TARANAKI CATCHMENT COMMUNITIES — CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

TARANAKI
CATCHMENT COMMUNITIES

Kaupokonui
Catchment Strategy

A community-led approach to understanding and improving water quality across the Kaupokonui catchment. Building a strong evidence base to support future freshwater management and catchment action.

14,623 HECTARES OF LAND & WATER	**77%** PASTORAL LAND USE
10 yrs OF CONCERTED GROUP EFFORT	**1** INTEGRATED STRATEGY

KAUPOKONUI CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

ENVIRONMENT
INNOVATION
STRATEGY

TARANAKI
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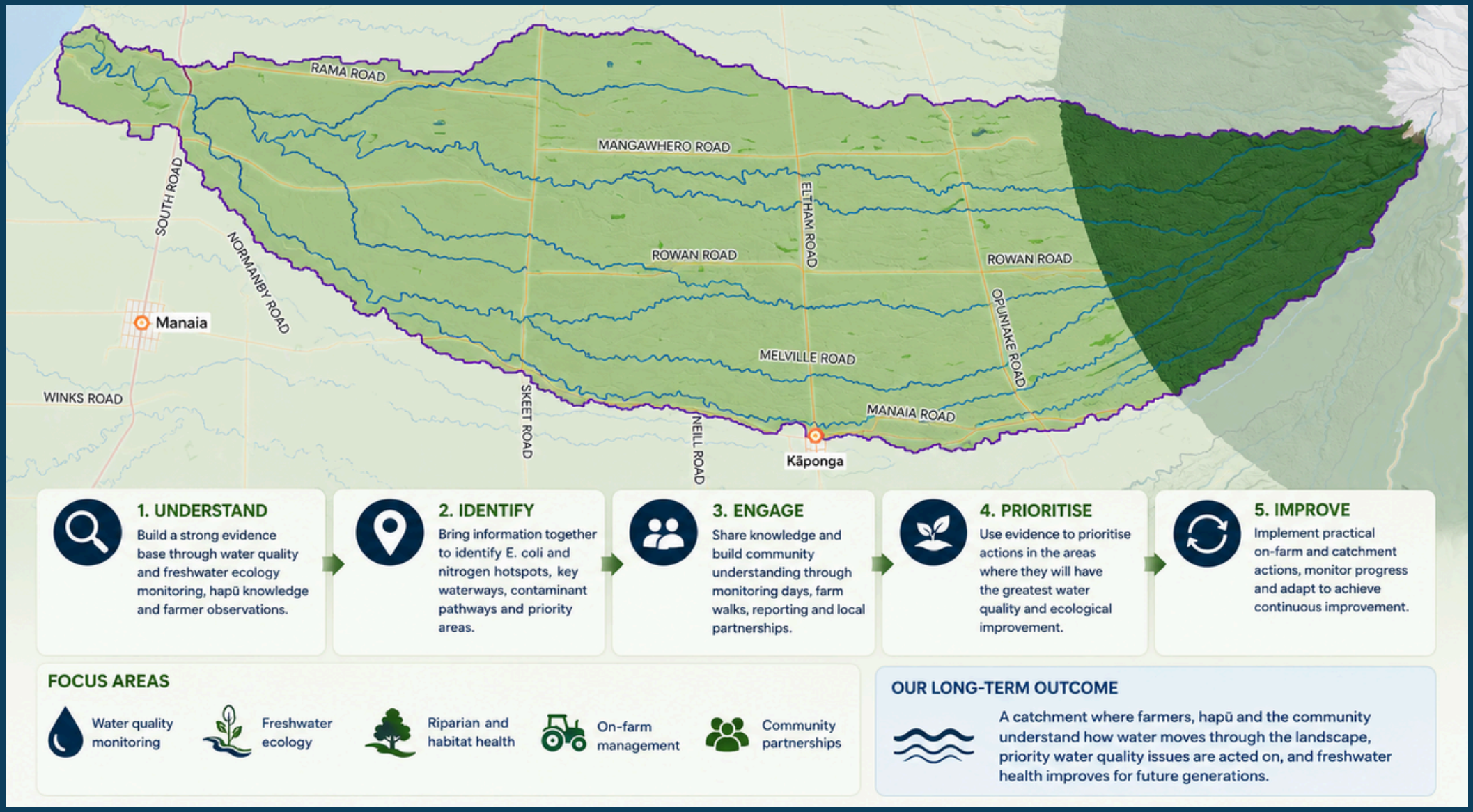
01: Objectives & Approach

ENVIRONMENT
INNOVATION
STRATEGY

Catchment Strategy Summary

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A community-led approach towards understanding and improving water quality across the Kaupokonui catchment. Building a strong evidence base to support future freshwater management and catchment action.



1. UNDERSTAND

Build a strong evidence base through water quality and freshwater ecology monitoring, hapū knowledge and farmer observations.

2. IDENTIFY

Bring information together to identify E. coli and nitrogen hotspots, key waterways, contaminant pathways and priority areas.

3. ENGAGE

Share knowledge and build community understanding through monitoring days, farm walks, reporting and local partnerships.

4. PRIORITISE

Use evidence to prioritise actions in the areas where they will have the greatest water quality and ecological improvement.

5. IMPROVE

Implement practical on-farm and catchment actions, monitor progress and adapt to achieve continuous improvement.

