



Tarata Catchment Strategy

Restoring and Enhancing the Tarata Catchment

A community-led strategy to protect and strengthen the environmental, cultural and economic values of the Tarata catchment.

Working together to understand our waterways, improve freshwater habitats, support biodiversity and build a resilient future for the Tarata community.

14,569

HECTARES OF LAND & WATER

11

MAJOR TRIBUTARIES

32%

INDIGENOUS VEGETATION

10 yr

STRATEGY

3

INTEGRATED WORKSTREAMS

1,000

HECTARES OF EROSION PRONE LAND

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01: Objectives & Approach

Catchment Strategy Summary



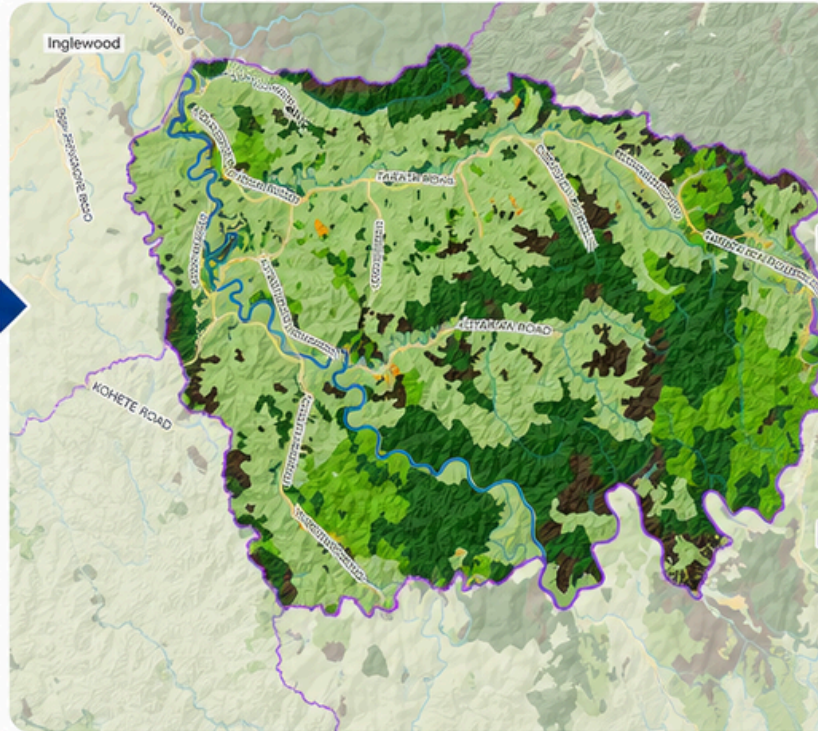
WORKSTREAM 1



MONITORING, KNOWLEDGE & CATCHMENT UNDERSTANDING

Understand our catchment and priorities.

- Water quality & E. coli monitoring
- eDNA & freshwater fish surveys
- Sediment & flow monitoring
- Identify priority issues & hotspots
- Data management & reporting



WORKSTREAM 2



SEDIMENT, HABITAT & FISH RECOVERY

Improve habitats and reduce pressures on our waterways.

- Manage erosion & sediment sources
- Restore wetlands & riparian margins
- Improve fish passage & connectivity
- Enhance habitat & support fish recovery



WORKSTREAM 3



BIODIVERSITY, STEWARDSHIP & RESILIENCE

Build community capacity and protect what matters.

- Support biodiversity & predator control
- Farm planning & on-farm action
- Community engagement & learning
- Partnerships & shared stewardship

CROSS-CUTTING ACTIONS



Work together
Strong partnerships with landowners, iwi, agencies and the community.



Use farm plans
Guide and record practical on-farm actions.



Build knowledge
Share practical knowledge and field learning.



Support action
Seek funding and technical support to deliver improvements.



Learn, adapt
Monitor progress, learn what works and improve over time.

OUR OUTCOMES



Cleaner, safer water



Healthy habitats & ecosystems



Thriving native fish populations



Biodiversity protected



Strong community stewardship



Productive, resilient farming

OUR VISION

A healthy, resilient Tarata catchment where strong water quality, thriving freshwater ecosystems, reduced sediment impacts and an engaged community support environmental and farming outcomes for future generations.



Tarata

TARATA CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

ABOUT TARATA AND THIS CATCHMENT STRATEGY

The Tarata catchment is located within the upper Waitara River catchment and contains a diverse landscape of productive farmland, indigenous forest, plantation forestry and freshwater habitats.

