



Ōaonui Catchment Strategy

Connecting Mountains to Sea

A community-led strategy to strengthen connections between people, whenua and wai across the Ōaonui catchment.

3,991

HECTARES OF LAND & WATER

20%

INDIGENOUS VEGETATION

10 yr

STRATEGY

3

INTEGRATED WORKSTREAMS



01: Objectives & Approach

Catchment Strategy Summary



Ōaonui

ŌAONUI CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

ABOUT ŌAONUI AND THIS CATCHMENT STRATEGY

The Ōaonui catchment stretches from the forested slopes of Taranaki Maunga to the Tasman Sea. Although relatively small, it contains a diverse range of environments including indigenous forest, productive farmland, spring-fed waterways, wetlands, coastal environments and culturally significant sites.

The catchment is characterised by:

- Strong mountain-to-sea freshwater connectivity
- Existing iwi-led monitoring programmes
- Active environmental restoration initiatives
- Significant cultural values
- Productive farming land
- Opportunities for greater collaboration

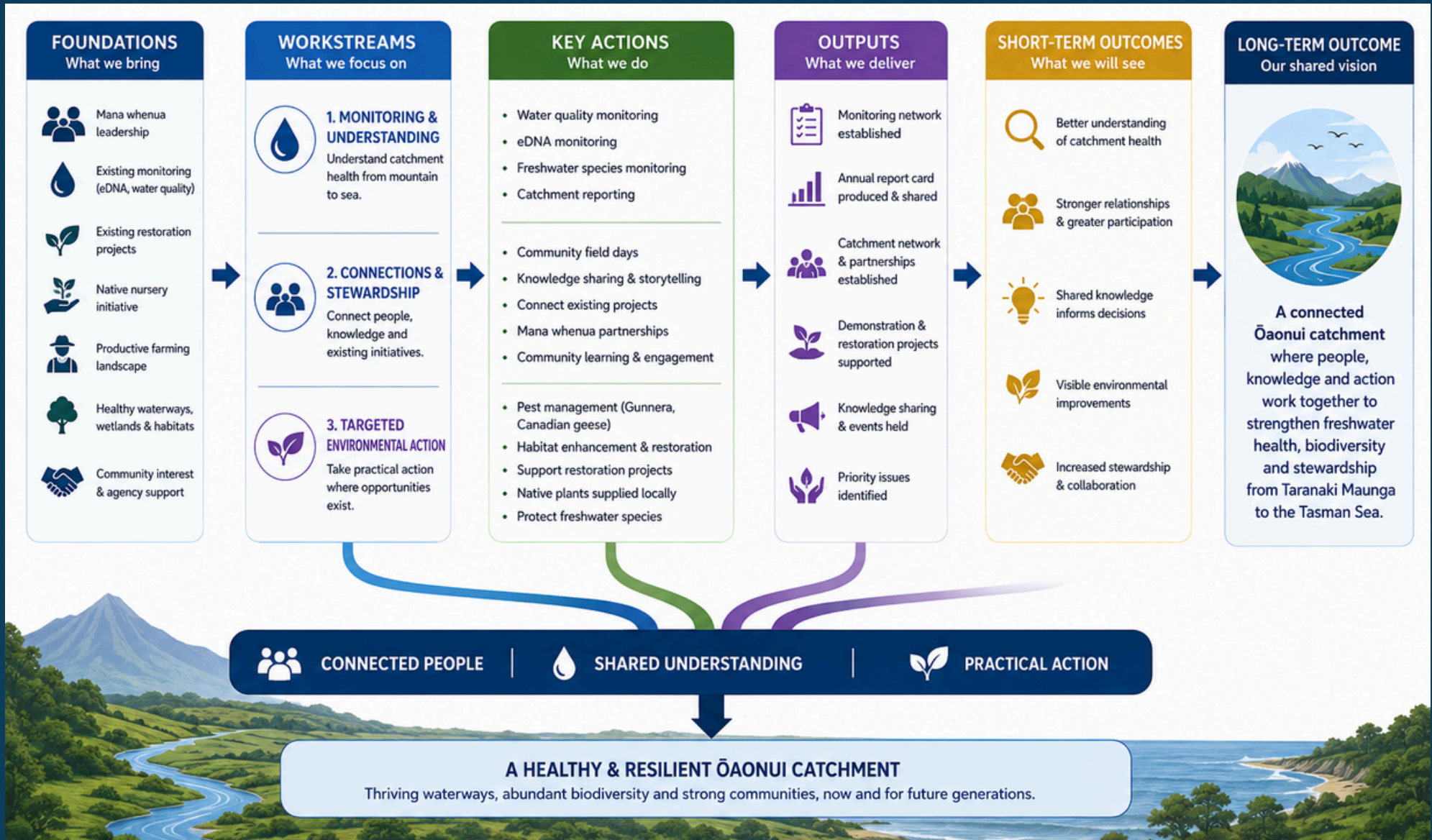
Ōaonui already has important environmental work underway. The challenge is not just starting new projects, but connecting existing efforts and building a shared direction for the future