FOCUS AREAS

- Water quality monitoring
- Freshwater ecology
- Riparian and habitat health
- On-farm management
- Community partnerships

OUR LONG-TERM OUTCOME

A catchment where farmers, hapū and the community understand how water moves through the landscape, priority water quality issues are acted on, and freshwater health improves for future generations.

Catchment Strategy Logic

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

PRIORITY CONFIRMED

WATER & WETLAND QUALITY

Community priority: Build a shared understanding of water quality and freshwater health to guide future catchment action.

14,623	77%	10 YRS	COMMUNITY-LED & LOCALLY DRIVEN
HECTARES OF LAND & WATER	PASTORAL LAND USE	OF CONCERTED GROUP EFFORT	

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Build a catchment-wide evidence base that combines monitoring, hapū knowledge, farmer observations and science to identify priority issues, understand contaminant pathways and guide future action.

FOCUS AREAS

1. MONITOR

Build a baseline understanding of water quality and freshwater ecology.

- Water quality monitoring
- Freshwater ecology monitoring
- Biodiversity monitoring
- Hapū monitoring
- Existing agency data

2. UNDERSTAND

Bring information together to identify:

- E. coli hotspots
- Nitrogen hotspots
- Freshwater values
- Contaminant pathways
- Priority areas

3. SHARE

Turn information into practical knowledge.

- Maps and reporting
- Farm walks
- Monitoring days
- Demonstration sites
- Community engagement

4. TARGET

Use evidence to prioritise action.

- Critical source areas
- Riparian opportunities
- Habitat restoration
- Farm management changes
- Future investment

5. ADAPT

Monitor progress and improve over time.

- Annual review
- Ongoing monitoring
- Refine priorities
- Update actions
- Continuous improvement

LEARN • IMPROVE • REPEAT

HOW WE WILL WORK

- Farmer-led and locally relevant
- Evidence-based decisions
- Practical and achievable
- Partnership approach
- Learn and adapt over time

KEY ACTIONS (WHAT WE WILL DO)

YEARS 1–2

- Establish monitoring network
- Water quality blitz
- Freshwater ecology monitoring
- Community monitoring days
- Build partnerships
- Create baseline understanding

YEARS 3–5

- Continue quarterly monitoring
- Analyse trends
- Identify hotspots
- Map contaminant pathways
- Increase participation

- Target investment
- Prioritise restoration
- Guide future projects
- Support catchment-wide action

SUCCESS INDICATORS

- Monitoring network established
- Catchment health understood
- Priority areas identified
- Community actively involved
- Data translated into practical decisions
- Future actions guided by evidence

LONG-TERM OUTCOME



A catchment where farmers, hapū and the community understand how water moves through the landscape, priority water quality issues are identified and acted upon, and freshwater health improves through targeted, evidence-based action.



Catchment Objective

A community-led approach towards understanding and improving water quality across the Kaupokonui catchment. Building a strong evidence base to support future freshwater management and catchment action.

ABOUT KAUPOKONUI AND THIS CATCHMENT STRATEGY

The Kaupokonui catchment is a productive pastoral landscape extending from the slopes of Taranaki Maunga to the coast. The catchment supports farming, indigenous forest, significant freshwater ecosystems and a highly connected stream network.
Community feedback identified water and wetland quality as the highest priority for the catchment. Workshop participants also highlighted the need for improved understanding of water quality conditions and stronger connections between people and waterways.
This strategy responds by focusing on a coordinated water quality monitoring programme that builds a shared understanding of catchment health and provides a foundation for future action.

SUCCESS INDICATORS: SHORT TERM

- A comprehensive water quality and freshwater ecology programme has been set up.
- The catchment group has a clear understanding of the state of freshwater in the catchment.
- Locally led projects and actions have been identified and mapped.
- Catchment data, hapū monitoring, farmer knowledge and agency information are brought together to guide future action.

SUCCESS INDICATORS: MEDIUM TO LONG TERM

- Water quality changes have been identified and objectives set, for example: E. coli and nitrogen trends are moving toward national bottom lines in priority areas.
- Farmers can see how water quality information links to practical on-farm decisions.

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02: What Makes Kaupokonui Great

ENVIRONMENT
INNOVATION
STRATEGY

Catchment State

Biophysical character

The Kaupokonui catchment covers approximately 14,623 hectares and is dominated by highly productive volcanic soils derived from Taranaki maunga. The catchment contains extensive pastoral land use, indigenous forest in the upper catchment, and a network of streams connected to the Kaupokonui Stream and the Tasman sea.

