resource
- Recognising the vulnerability of natural resources
- Identifying, protecting, and where appropriate restoring, and/or enhancing
 - Waterways and wetlands
 - Significant remnant native vegetation
 - Natural ecosystems
 - Significant habitats for indigenous fauna.

More than 20 years later these actions are still relevant with the need to protect our natural environment and indigenous biodiversity ecosystems even more important due to increased

pressures from population growth, land use change and climate change. The vision for the Waimakariri Natural Environment Strategy recognises the interrelationship between a healthy environment and thriving, healthy communities, and the need for us all to work together to

achieve this. The implementation plan that gives effect to this strategy demonstrates Council’s commitment to being a leader in the protection and enhancement of our natural environment, while working in partnership with, and actively supporting our community on the journey.



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Strategic Goal We work together to ensure Waimakariri’s natural environment is valued, protected, restored and celebrated.





Guiding principles

The following principles underpin this strategy and guide its implementation.

Guiding Principles | Lead by example | Engage with others | Use best practice | Commit to action

Key themes

The following four key focus areas have been identified for the strategy.

 <p>Strategic Direction 1 Prioritise nature</p> <p>This focus area is about recognising nature is core to our identity, lifestyle, wellbeing and economy and making space for it to thrive in our built-up and productive environments.</p>	 <p>Strategic Direction 2 Connect people and nature</p> <p>The more our community connects with nature the more we will respect, understand, and care for it. This focus area is about making it easy for people to be a part of nature and supporting those already engaged in protecting and restoring it.</p>	 <p>Strategic Direction 3 Improve our knowledge</p> <p>We need to know what we have to determine whether our actions are making a difference. This focus area is about developing baseline data, carrying out research to inform best practice responses to current and future challenges, and monitoring performance.</p>	 <p>Strategic Direction 4 Sustain and create resilient ecosystems</p> <p>This focus area is about making practical on the ground improvements to protect and restore natural ecosystems across the District.</p>
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Strategic direction 1: Prioritise nature

Desired outcomes:

1. The District's natural environment is valued as critical infrastructure, essential to our wellbeing and the survival of other species we share Earth with.
2. Natural ecosystems are a significant feature of the Waimakariri District.
3. There is better integration of the natural and built environment.

To succeed we need to:

- Understand the District's unique contribution to global biodiversity.
- Increase awareness of the importance of our natural areas for connection to place, and our community's social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing.
- Increase funding to protect and restore the natural environment.
- Understand and mitigate the effects of development on our natural environment.
- Ensure environmental impacts are factored into District development and infrastructure planning and management.

Strategic Actions:

1. Integrate planning by:

- Increasing the circle of influence in infrastructure and district planning.
- Advocating for a holistic approach.

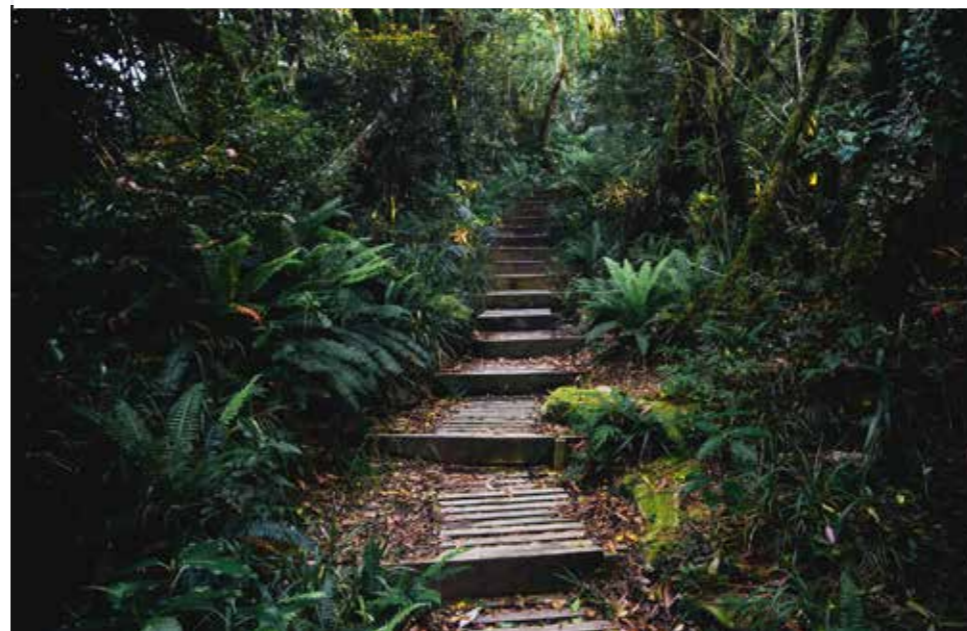
2. Mainstream biodiversity by:

