



Urenui Catchment Strategy

Restoring the Health of the Urenui Catchment

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

Working together to strengthen the health of the awa, restore wetlands and biodiversity, support resilient farming communities and reconnect people with the river.

13,369

HECTARES OF LAND & WATER

11

MAJOR TRIBUTARIES

66%

INDIGENOUS VEGETATION

10 yr

STRATEGY

3

INTEGRATED WORKSTREAMS

42

KM LONG URENUI RIVER

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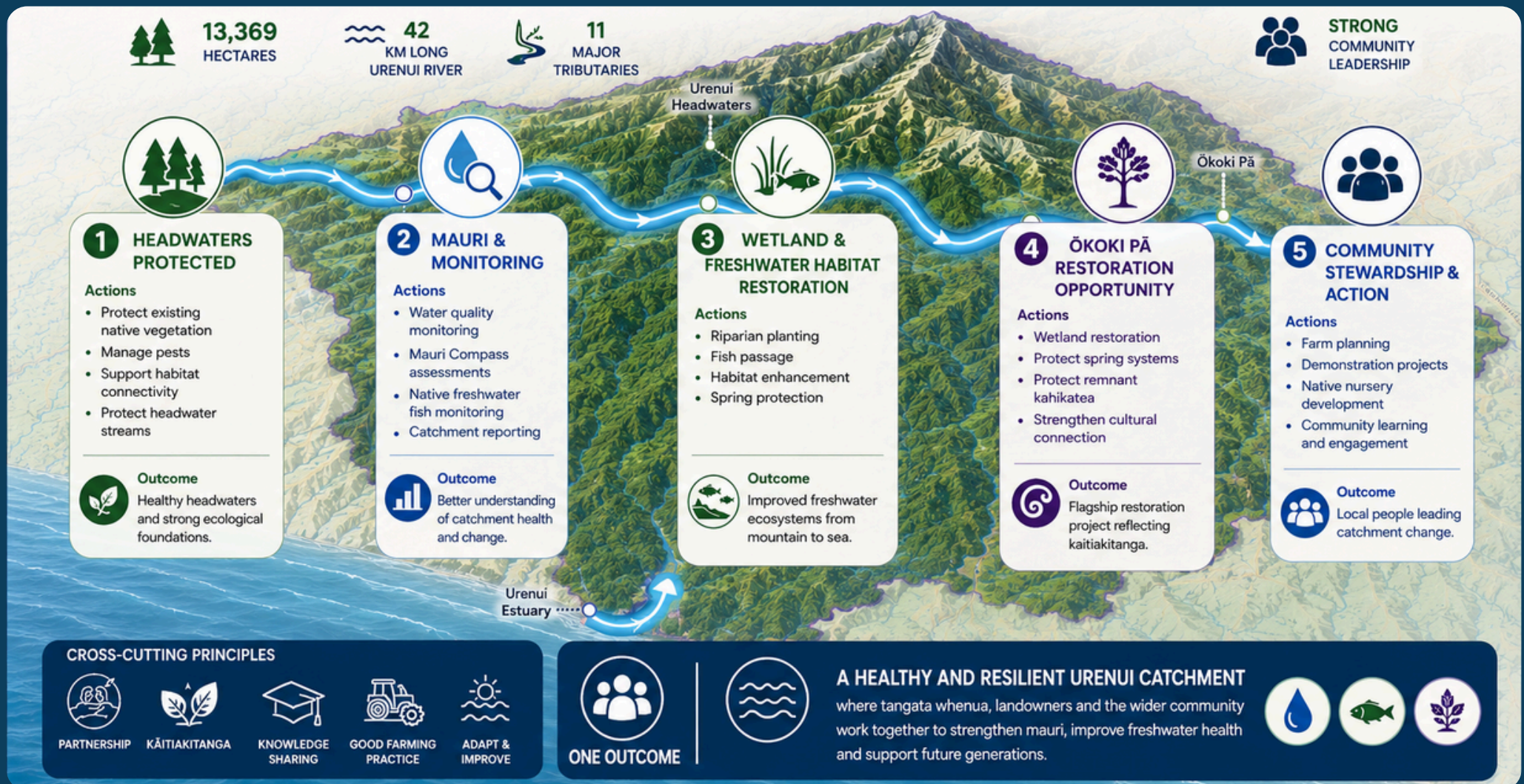


01: Objectives & Approach

Catchment Strategy Summary



Combining monitoring, restoration and action to strengthen the health of the catchment & its people.