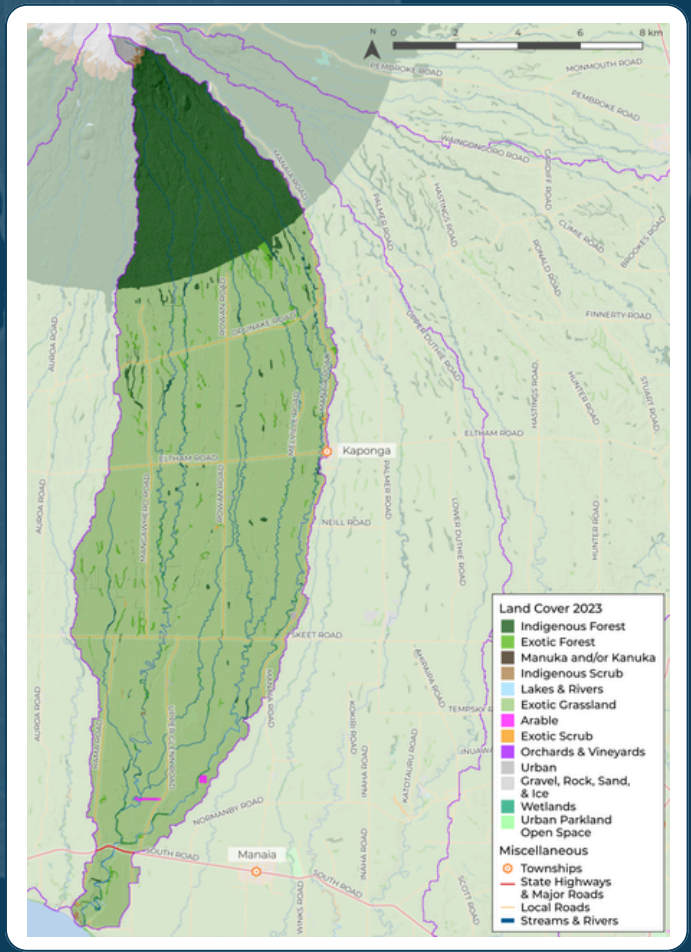
LAND AND WATER

- Strong groundwater to surface water connectivity influences water movement.
- Productive volcanic soils generally retain phosphorus well.
- Water quality conditions may vary considerably throughout the catchment due to soils and geology.
- Upper catchment waterways generally show good ecological condition.

WATER QUALITY SUMMARY

- Limited monitoring means many current conditions remain poorly understood.
- General monitoring indicates good ecological condition in upper catchment areas.
- Ecological condition declines downstream.
- Swimming water quality issues occur near the coast.
- Further monitoring is needed to identify priorities and trends

CATCHMENT BOUNDARY



Community Context

Local Action

The Kaupokonui catchment currently has relatively low levels of organised catchment-wide action, but there is strong interest in improving environmental outcomes. Existing efforts include pest control, biodiversity work, hapū-led initiatives and individual landowner action.

KEY PROGRESS OPPORTUNITIES

- Establish a water quality monitoring network.
- Involve landowners in sampling.
- Build partnerships with agencies and schools.
- Improve understanding of freshwater ecosystems.
- Create a stronger sense of catchment identity.



FRESHWATER FISH SPECIES

Many NZ fish species are found within the Kaupokonui catchment, many of which require a connection to the sea to complete their life cycles.

- Shortjaw kōkopu – Threatened (Nationally Vulnerable)
- Lamprey (piharau) – Threatened (Nationally Vulnerable)
- Torrentfish – At Risk (Declining)
- Koaro – At Risk (Declining)
- Shortfin eel – Not Threatened
- Redfin bully – Not Threatened
- Bully (unspecified) – Not Threatened (species dependent)
- Kōura – Not Threatened
- Freshwater shrimp – Not Threatened

Local Feedback

ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

Good Management Practices	26%
Biodiversity	28%
Water and wetland quality	46%
Flood and weather resilience	0%

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Protect & enhance economic viability	0%
Support locally-led initiatives	36%
Strengthen agency collaboration	27%
Build community knowledge	37%
Raise the profile of rural management	0%

ENVIRONMENT INNOVATION STRATEGY

Key issues & pressures

WHAT SHAPES THE STRATEGY

Water quality pressues

E.COLI

E. coli concentrations are high in the downstream monitoring site. Likely risk areas include stock access points, wet paddocks, drains, runoff pathways and areas where contaminants can move quickly to waterways during rainfall.

NITROGEN

Most of the catchment has low to very low modelled nitrogen leaching susceptibility. Further monitoring is required to understand nitrogen patterns and identify any areas where nitrogen concentrations may be increasing downstream.

Landscape & ecological pressures

RIPARIAN CORRIDORS

Many waterways in the mid and lower catchment have limited riparian vegetation, reducing shade, bank stability, habitat value and contaminant filtering. This creates a clear opportunity for targeted riparian enhancement in areas where planting will provide the greatest water quality and biodiversity benefit.

FRESHWATER CONNECTIVITY

Despite water quality pressures, the catchment still supports freshwater mussels, lamprey, kōura, galaxiids, giant kōkopu, brown mudfish, longfin eel and other native species. This shows the catchment retains important ecological connections, which can be strengthened through targeted habitat, riparian and water quality actions.

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03: Implementation

ENVIRONMENT
INNOVATION
STRATEGY

Priorities & Phases

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID — AND HOW THE STRATEGY RESPONDS

Priorities were identified through the Kaupokonui Catchment Workshop (March 2026). The voting results below shaped the focus of this strategy, weaving together a practical, farm-focused approach that meets both environmental and community priorities.

A Staged Knowledge-Building Approach

The strategy begins by building a clear picture of water quality across the catchment. Through coordinated monitoring and community involvement, the catchment group will establish a baseline understanding of current conditions and identify areas where obvious actions should be undertaken and those areas requiring further investigation.

This knowledge will provide the foundation for future catchment actions, ensuring decisions are guided by local evidence and shared understanding.