Approximately half of the catchment is pastoral farming, while indigenous vegetation covers around one third of the landscape. Significant forest remnants, Key Native Ecosystems, wetlands and tributaries contribute to high ecological values and strong habitat connectivity across the catchment. The Tarata Catchment Community was established to improve understanding of catchment health and support practical action. Since 2023 the group has undertaken water quality monitoring, community engagement and environmental projects designed to improve long term catchment outcomes.

Recent community discussions highlighted several key priorities:

- Better understanding E. coli sources.
- Protecting and enhancing freshwater biodiversity.
- Understanding lamprey and other native fish.
- Managing sediment and erosion risks.
- Supporting resilient farming systems.
- Continuing successful predator control initiatives.

This strategy provides a framework for coordinating these efforts over the next decade.



Catchment Strategy Logic

TARATA CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER ON A PAGE





02: What Makes Tarata Great

Catchment State (1 / 2)

Biophysical, Cultural and Community Character

The Tarata catchment contains a highly dissected hill country landscape draining into the Waitara River.

LANDSCAPE

The catchment contains:

- Extensive indigenous forest and regenerating vegetation.
- Productive hill country farming.
- Significant plantation forestry.
- Strong riparian vegetation networks.
- Numerous tributaries and freshwater habitats.
- Important ecological corridors and Key Native Ecosystems.

STRENGTHS

Community monitoring and local knowledge indicate:

- Generally good water quality.
- Extensive riparian vegetation.
- Strong biodiversity values.
- Existing predator control programmes.
- High levels of community engagement.
- Significant indigenous vegetation.

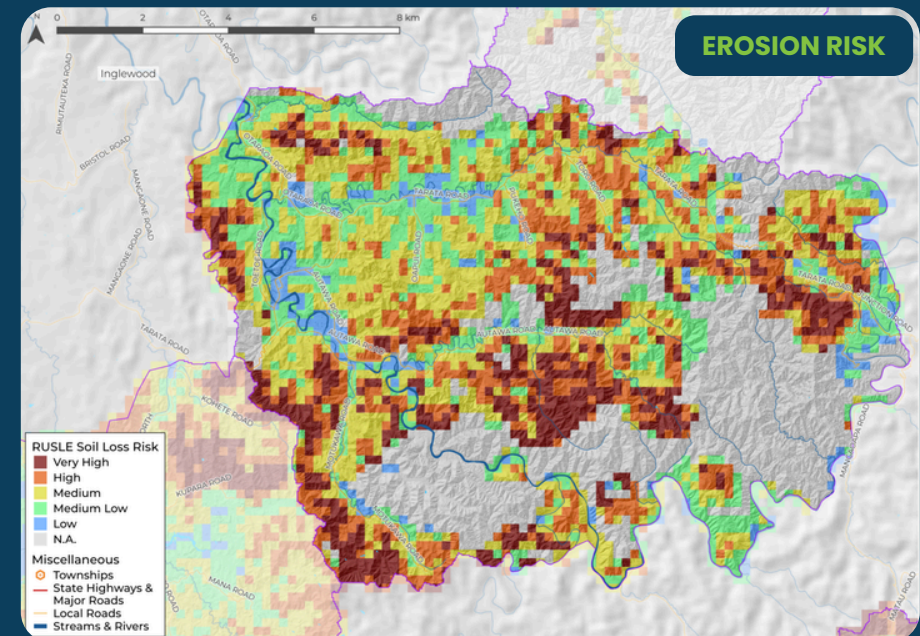
CHALLENGES

The most significant environmental challenges identified are:

- Hillslope erosion and sediment generation.
- E. coli contamination events.
- Freshwater fish decline.
- Fish passage barriers.
- Maintaining gains from biodiversity programmes.

SEDIMENT, WATER QUALITY AND BIODIVERSITY

- The Tarata catchment contains some of the highest areas of erosion prone land identified across the Taranaki Catchment Communities programme, with approximately 1,000 hectares classified as erosion prone. While extensive riparian vegetation provides an important buffer throughout much of the catchment, ongoing sediment generation from steep hill country remains a key long term challenge.
- Monitoring indicates generally good water quality across much of the catchment, although elevated E. coli levels have been identified at times. Combined with community concerns regarding freshwater fish decline, this highlights the importance of understanding how sediment, habitat condition, water quality and fish populations interact across the catchment.
- The catchment's strong biodiversity values, extensive indigenous vegetation and active community stewardship provide an excellent foundation for targeted action that strengthens both environmental and farming outcomes.