Catchment Strategy Logic

ŌAONUI CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER ON A PAGE





02: What Makes Oaonui Great

Catchment State (1 / 2)

Biophysical, Cultural and Community Character

BIOPHYSICAL, CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The Ōaonui catchment covers approximately 4,000 hectares and extends from the forested slopes of Taranaki Maunga to the Tasman Sea. Although relatively small in size, the catchment contains a remarkable range of landscapes including indigenous forest, spring-fed waterways, productive pastoral land, wetlands, coastal environments and culturally significant sites. The catchment is characterised by strong mountain-to-sea connectivity, meaning freshwater species can move between the upper catchment and the coast, supporting healthy ecological processes and cultural values. Unlike many catchments, significant environmental work is already underway. Mana whenua are actively undertaking water quality monitoring and eDNA assessments, while a native nursery initiative is helping build local restoration capability. The challenge for Ōaonui is less about starting new projects and more about connecting existing people, knowledge and activity into a shared catchment direction.

LAND AND WATER

The catchment contains:

- Indigenous forest in the upper catchment adjoining Taranaki Maunga.
- Productive pastoral farming throughout much of the catchment.
- A highly connected freshwater network extending from mountain to sea.
- Numerous spring-fed tributaries and seepage areas.
- Wetlands and groundwater-fed habitats through the mid catchment.
- Significant coastal and estuarine influences at the catchment outlet.
- Strong ecological linkages between freshwater, terrestrial and coastal environments.

The catchment's volcanic geology and allophanic soils create highly productive land, while spring systems and groundwater interactions play an important role in freshwater health.

CATCHMENT HEALTH SUMMARY

Existing information suggests:

- Water quality monitoring is already occurring at several locations.
- eDNA monitoring is helping improve understanding of freshwater biodiversity.
- Freshwater fish communities remain relatively diverse.
- Riparian condition is variable across the catchment.
- Wetlands and spring systems provide important ecological refuges.
- Canada geese may contribute to local water quality pressures.
- Gunnera remains a significant pest plant challenge.
- Coastal erosion is a concern in some locations.

Despite these challenges, the catchment retains many natural strengths and significant opportunities for future improvement.

Catchment State (2 / 2)

Biophysical, Cultural and Community Character

MAURI

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of understanding what is already occurring within the catchment before developing new initiatives.

The workshop identified:

- Strong cultural connections to waterways and whenua.
- Existing iwi leadership in environmental monitoring.
- A desire to build relationships before implementing large-scale projects.
- Recognition that existing projects should be supported rather than duplicated.
- Opportunities to reconnect people with the awa and surrounding landscape.
- A shared interest in protecting freshwater ecosystems for future generations.

There is a significant opportunity to strengthen catchment mauri through collaboration, knowledge sharing and practical action.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

- Ōaonui already has several important foundations for future catchment action:
- Existing water quality monitoring.
- eDNA monitoring at multiple locations.
- Strong local environmental knowledge.
- Active involvement from mana whenua.
- Native nursery development.
- Existing restoration activity.
- Local leadership and environmental interest.
- Strong understanding of cultural values and history.
- These foundations provide an excellent starting point for future catchment collaboration.

SIGNIFICANT FRESHWATER SPECIES

- The catchment supports a range of native freshwater species, including:
- Shortjaw kōkopu (Nationally Vulnerable)
- Longfin eel (At Risk – Declining)
- Inanga (At Risk – Declining)
- Torrentfish (At Risk – Declining)
- Redfin bully
- Common bully
- Kōura
- Freshwater shrimp
- Shortfin eel

The presence of these species demonstrates that important mountain-to-sea ecological connections remain intact throughout much of the catchment.