Urenui

URENUI CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

ABOUT URENUI AND THIS CATCHMENT STRATEGY

The Urenui Catchment is a picturesque corner of Taranaki. The river is a treasured taonga of Ngāti Mutunga and has sustained generations of people through its cultural, spiritual, ecological and economic values. Historically the river and its associated wetlands provided food, transport routes, places of gathering and connections between people and place.

Today the catchment remains one of the most ecologically intact farming catchments in Taranaki, with extensive indigenous vegetation, important wetlands, productive farmland alongside a connected community.

This catchment strategy builds on:

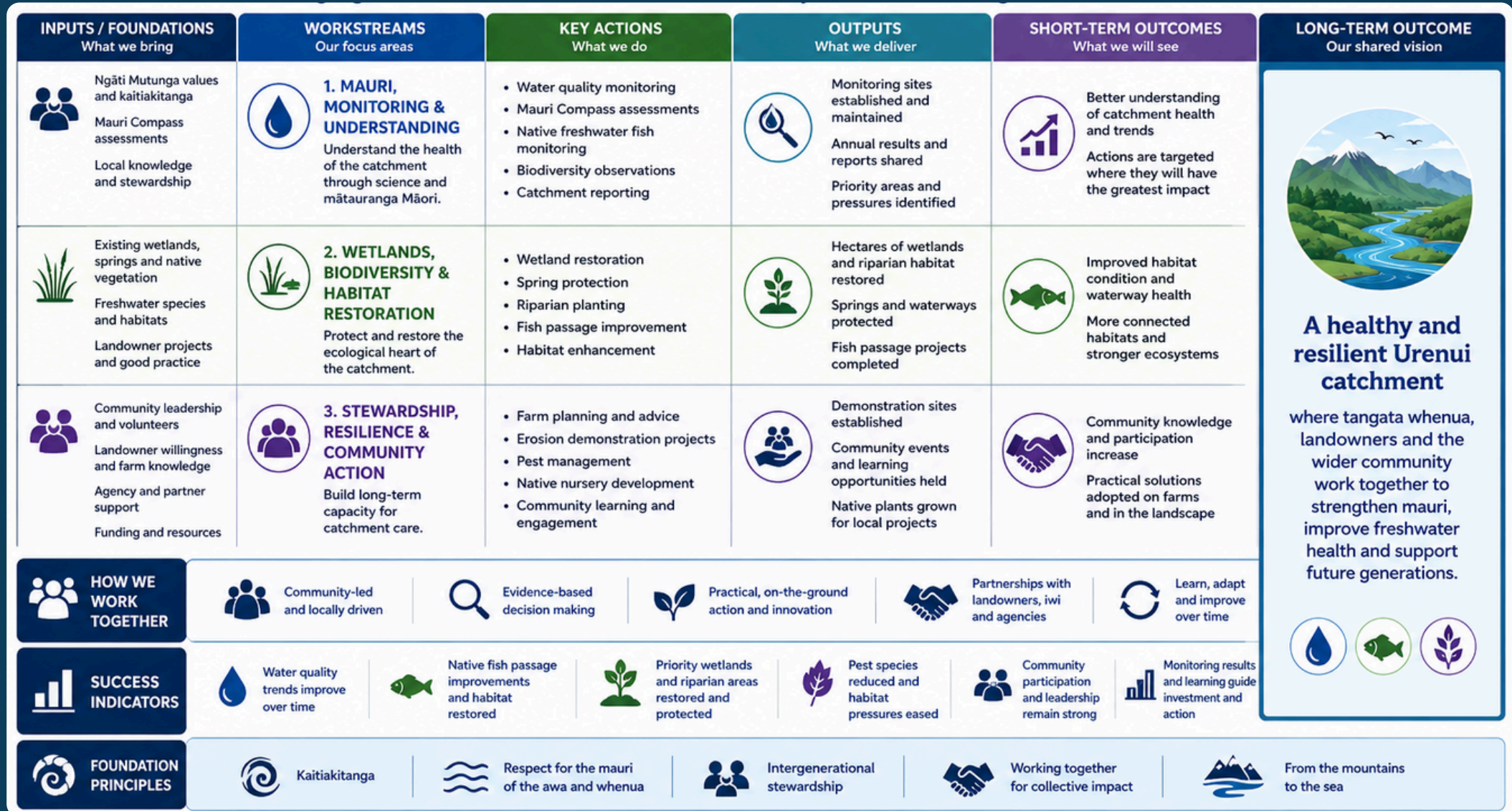
- Existing community initiatives
- Farm planning programmes and local environmental projects
- Ngāti Mutunga Mauri Compass assessments
- Community knowledge and leadership