- Ensuring biodiversity is prioritised as a key Council activity.
- Moving from grey to green.
- Creating spaces for nature.

The environment has different meanings for people, shaping the way they interact with it.



There is only one earth and one solution. The ultimate test for us and everything we do is: "Am I working with nature or against it?" Rod Oram 2023





Strategic direction 2: Connect people and nature

Desired outcomes:

1. Living in a healthy natural environment enriches our everyday life and we work together to achieve and maintain this.
2. People understand and value indigenous biodiversity and natural ecosystems.
3. Residents have a 'sense of place' or connectedness to the District's natural landscape.
4. Our community understands how it can contribute to and become actively involved in protecting, restoring and recreating natural ecosystems.

To succeed we need to:

- Assist our community to understand, appreciate and care for our natural environment.
- Encourage residents to become actively involved with environmental rehabilitation and enhancement projects.
- Maximise benefits, including value for money, by partnering with others.
- Celebrate biodiversity success stories – past, present, and future.
- Enable sustainable public access to the natural environment.
- Significantly increase the amount of indigenous biodiversity in the District's landscape.
- Integrate indigenous biodiversity with our urban form to ensure it is visible.

Strategic Actions:

1. Make it easy to connect by:

- Providing opportunities to bring together people and biodiversity.
- Ensuring education programmes, activities, and resources are available.
- Looking for opportunities to partner with and support others.
- Encouraging people to physically connect with the natural environment.

2. Rediscover and make our indigenous landscape visible by:

- Increasing the proportion of indigenous planting on Council reserves and streetscapes.
- Supporting the achievement of 10% indigenous biodiversity in the wider landscape.



The 'mere-exposure' effect

People connected to nature are more likely to advocate for the natural environment.

People joining in, caring for nature and each other.



Strategic direction 3: Improve our knowledge

Desired outcomes:

1. Tangata Whenua knowledge and practices are recognised, respected and encouraged.
2. We have the knowledge to effectively protect and restore our natural ecosystems.

To succeed we need to:

- Understand the District’s natural ecosystems and biodiversity indicators.
- Understand the impacts of activities on the District’s water catchments and any flow on effects.
- Understand the likely effects of climate change on the District’s biodiversity and how resilience can be promoted.
- Work in partnership with Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga to incorporate Mātauranga Māori into policies and actions.
- Work collaboratively with local, regional, and national organisations committed to transforming environmental outcomes.
- Use knowledge, science, data, and innovation to inform our work.

Strategic Actions:

1. Know what we have by:

- Continuing the assessment, monitoring, and reporting of biodiversity values on public and private land.

2. Understand future challenges by:

- Carrying out research, and working with research partners, community groups and landowners to fill knowledge gaps and understand challenges.
- Identifying the impacts of key trends on the natural environment.



iNaturalist NZ - Mātaki Taiao

A place where you can record what you see in nature, meet other nature watchers, and learn about Aotearoa’s natural world.

- 48,861 people signed up
- 1,865,227 observations to date
- 18,288 species observed



Through increasing natural environment information, people become more involved, empowered, and responsive.