Longfin and shortfin tuna are particularly significant indicators of catchment connectivity, requiring access between inland habitats and the sea to complete their life cycles.



Shortjaw Kokopu (source: DOC)



Inanga (source: DOC)



Redfin Bully (source: DOC)



Community Context

Building Connections Across Ōaonui

ŌAONUI CATCHMENT GROUP **CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026**

The Ōaonui community represented at the catchment group meeting were connected around a shared catchment vision. Workshop participants identified significant work already underway, particularly through hapū. Existing initiatives include water quality monitoring, eDNA assessments, native plant nursery development and local environmental projects. Participants consistently noted that future catchment work should build on these existing efforts rather than duplicate them.

Participants also discussed opportunities to reconnect people with the catchment from mountain to sea, recognising that environmental outcomes are likely to improve when people better understand both the natural systems and the communities that depend upon them.

The Ōaonui catchment is at an earlier stage of development compared to many. As a result, relationship building, information sharing and collaborative learning were identified as essential foundations for future action.

ACHIEVEMENTS & STRENGTHS

Community

- Active local leadership
- Growing interest in catchment-scale approaches and significant existing knowledge
- Existing relationships between landowners and other groups

Land, Water & Biodiversity

- Some water quality monitoring
- eDNA monitoring programme established
- Native nursery development
- Existing riparian and restoration projects
- Diverse native fish communities

WHAT WE HEARD

Catchment Connections

- Strengthen connections between landowners, mana whenua, lifestyle block owners and the wider community.
- Currently no strong catchment identity or clear mechanism for working together.

Understanding Before Action

- Improving understanding of catchment health before implementing large-scale projects.
- Rather than creating new programmes, participants wanted future investment to support and strengthen work already underway.

Local Feedback

ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

- Water Quality & Monitoring
- Biodiversity
- Wetlands & Freshwater Habitats
- Pest Plant & Animal Management
- Coastal Resilience

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Build Community Knowledge
- Support Locally-Led Initiatives
- Strengthen Partnerships
- Connect People Across the Catchment
- Develop Local Leadership



Key Opportunities

ŌAONUI CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

NO RISK OPPORTUNITIES FOR ŌAONUI



Future Opportunities for Ōaonui

CONNECT EXISTING EFFORTS

Create stronger links between mana whenua, landowners and community groups.

MOUNTAINS TO SEA MONITORING

Develop a coordinated monitoring programme that tells the story of catchment health from the headwaters to the coast.

FRESHWATER SPECIES MONITORING

Use tuna, kōkopu and eDNA monitoring to track ecosystem health over time.

COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

Build a stronger catchment identity through field days, storytelling and shared learning.

PEST SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Coordinate action on Gunnera and Canadian geese where these affect environmental outcomes.





03: Implementation

Roadmap for Action

Simple steps

This strategy can be broken down to phases of work and when stepped through to help reach catchment objectives. This page supplies a brief summary of those steps.

Phase 1: Years 1–2 — Connect and Understand

- Establish catchment network
- Develop communication channels
- Map existing projects
- Expand water quality monitoring
- Continue eDNA monitoring
- Complete catchment baseline report
- Develop shared vision



A connected community with a shared understanding of catchment condition.

Phase 2: Years 3–5 — Deliver Targeted Catchment Action

- Mountain-to-sea monitoring programme
- Gunnera control demonstrations
- Canadian geese management initiatives
- Wetland and spring protection projects
- Riparian enhancement
- Community field days



Visible improvements in habitat condition, erosion resilience and freshwater ecosystem health.

Phase 3: Years 5+ — Grow, Maintain and Adapt

- Repeat monitoring
- Expand successful projects
- Develop flagship restoration sites
- Track mauri and ecological indicators
- Maintain catchment network



A resilient catchment with strong partnerships and measurable environmental gains.

Potential Flagship Projects

- Ōaonui Springs to Sea Demonstration Site – Protect and restore a spring-fed wetland system while showcasing monitoring, native planting and freshwater species recovery.
- Native Nursery & Restoration Hub – Support local native plant production.
- Tuna Monitoring & Freshwater Species Site – Establish a long-term monitoring location to track tuna, kōkopu and other native species as indicators of catchment health.
- Mountains to Sea Monitoring Site – Create an integrated monitoring location combining water quality, eDNA, freshwater species and community observations to tell the story of catchment health from headwaters to coast.