Phase 1: Years 1–2 — Build understanding and start action

- Water quality blitz
- Establish monitoring network
- Identify priority sites
- Build partnerships
- Begin biodiversity monitoring

Phase 2: Years 3+ — Target action to the main pathways

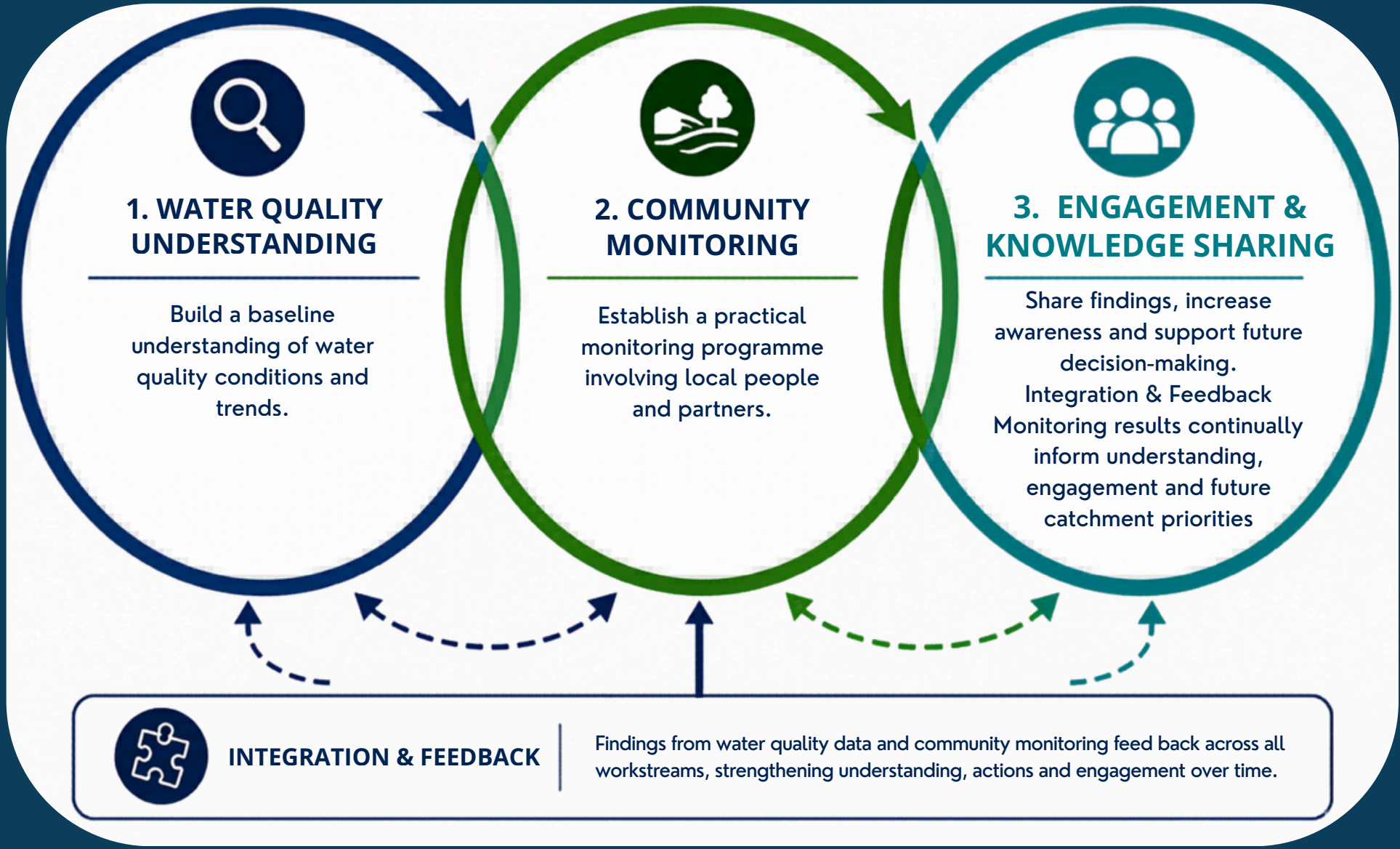
- Continue quarterly monitoring
- Analyse trends
- Improve understanding of contaminant sources
- Increase community participation

Phase 3 (Years 5+) - Inform Future Action

- Identify priority management areas
- Target investment
- Guide restoration activities
- Adapt and improve over time