Catchment State (2 / 2)

Biophysical, Cultural and Community Character

SIGNIFICANT FRESHWATER SPECIES

The Tarata catchment supports a diverse range of native freshwater species, many of which rely on connected stream habitats and good water quality throughout their life cycles.

- Lamprey (piharau / kanakana) – Threatened (Nationally Vulnerable)
- Longfin eel (tuna) – At Risk (Declining)
- Shortfin eel (tuna) – At Risk (Declining)
- Giant kōkopu – At Risk (Declining)
- Banded kōkopu – At Risk (Naturally Uncommon)
- Īnanga – Threatened (Nationally Vulnerable)
- Kākahi (freshwater mussel) – At Risk (Declining)
- Kōura – Not Threatened

Historical observations suggest some species were once more common within the catchment, creating an opportunity to better understand fish populations, habitat quality and freshwater connectivity.



KNOWLEDGE STRENGTHS

- Community led water quality monitoring programme.
- Baseline catchment health assessment completed.
- Existing eDNA monitoring and freshwater species information.
- Strong local landowner knowledge.
- Active catchment community and leadership group.
- Existing biodiversity and predator control initiatives.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

- Better understand and reduce E. coli sources.
- Target erosion prone hill country and sediment sources.
- Improve freshwater fish habitat and connectivity.
- Investigate and address fish passage barriers.
- Expand eDNA and freshwater fish monitoring.
- Build on existing predator control and biodiversity projects.
- Support riparian enhancement in priority locations.
- Develop a flagship freshwater habitat and fish recovery project.

Community Input

TARATA CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

Community Approaches

The Tarata Catchment Community has developed through a local commitment to understanding and improving catchment health.

The catchment is characterised by strong community participation, existing monitoring programmes and a willingness to work together on practical solutions that benefit both farming and environmental outcomes.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Community

- Active Tarata Catchment Community.
- Growing partnerships with community, agencies, iwi and environmental organisations.

Land, Water & Biodiversity

- Water quality monitoring programme.
- Existing predator control.
- Significant indigenous vegetation retained.
- Strong riparian vegetation network established along many waterways.

Knowledge & Learning

- Improved understanding of catchment condition.
- Freshwater fish values identified.
- Baseline environmental information assembled.
- Strong local knowledge contributing to catchment planning.
- Opportunities identified for eDNA and fish monitoring.

WHAT WE HEARD

Water Quality

Monitoring generally indicates good water quality across the catchment. However, elevated E. coli levels were identified.

Freshwater Fish

Participants expressed a strong interest in improving freshwater fish habitat and supporting the recovery of native fish, particularly lamprey. There was strong interest in understanding fish passage, habitat quality and opportunities to support recovery.

Sediment & Erosion

While extensive riparian vegetation exists throughout the catchment, significant areas of erosion-prone hill country remain a challenge. Participants recognised the importance of understanding sediment sources and implementing practical erosion control.

Biodiversity & Pest Management

Significant biodiversity exists, including native forest remnants and freshwater habitats. Continued predator control and habitat protection were identified as important priorities.

Local Feedback

ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES



Key Issues & Opportunities

WHAT SHAPES THE STRATEGY



Key Issues and Opportunities

UNDERSTANDING E. COLI SOURCES

Water quality monitoring indicates generally good water quality across much of the catchment. However, elevated E. coli levels remain one of the most important water quality issues identified by the community. Better understanding the timing, location and sources of contamination provides a focus for targeted action and measurable improvement.

FRESHWATER FISH RECOVERY

Historical observations suggest that lamprey and other native fish species were once more common throughout the catchment. Understanding fish populations, habitat condition and freshwater connectivity provides an opportunity to improve stream health while creating a flagship environmental project that the community can rally behind.

SEDIMENT & HILLSLOPE EROSION

The Tarata catchment contains approximately 1,000 hectares of erosion-prone land, making it one of the more erosion susceptible catchments within the Taranaki Catchment Communities programme. While much of the catchment benefits from established riparian vegetation, reducing sediment generation from steep hill country remains a key long-term initiative for improving freshwater habitat and catchment resilience.

RIPARIAN NETWORKS & WATERWAY PROTECTION

Compared with many catchments, Tarata already has substantial riparian vegetation established along waterways. This existing asset provides an important buffer for water quality and stream health. Future work can focus on strengthening priority gaps, protecting headwater streams and linking riparian efforts with sediment and fish habitat outcomes.