Meet Connected Outcomes

THREE WORKSTREAMS WITH ONE INTEGRATED OUTCOME FOR ŌAONUI



Action planning is a live approach



Oaonui

Action Plan Summary

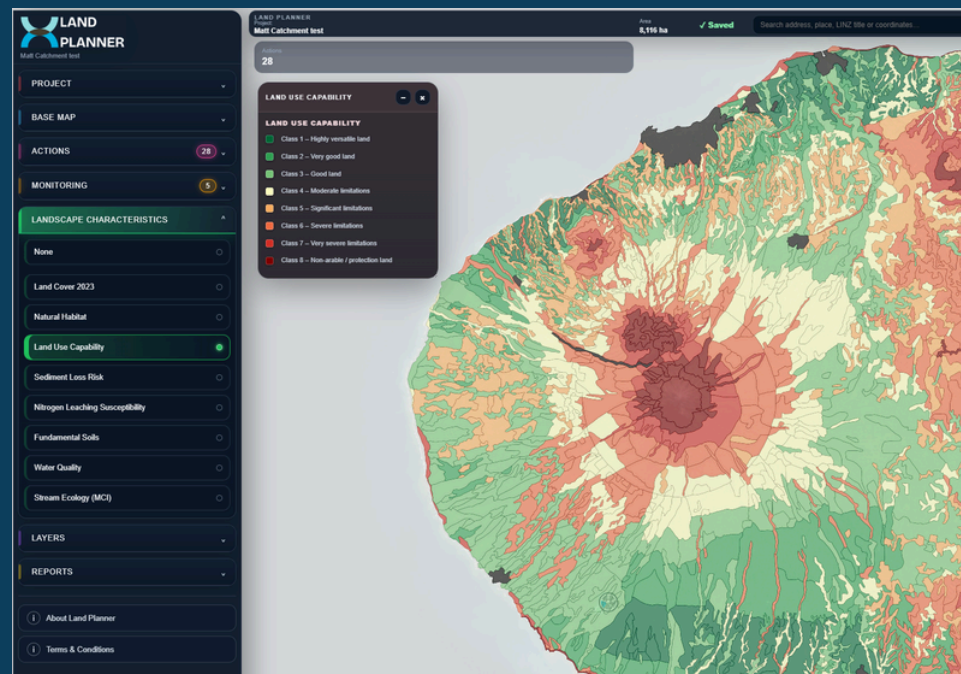
To be used in conjunction with the Catchment Strategy

Developed by EIS
Contact: matt@eis.org.nz
0277024378



Oaonui 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.
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	Post-construction monitoring, establish photo points around the demonstration site.
	Q3	Engagement & Knowledge Sharing	Hold a field day showcasing any existing projects and catchment monitoring results.
2028	Q4	Water Quality Understanding	Produce the first annual Catchment Report Card and refine priority action areas.
	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 available for TCC use in September 2026. This will enable visualisation of data, access to monitoring data, planning of actions and reporting.





04: Measuring success

Monitoring

MEASURING PROGRESS ACROSS THE CATCHMENT

Outcome Area	What Success Looks Like	Indicators	Frequency
Water & Catchment Health	Improved understanding and management of freshwater health	Water quality trends (E. coli, nutrients, clarity, temperature), monitoring sites established, annual reporting completed	Quarterly / Annual
Freshwater Biodiversity & Habitat	Healthy freshwater ecosystems connected from mountain to sea	eDNA results, native fish presence, habitat restoration completed, wetlands and springs protected	Annual
Community & Partnerships	Strong relationships and shared catchment stewardship	Community participation, field days, partnerships with mana whenua, collaborative projects underway	Annual
Pest & Environmental Management	Reduced impacts from priority environmental pressures	Gunnera control, geese management, pest management projects completed, demonstration sites established	Annual
Knowledge, Learning & Adaptation	Better decisions informed by local knowledge and monitoring	Catchment report card, monitoring programme maintained, knowledge sharing events, lessons applied to future actions	Annual