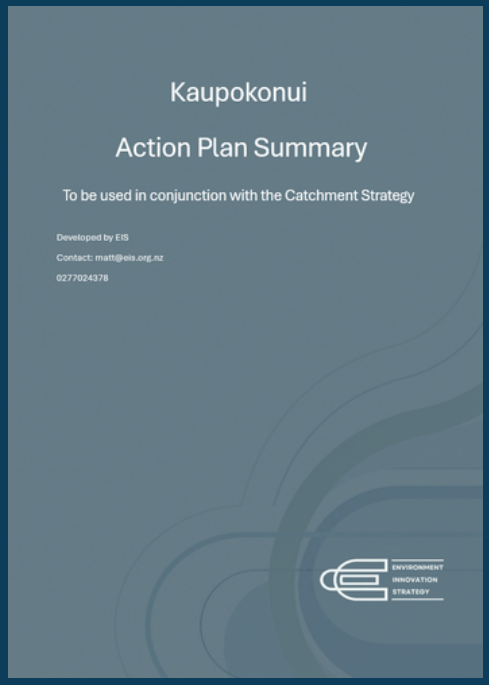
Meet Outcomes

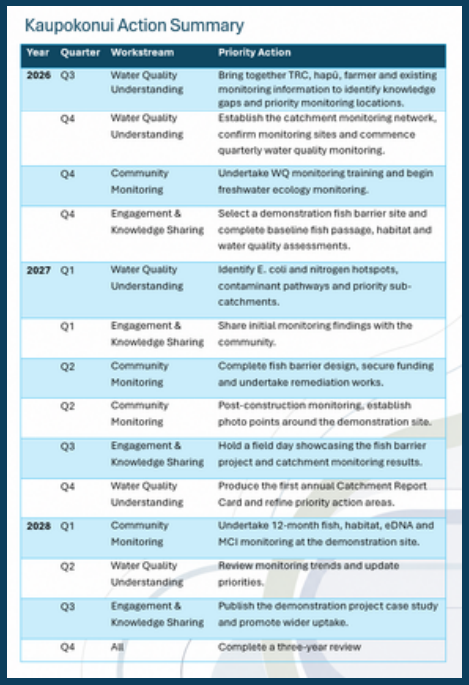
THROUGH ALIGNMENT OF THREE WORKSTREAMS ACROSS DIFFERENT SCALES OF ACTION



Action planning is a live approach

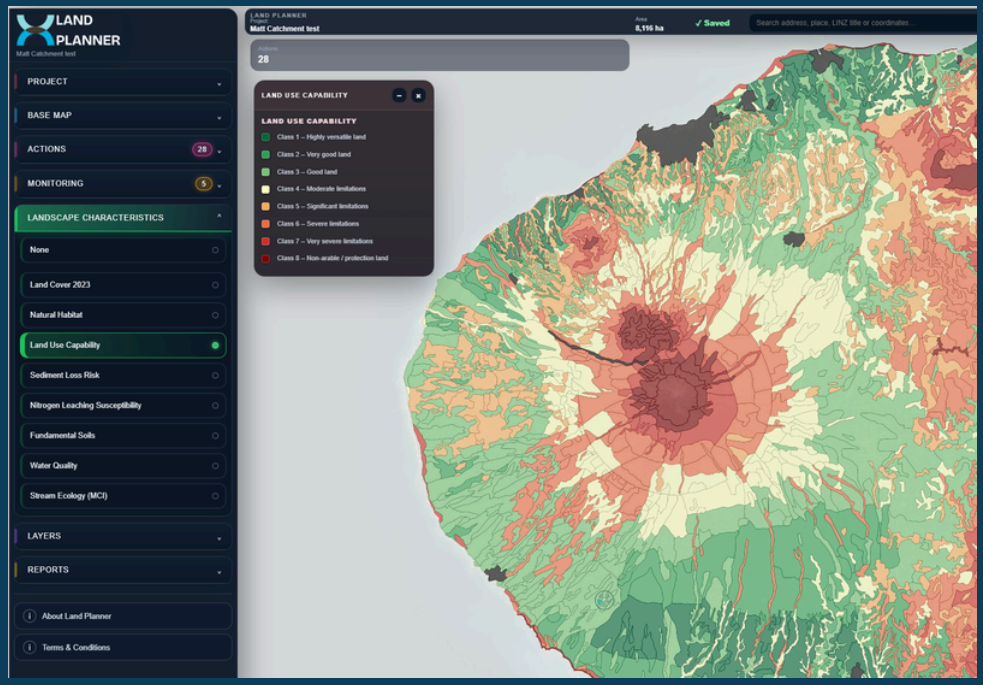
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Kaupokonui Action Summary

Year	Quarter	Workstream	Priority Action
2026	Q3	Water Quality Understanding	Bring together TRC, hapū, farmer and existing monitoring information to identify knowledge gaps and priority monitoring locations.
	Q4	Water Quality Understanding	Establish the catchment monitoring network, confirm monitoring sites and commence quarterly water quality monitoring.
	Q4	Community Monitoring	Undertake WQ monitoring training and begin freshwater ecology monitoring.
	Q4	Engagement & Knowledge Sharing	Select a demonstration fish barrier site and complete baseline fish passage, habitat and water quality assessments.
2027	Q1	Water Quality Understanding	Identify E. coli and nitrogen hotspots, contaminant pathways and priority sub-catchments.
	Q1	Engagement & Knowledge Sharing	Share initial monitoring findings with the community.
	Q2	Community Monitoring	Complete fish barrier design, secure funding and undertake remediation works.
	Q2	Community Monitoring	Post-construction monitoring, establish photo points around the demonstration site.
	Q3	Engagement & Knowledge Sharing	Hold a field day showcasing the fish barrier project and catchment monitoring results.
	Q4	Water Quality Understanding	Produce the first annual Catchment Report Card and refine priority action areas.
2028	Q1	Community Monitoring	Undertake 12-month fish, habitat, eDNA and MCI monitoring at the demonstration site.
	Q2	Water Quality Understanding	Review monitoring trends and update priorities.
	Q3	Engagement & Knowledge Sharing	Publish the demonstration project case study and promote wider uptake.
	Q4	All	Complete a three-year review



Actions planning for this catchment has been templated by EIS into a word document. The key for this approach is that action planning:

- Remains live
- Discussed at regular intervals by the group
- Is adjusted as resources change
- Notes budget requirements for actions
- Includes monitoring and how to tell the story

The Land Planner Software will be avialable for TCC use in September 2026. This will enable visualisation of data, access to monitoring data, planning of actions and reporting.