The focus is not simply environmental improvement. It is restoring and strengthening the relationship between people, the land and the water.



Catchment Strategy Logic

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER ON A PAGE





02: What Makes Urenui Great

Catchment State (1 / 2)

Biophysical, Cultural and Community Character

The Urenui catchment covers approximately 13,400 hectares and extends from the forested hill country of eastern Taranaki to the Urenui estuary. The catchment supports productive farming, extensive indigenous forest, important freshwater habitats and significant cultural values associated with the Urenui Awa and Ngāti Mutunga.

LAND AND WATER

The catchment contains:

- Extensive indigenous forest in the upper catchment
- Productive hill country and pastoral farming
- A highly connected river network flowing to the Urenui estuary
- Numerous spring-fed tributaries
- Significant areas of paper road and river reserve adjoining waterways
- Remnant wetlands, springs and kahikatea habitats
- Strong mountain-to-sea freshwater connectivity

The Urenui River is approximately 42 km long and is fed by 11 major tributaries. The catchment retains many natural values but due to its locations and geology, also faces ongoing pressure from erosion, sediment movement and invasive species.

CATCHMENT HEALTH SUMMARY

Community knowledge and recent assessments indicate:

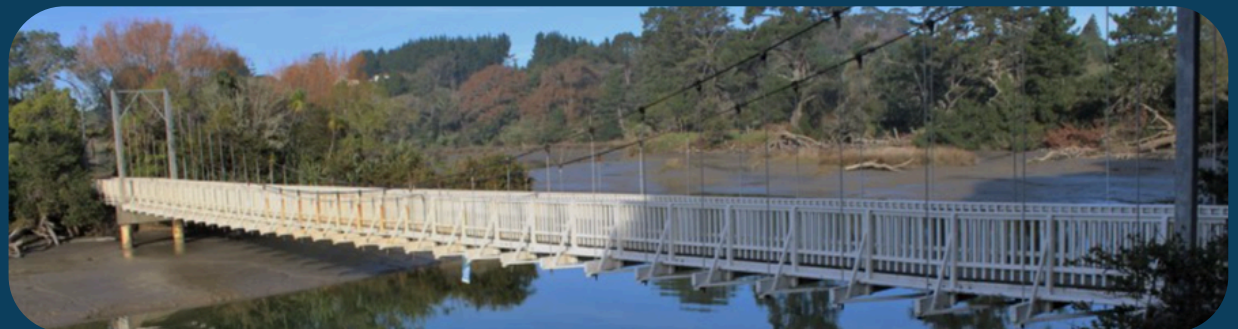
- Bank erosion is the most significant environmental challenge across the catchment.
- Water quality monitoring is underway to better understand E. coli, sediment and nutrient sources.
- Pest species including goats, possums, pigs and stoats remain widespread.
- Wetland loss and reduced riparian cover have affected freshwater habitats.
- Despite these pressures, the catchment retains strong ecological function and important native fish populations

MAURI

Ngāti Mutunga identify the Urenui Awa as a treasured taonga with deep cultural, historical and spiritual significance.