Collaborative learning through citizen science



7-8.30pm
Wednesday
13 September

Presenter:
Bev Alexander,
Ashley-Rakahuri
River Group

Venue:
Waikuku Beach Hall





Strategic direction 4: Sustain and create resilient ecosystems

Desired outcomes:

1. The District's natural ecosystems are self-sustaining, healthy, resilient, and connected from the mountains to the sea.
2. A greater proportion of vegetation cover in the District is indigenous.
3. There is no further loss or degradation of Significant Natural Areas (SNAs).
4. Urban vegetation, including street trees, is valued by the community as making a significant contribution to urban resilience, human health and environmental sustainability.

To succeed we need to:

- Prioritise the protection of species and ecosystems that are internationally, nationally and regionally important.
- Prioritise the protection, restoration and enhancement of the District's most vulnerable and high-value ecosystems.
- Conserve, rehabilitate, extend, and connect biodiversity and wildlife corridors.
- Ensure waterways provide healthy and connected habitats for indigenous aquatic species.
- Have a joined-up response to managing our natural resource.
- Work in partnership with Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga to promote improved natural environment outcomes.
- Encourage and support action by landowners and community to protect, maintain, restore, and recreate indigenous biodiversity.
- Prioritise the planting of eco-sourced (where possible) indigenous vegetation over exotics on Council-owned land.
- Develop more of the Council's reserve land as self-sustaining natural ecosystems.
- Reduce biological threats and pressures through effective management.
- Implement climate change mitigation and adaptation action.
- Transition to maintenance practices that work in harmony with nature.
- Promote the ecosystem services provided by street trees to residents.

Strategic Actions:

1. Rebuild nature – more, bigger, better, and joined by:

- **More** - Creating new natural environment sites to provide for future wellbeing.
- **Bigger** - Increasing the size of existing indigenous flora and fauna sites.
- **Better** - Improving the quality of the natural environment by better habitat management and promoting fauna-friendly practices.
- **Joined** - Enhancing connections between, or joining up sites.

2. Protect what we have by:

- Implementing a climate change natural environment mitigation and adaptation programme.
- Reducing the pressure in high value indigenous ecosystems by improving the wider environment.
- Providing support for SNA landowners and incentivising SNA protection.



Implementation

2024-34 Long Term Plan

The Implementation Plan for this strategy contains 124 actions that could be carried out over the next 30 years. Actions programmed for 2024 to 2034 have been included in the Council's Long Term Plan (LTP). Over this ten year period an additional \$1.2m operational expenditure and \$2.9m capital expenditure has been provided to support the implementation of these actions.

Implementation Plan actions have been prioritised as following:

1. Meeting Council's legislative requirements (protecting remaining indigenous priority ecosystems).
2. Very Important (restoring and managing natural ecosystems, education).
3. Important (educating residents in general).

Many of the actions are business as usual for the Council and have been captured to guide Greenspace biodiversity work programmes over the next few years. In order to make further progress on environmental outcomes the Council significantly increased its expenditure on biodiversity in the 2021-24 LTP and this increased activity is reflected in the Implementation Plan.



Key projects from the 2021-24 Long Term Plan include:

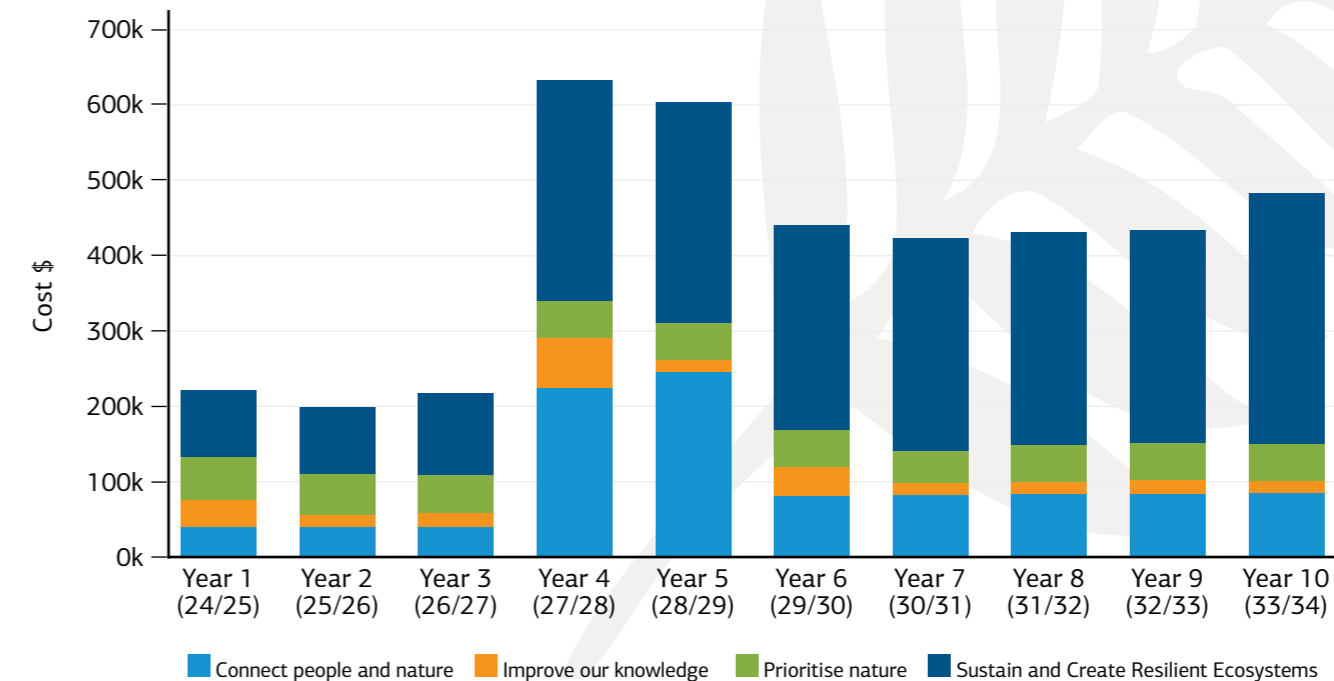
- Additional funding for SNA landowners in the form of rates relief and a contestable fund
- Funding to implement Arohaitia te Awa over 10 years
- Funding to support the establishment of the Waimakariri Biodiversity Trust

- Funding to provide access to the coast for people with restricted mobility
- Additional biodiversity staff resource.

In addition to these new projects, 85ha of wetland off Lineside Road was purchased by the Council in 2023 to cover a shortfall in its stated levels of service for Natural Parks.

Strategy actions funded in the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan

This graph includes all the Implementation Plan actions and shows the logical progression of activities from ensuring internal resources, processes and knowledge are in order, to concentrating on connecting people and nature, and then making on-the-ground ecosystem improvements.



Key Waimakariri Natural Environment Strategy implementation actions that have been funded in the 2024-34 Long Term Plan include:

- Operational funding for the Waimakariri Biodiversity Trust
- An annual contestable fund to support community-based environmental groups to implement strategy actions
- New education and research programmes
- An increase in Council biodiversity capability and capacity in light of increased legislative requirements arising from the recent gazettal of the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity
- New targets for additional tree planting to increase the size of urban tree canopies (approximately 12,000 more specimen trees by 2033) and increased indigenous biodiversity planting on Council reserves
- The development of the Lineside Road wetland
- Projects that increase access to the natural environment for those with restricted mobility
- An additional ranger to work with community groups, plant reserves and carry out pest and weed management
- Partnering in an integrated landscape-wide pest and weed control programme
- Developing more walking tracks at natural parks such as Ashley Gorge Reserve
- Part funding (with Department of Conservation) a new toilet at Coopers Creek.

Monitoring

Improving environmental outcomes takes time and the Waimakariri Natural Environment Strategy is intended to provide strategic direction for achieving this over the next 30 years. A key action is to identify, monitor and publicly report on biodiversity indicators for the Waimakariri District so progress can be tracked.

Review

The strategy document will be reviewed in eight years' time prior to the development of the Council's 2034 Long Term Plan.

The Implementation Plan needs to be flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances and priorities. This will therefore be reviewed every three years in line with LTP reviews to allow requests for funding to be considered by Council.





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