LAND PLANNER

ENVIRONMENT INNOVATION STRATEGY

Build a Foundation of Understanding

Phase 1 of this workstream develops a clear, shared understanding of water quality across the catchment. It brings together the catchment group's water quality monitoring, Āu Kahu hapū SMAK and flow data, farmer observations, agency information and the Massey University bioreactor trial.

The purpose is to identify water quality trends, E. coli and nitrogen hotspots, understand likely sources and pathways, and agree where action should be focused first.

Targeted monitoring should only be used where important gaps remain. The emphasis is on turning information into practical insights that support on-farm decision-making and Farm Environment Plans.



Actions across multiple scales

Individual / Landowner

Share what you know
Share local observations, farm data and water quality knowledge. Farmer knowledge helps explain what monitoring data alone cannot show.

Walk the farm in wet weather
Notice where water moves during rain, where paddocks stay wet, and where flow paths connect to drains or streams.

Use findings in your FEP
Use water quality findings to confirm or update priority actions in your Farm Environment Plan.

Local / Community

Bring together existing monitoring
Combine SMAK, flow, water quality, farmer and agency information into one shared catchment picture.

Identify hotspots and pathways
Use combined information to identify E. coli and nitrogen hotspots, priority sub-catchments, and likely contaminant pathways.

Fill monitoring gaps only where they exist
Use targeted monitoring only where gaps are preventing clear decisions about priority areas or actions.

Whole Catchment

Translate findings into practical information
Share results through simple maps, summaries and farm-relevant guidance.

Agree priority areas for action
Use the shared evidence base to agree where, farm management, CSA action, nutrient management and future investment should focus first.

Build a big picture
Develop a clear picture of where contaminants are coming from, how they move, and where actions will have the greatest impact.

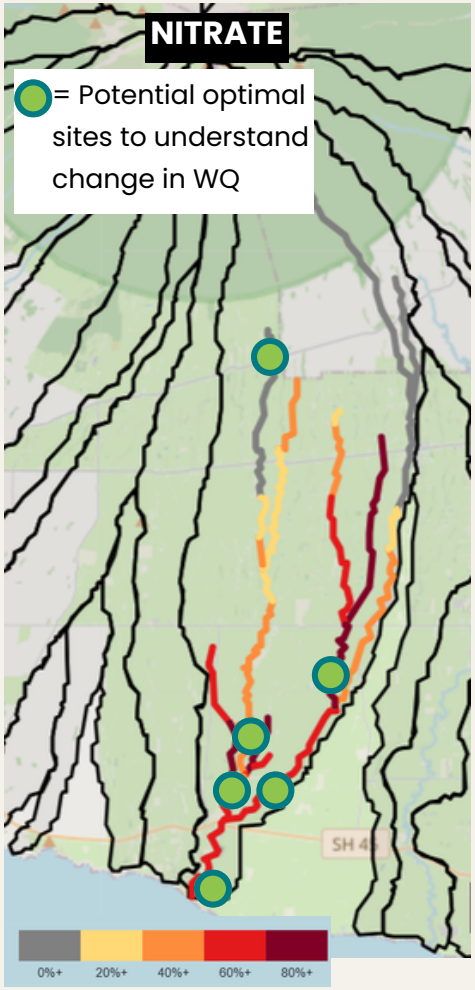
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04: Measuring success

ENVIRONMENT
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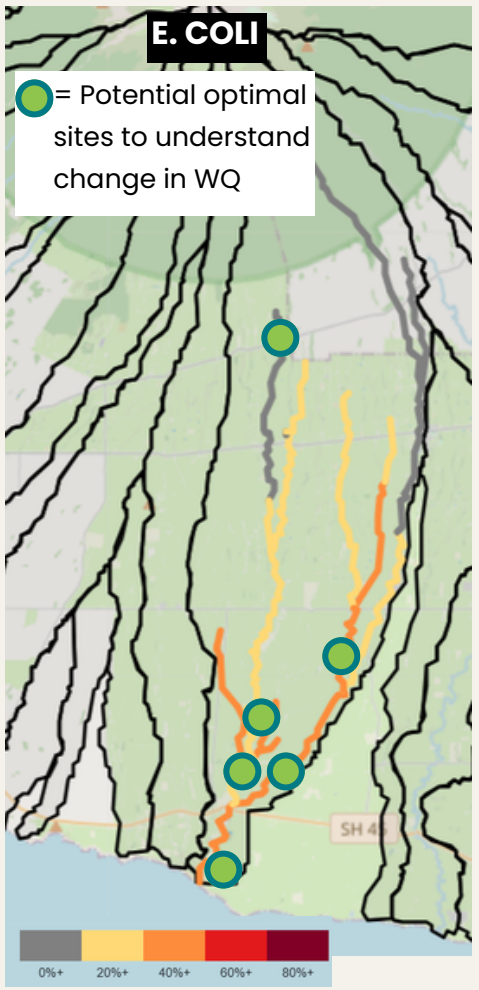
MONITORING