STRONG BIODIVERSITY FOUNDATIONS

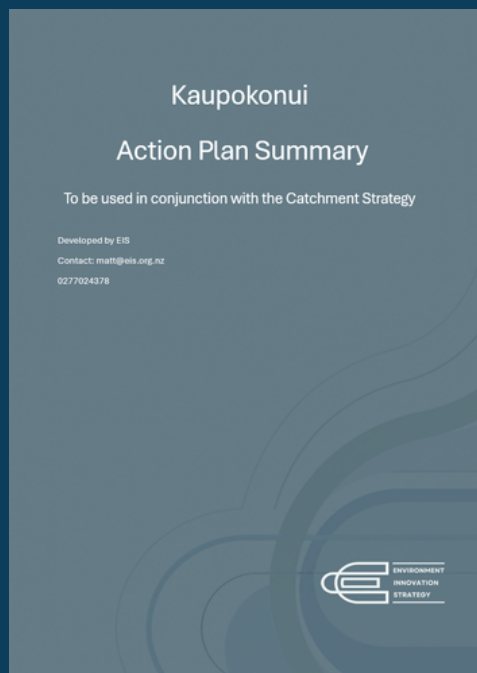
Tarata contains extensive indigenous vegetation, important forest remnants, Key Native Ecosystems and significant freshwater habitats. Existing predator control initiatives and biodiversity projects provide a strong foundation to build upon and create opportunities to further strengthen ecological connectivity across the catchment.



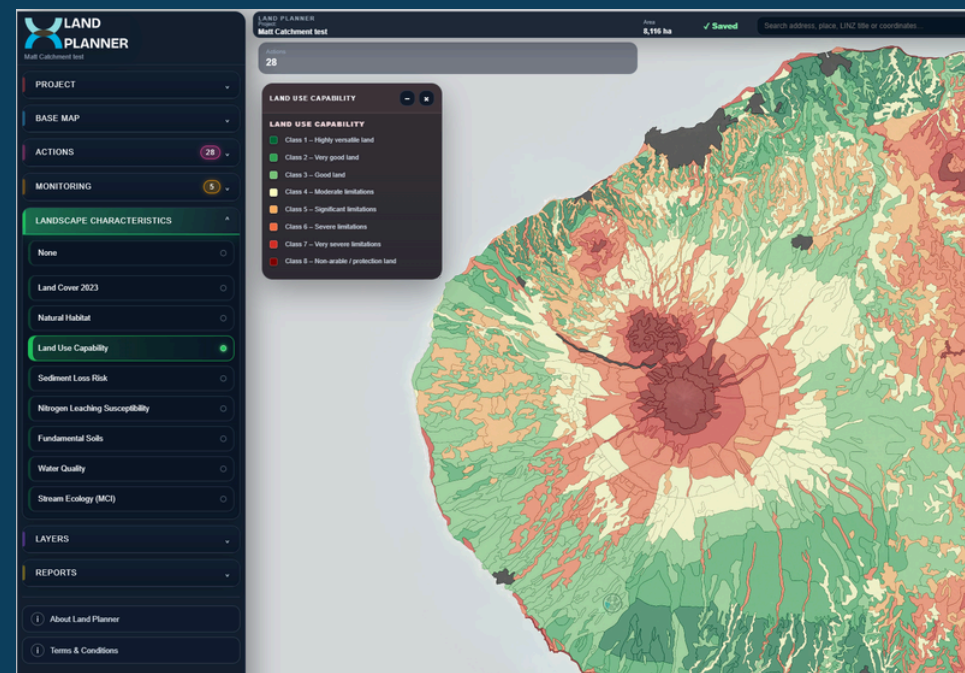


03: Implementation

Action planning is a live approach



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.
2028	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.
	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.



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 — Understand, Monitor and Prioritise

- Continue community water quality monitoring.
- Undertake targeted E. coli source tracking.
- Expand eDNA and freshwater fish monitoring.
- Establish baseline lamprey, kākahi and native fish information.
- Identify priority sediment and erosion source areas.
- Assess fish passage barriers and habitat condition.



A strong understanding of catchment health, freshwater ecosystems and the key pressures affecting water quality and habitat.