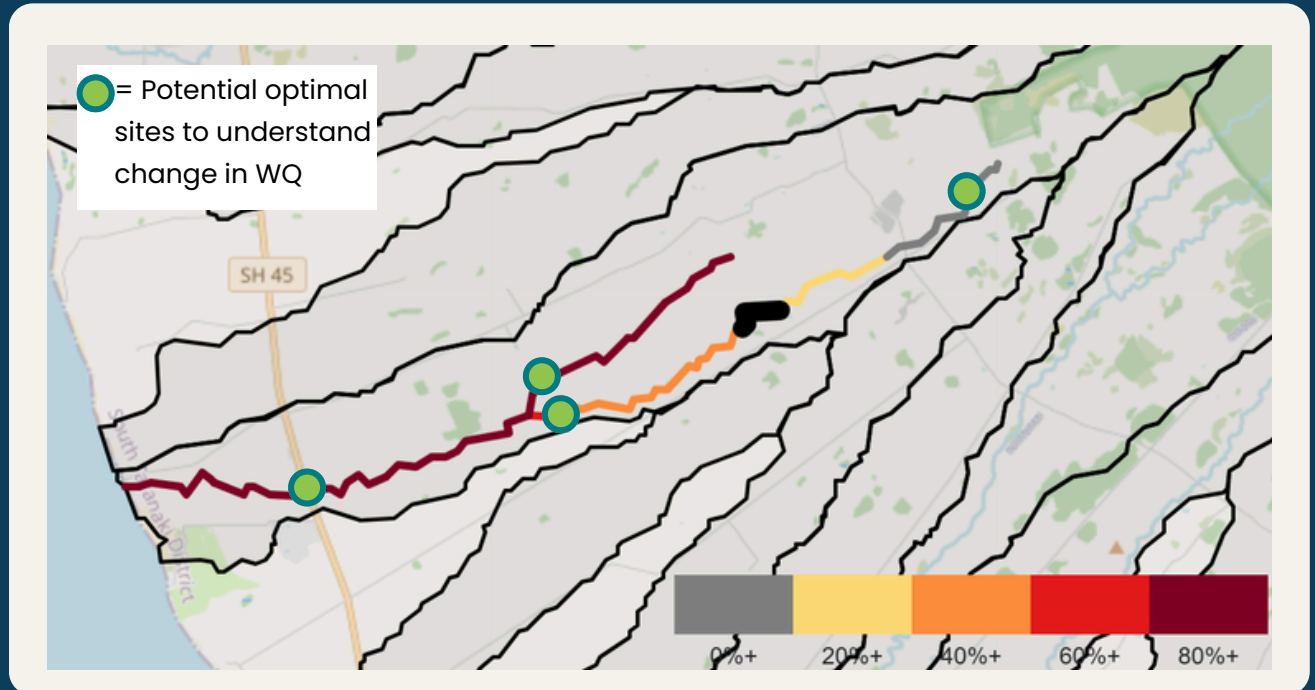
MONITORING

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, particularly ecological understanding (like eDNA, MCI and Fish)
- Build in focused monitoring around action areas as required to support communication extension and learning.

What success looks like

MEASURING PROGRESS ACROSS THE CATCHMENT

Success should first be measured by the level of coordinated action occurring across the catchment. Over time, success shifts from participation and project delivery toward measurable improvements in waterway health, ecological connectivity and catchment resilience.

Water & Catchment Health

- A clear understanding of catchment health from mountain to sea.
- Water quality trends are tracked and understood.
- Monitoring information is regularly shared with the community.

Freshwater Biodiversity & Habitat

- Native fish populations remain connected throughout the catchment.
- Wetlands, springs and freshwater habitats are protected and enhanced.
- More native vegetation supports healthy waterways and biodiversity.

Community & Partnerships

- Strong relationships exist between mana whenua, landowners and the wider community.
- Existing initiatives are connected and working towards shared outcomes.
- More people are actively involved in catchment stewardship.

Environmental Action

- Practical action is underway on priority issues such as Gunnera, geese and habitat restoration.
- Demonstration projects showcase what works in local conditions.
- Environmental improvements are visible across the catchment.

Knowledge, Learning & Stewardship

- Catchment decisions are informed by monitoring, local knowledge and experience.
- Annual reporting tells the story of catchment progress.
- A strong catchment identity supports ongoing collaboration and action.



Shared kaitiakitanga

A SHARED GOAL FOR THE ŌAONUI GROUP



Improving outcomes in the Ōaonui catchment will only succeed if it is carried by the people who live, farm and care for the place they live. 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 and tangata whenua. It brings this work together into a shared direction: Working together to implement a community-led strategy to strengthen connections between people, whenua and wai across the Ōaonui catchment.

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.