Water Quality - Optimal Monitoring



Water quality (WQ) monitoring in this catchment should focus on areas that help differentiate the sub catchments and can measure change through time. The images below show the Our Land and Water change detection tool, showing likelihood of detecting change over a 5 year sampling period, sampling monthly. For the highest priority contaminants there is a high likelihood of detecting change over that sampling period, assuming that good management practices are implemented in the above catchment areas. The minimum recommended sampling should be implemented in the below sites (green dots). These sites should:

- Be easy and relatively safe to access as (e.g., from bridges).
- Differentiate sub catchments in the catchment to help differentiate change.
- Will show change and trends before or at 5 years.



ADDITIONAL MONITORING CONSIDERATIONS

- Gather data from other sources and partners to get the best picture of the area as possible.
- Supplement data with information on farm actions, photo points and case studies
- Build in other freshwater monitoring, partciularly ecological understanding (like eDNA, MCI and Fish)
- Build in focused monitoring around action areas as required to support communication extension and learning.

MONITORING

Monitoring Dashboard Example

CATCHMENT SUMMARY

This dashboard shows the latest water quality results across the Kaupokonui Catchment.

Focus is on E. coli and nitrogen (DIN) which are key indicators of water quality.

Use the map and charts to understand where pressures are highest and where action should be prioritised.

WATER QUALITY STATUS

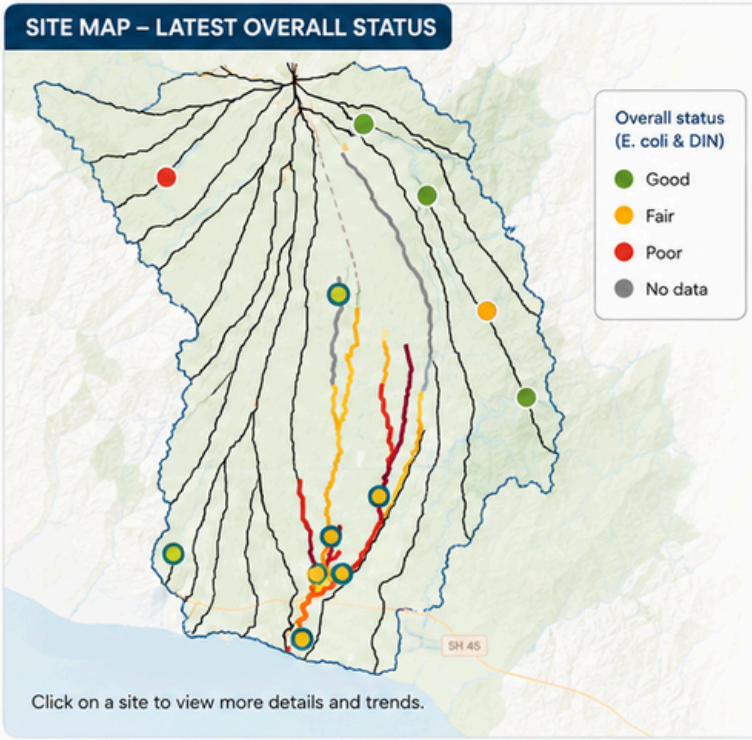
- Good (meeting guideline)
- Fair (watch)
- Poor (over guideline)
- No data

GUIDELINES (ANZ 2022)

E. coli 95th percentile	**540** cfu/100 mL
DIN Median	**0.26** mg/L

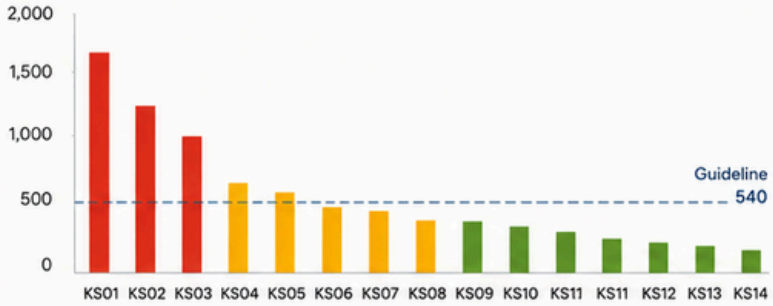
Guidelines shown for rivers and streams (lowland).

SITE MAP – LATEST OVERALL STATUS

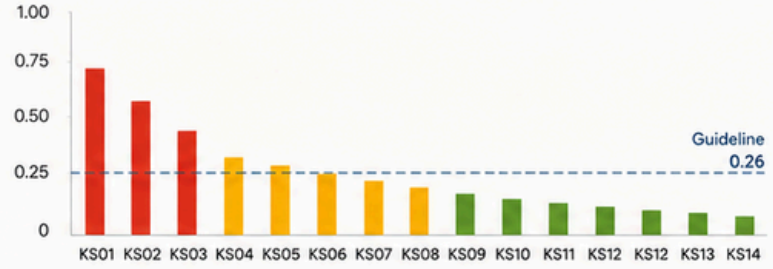


Click on a site to view more details and trends.