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

- Implement sediment and erosion reduction projects at priority sites.
- Address identified E. coli sources through farm planning.
- Improve fish passage where barriers are present.
- Support biodiversity and predator control initiatives.
- Establish demonstration projects showing practical solutions.
- Continue monitoring to track change.



Visible improvements in freshwater habitat, reduced sediment pressures and better understanding of water quality outcomes.

Phase 3: Years 5+ — Grow, Adapt and Demonstrate Success

- Expand successful sediment and habitat projects.
- Track freshwater fish recovery trends.
- Refine investment using monitoring results.
- Share lessons with other Taranaki catchments.
- Continue community leadership and stewardship initiatives.
- Seek funding for larger-scale restoration opportunities.



A resilient catchment where practical action is linked to measurable improvements in mauri, biodiversity and water quality.

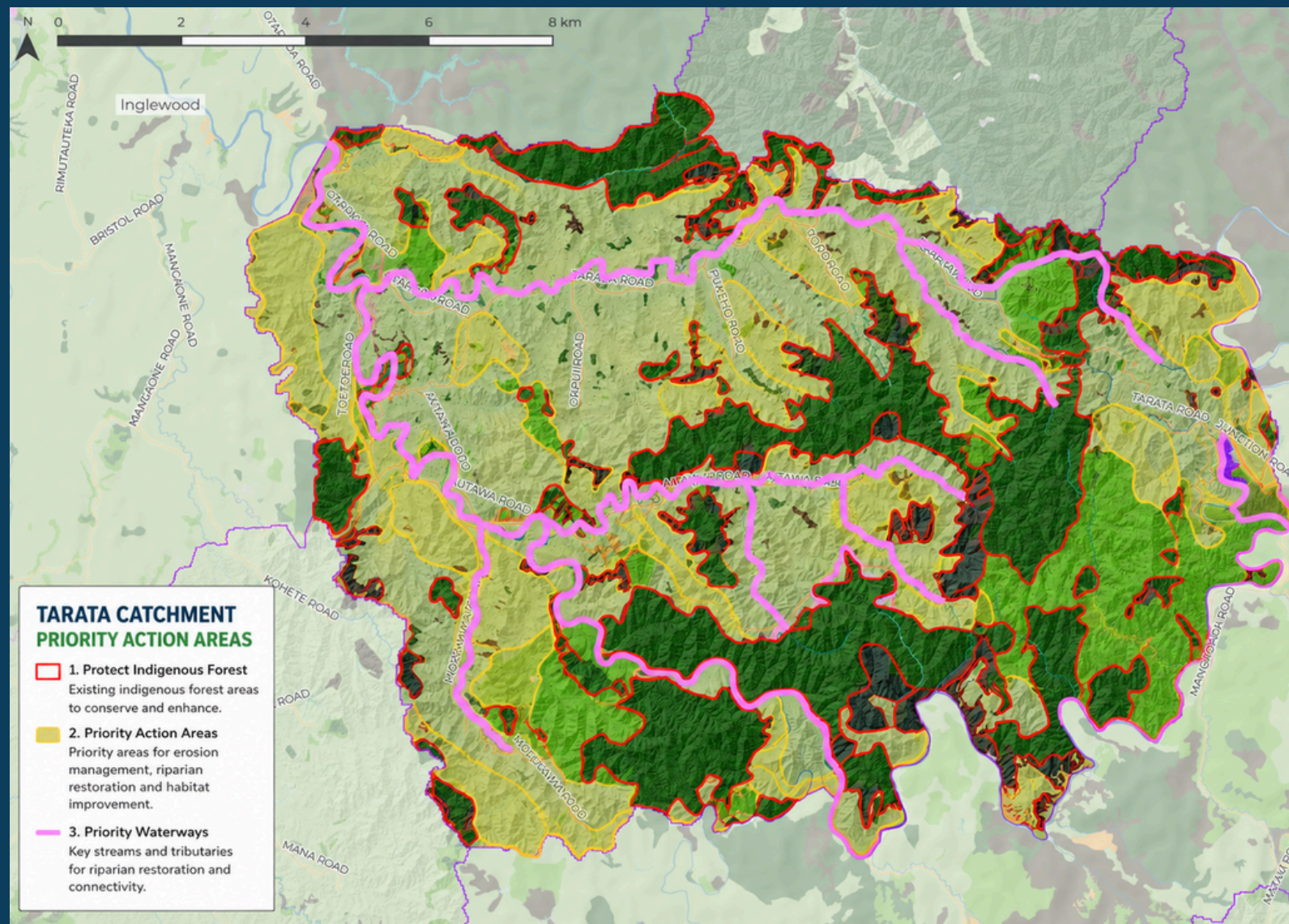
Potential Flagship Projects

- Lamprey focus: Education and recovery. Communication through monitoring
- Water quality: Sediment and E. Coli reduction projects

Priority Action Areas



WHERE TO FOCUS



Biodiversity and pest control

- Focus on existing forest habitat areas, with high value ecosystems
- In map: Green with red border

Soil loss and erosion

- Soil loss is high in upper catchment areas
- Focus on highly erodible land
- Use existing techniques outlined in the planting selection tool
- In map: Outlined in yellow

Fish barrier understanding & remediation

- Understand fish barriers in high priority areas – where tributaries connect to main river.
- Remediate fish barriers in priority areas as resources allow.

Meet Connected Outcomes

THREE WORKSTREAMS WITH ONE INTEGRATED OUTCOME

1 WORKSTREAM 1 Monitoring, Knowledge & Catchment Understanding

Provides evidence and direction

-  Water quality monitoring
-  E. coli source tracking
-  eDNA monitoring
-  Freshwater fish surveys
-  Sediment monitoring
-  Catchment reporting



2 WORKSTREAM 2 Sediment, Habitat & Fish Recovery

Addresses key environmental pressures

-  Erosion management
-  Critical source areas
-  Fish passage
-  Lamprey recovery
-  Riparian enhancement
-  Freshwater habitat restoration



3 WORKSTREAM 3 Biodiversity, Stewardship & Resilience

Builds long-term community capacity

-  Predator control
-  Biodiversity enhancement
-  Farm environmental planning
-  Demonstration projects
-  Community engagement
-  Knowledge sharing



UNDERSTAND

Collect monitoring data and local knowledge to understand water quality, sediment and freshwater ecosystems.



TARGET

Identify priority E. coli sources, sediment hotspots and habitat opportunities.



RESTORE

Reduce sediment, improve habitat quality and strengthen freshwater connectivity.



ACT TOGETHER

Landowners, iwi, community groups and agencies deliver practical projects.



LEARN & ADAPT

Track progress, share results and invest in what works best.



ONE INTEGRATED OUTCOME

A HEALTHY, RESILIENT TARATA CATCHMENT

Strong water quality, thriving freshwater ecosystems, reduced sediment impacts and a connected community working together to protect the catchment for future generations.





04: Measuring success

Monitoring

MEASURING PROGRESS ACROSS THE CATCHMENT

Outcome Area	What Success Looks Like	Frequency	Indicator
Water Quality & E. coli	Improved freshwater condition	Quarterly	E. coli, clarity, nutrients and temperature
Freshwater Fish & Habitat	Healthy native fish populations and habitats	Annual	eDNA, lamprey, tuna, kōkopu, habitat condition
Sediment & Erosion	Reduced sediment impacts	Annual	Priority sites treated, turbidity trends, erosion projects completed
Biodiversity	Healthy native species and ecosystems	Annual	Predator control, native species records, habitat protection
Community Stewardship	Strong local participation and leadership	Annual	Volunteers, field days, monitoring and projects
Partnerships & Resilience	Strong collaboration and adaptive management	Annual	Joint projects, funding leveraged, catchment reporting

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.

Catchment Understanding

- Improved understanding of E. coli sources and water quality trends.
- Better understanding of freshwater fish populations and habitat condition.
- Monitoring information is actively used to guide investment and action.

Water Quality

- Water quality trends are maintained or improving.
- Improved understanding of sediment and contaminant pathways.

Native Biodiversity

- Native habitats are protected and enhanced.
- Predator control programmes continue to deliver positive outcomes.
- Indigenous vegetation and ecological corridors remain strong features of the catchment.

Freshwater Fish & Habitat

- Lamprey, tuna, kōkopu and other native fish remain present throughout the catchment.
- Improved fish passage and freshwater connectivity.

Community Stewardship

- Strong landowner participation and community leadership.
- Ongoing monitoring, field days and knowledge sharing.
- Increased collaboration between landowners, iwi, agencies and community groups.
- The catchment remains productive, environmentally healthy and resilient to future challenges.



Shared kaitiakitanga

A SHARED GOAL FOR THE TARATA GROUP



Improving outcomes in the Tarata 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 strengthen the health of the awa, restore wetlands and biodiversity, support resilient farming communities and reconnect people with the river.

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.