E. COLI – 95TH PERCENTILE (CFU/100 ML)

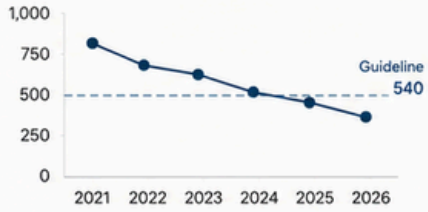


DIN – MEDIAN (MG/L)



TREND OVERVIEW (5-YEAR MEDIAN)

E. COLI (CFU/100 ML)



Catchment-wide 95th percentile E. coli is improving.

DIN (MG/L)



Catchment-wide median DIN is improving.

SITE SNAPSHOT – LATEST RESULTS

Site ID	Site Name	E. coli (95th %ile) cfu/100 mL	DIN (median) mg/L	Overall Status
KS01	Kaupokonui at Upper SH45	1,680	0.72	●
KS02	Waitaanga Stream	1,220	0.56	●
KS03	Pawapawa Stream	950	0.44	●
KS04	Mangahaoa Stream	610	0.32	●
KS05	Kaupokonui at Brickworks	580	0.28	●

Click on a site in the table or map for full details and trends.

Monitoring

MEASURING PROGRESS ACROSS THE CATCHMENT

Monitoring Component	What Will Be Monitored	Frequency	Who	Purpose
Water Quality Monitoring	E. coli, nitrate nitrogen, ammoniacal nitrogen, dissolved reactive phosphorus, turbidity, temperature and conductivity at 5–8 sites across the catchment.	Quarterly	Catchment group volunteers with support from partners	Establish a baseline, identify hotspots and track trends over time.
Freshwater Ecology Monitoring	Macroinvertebrates (MCI), fish observations, kōura observations and stream habitat condition at representative sites.	Annually (summer)	Community volunteers with technical support	Understand ecological health and identify restoration priorities.
Biodiversity Monitoring	Presence and distribution of native fish, kōura and other freshwater species.	Every 2–3 years	Community with expert support	Assess freshwater connectivity and habitat condition.
Community Monitoring Days	Coordinated catchment-wide sampling and site visits.	1–2 times per year	Catchment group and partners	Build participation, collect information and strengthen understanding of catchment issues.
Data Review & Interpretation	Water quality results, ecological monitoring, farmer observations and existing agency/hapū information.	Annually	Catchment group with support partners	Identify hotspots, trends and priority areas for action.
Catchment Reporting	Monitoring results, maps, key findings, actions completed and next priorities.	Annually	Catchment group	Share progress with the community and support decision-making.
Priority Area Identification	E. coli hotspots, nitrogen hotspots, contaminant pathways and restoration opportunities.	Reviewed annually	Catchment group and partners	Guide future investment and on-the-ground actions.

What success looks like

MEASURING PROGRESS ACROSS THE CATCHMENT

Progress should be measured first by the level of early action, shared understanding and amount of community working together on a shared outcome. As this understanding progresses, implementation becomes increasingly targeted as the evidence base improves. The focus is not just on the number of actions completed, but whether those actions are helping farmers, hapū and agencies make better decisions and improve water quality over time.

Focus Area	Individual / Landowner	Local Community	Whole Catchment
Water Quality Understanding Phase 1	Farmers understand the key water quality risks relevant to their property and has identified priority areas for action through their FEP.	Existing monitoring, hapū data, farmer observations and agency information are brought together and translated into practical insights.	E. coli and nitrogen hotspots, priority areas and likely contaminant pathways are identified.
On The Ground Action Phase 1	High-risk areas are identified and ground-truthed, with one action underway or planned. Farmers support the ground up approach by communicating whats working.	Demonstration sites are established and used to support farmer learning and wider uptake.	Action hotspots/ priority areas are mapped, prioritised and planned out in a project management structure (costs and timeframes).
Targeted Implementation Phase 2	Farmer is applying a broader mix of actions, such as CSA treatment, nutrient management, grazing changes, riparian planting or wetland enhancement, where these fit the farm system.	Monitoring and demonstration results are used to refine actions and guide support.	Actions are targeted to the dominant contaminant drivers and pathways in each priority area.
Long-term Water Quality Outcomes Phase 3	On-farm actions are understood, recorded and connected to wider catchment water quality outcomes. Reporting back on what actions mean for freshwater improvement.	Water quality trends and local progress are visible, regularly shared and used to sustain farmer confidence and participation.	Sustained catchment action is contributing to measurable improvement, water quality, freshwater ecology and cultural indicators are improving

Shared kaitiakitanga

A SHARED GOAL FOR THE KAUPOKONUI GROUP

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Improving water quality in the Kaupokonui will only succeed if it is carried by the people who live, farm and care for this catchment. Every on farm action, every water quality result shared, every monitoring site maintained and every farmer involved adds to the wider improvement effort.

This strategy builds on work already underway and the commitment of local farmers. It brings this work together into a shared direction: understand the issues, act where risks are clear, and target future investment where it will make the biggest difference.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Want to be part of the catchment group?

Work with your catchment coordinator or Taranaki Catchment Communities to identify where your effort can contribute most — whether that is sharing farm knowledge, hosting a demonstration site, joining monitoring, managing a critical source area, planting, or helping build the next stage of catchment action.

Read the full TCC Strategy to see how this work connects with wider catchment priorities and locally-led action across Taranaki.