The Mauri Compass assessment found:

- Strong ongoing connection between Ngāti Mutunga and the awa.
- Significant declines in mahinga kai opportunities.
- Reduced biodiversity and habitat condition.
- Loss of wetlands and pressures on freshwater ecosystems.
- A clear opportunity for restoration and reconnection through practical catchment action.



Catchment State (2 / 2)

Biophysical, Cultural and Community Character

SIGNIFICANT FRESHWATER SPECIES

The catchment supports several fish species, including:

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

The presence of tuna throughout parts of the catchment is considered a significant strength and reflects the importance of maintaining habitat connectivity from the mountains to the sea



KNOWLEDGE STRENGTHS

- Four years of community monitoring.
- eDNA programme.
- Macroinvertebrate monitoring.
- Strong local knowledge.
- Mauri monitoring and reporting

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

- Demonstrate practical erosion control solutions.
- Restore wetlands and spring-fed habitats.
- Enhance riparian planting along river margins and reserves.
- Improve fish passage and freshwater habitat.
- Develop a native nursery to support restoration projects.
- Establish a flagship wetland restoration project below Ōkoki Pā, protecting springs and remnant kahikatea while strengthening cultural and ecological values.



Community Input

Community Approaches

URENUI CATCHMENT GROUP CATCHMENT STRATEGY 2026

The Urenui Catchment Group has developed through strong local leadership and a commitment to improving environmental outcomes, community resilience and catchment health.

The group has focused on building community connections, sharing knowledge and creating opportunities for practical action. This includes newsletters, workshops, field days, resilience initiatives and growing partnerships with landowners, agencies and Ngāti Mutunga.

The catchment is characterised by a strong willingness to work together, learn from others and trial practical solutions that can be applied across farms and waterways.

Workshop feedback highlighted a strong focus on flood resilience, water quality and community-led action, reflecting a desire for practical solutions that support both environmental and farming outcomes.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Community

- Quarterly community newsletter (Pānui)
- Development of a local catchment directory
- Community events and workshops
- Emergency response planning
- Growing partnerships

Land, Water & Biodiversity

- Water quality monitoring programme
- Wetland and riparian restoration discussions
- Erosion and river management field days

Knowledge & Learning

- Information sharing between landowners
- Mauri Compass assessments completed

WHAT WE HEARD

Erosion

Bank erosion was identified as the most significant issue with uncertainty around which solutions work best in local conditions.

Water Quality

Improving understanding of water quality, particularly E. coli sources, was seen as an important next step.

Wetlands & Biodiversity

Participants recognised the value of wetlands, native habitats and freshwater species.

Pest Management

Possums, goats, pigs, stoats and invasive plants such as old man's beard were identified as widespread challenges.

Local Feedback

ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES





03: Direction & Workstreams

Key Issues & Opportunities

WHAT SHAPES THE STRATEGY



Key Issues and Opportunities

RESTORING THE CATCHMENT FROM A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The Mauri Compass assessment identified opportunities to strengthen cultural connection, mahinga kai values and the overall health of the awa.

WETLAND RESTORATION

Remaining wetlands, springs and seepage areas represent some of the greatest opportunities for long-term environmental improvement.

SHOWCASE WETLAND OPPORTUNITY

A priority opportunity exists below Okoki Pā where Ngāti Mutunga are exploring restoration of river-edge wetlands, spring systems and riparian habitats.

The site includes three remaining kahikatea trees, each associated with spring-fed water sources, and has potential to become a flagship restoration project for the catchment.

NATIVE NURSERY DEVELOPMENT

Community discussions have also identified the potential establishment of a native nursery within the catchment to support future restoration projects and strengthen local capability.

RIVER RESILIENCE

Bank erosion was consistently identified as the most significant environmental issue facing the catchment. Demonstrating practical erosion-control approaches and sharing lessons between landowners represents a significant opportunity for improving catchment resilience.

PEST MANAGEMENT

Goat, possum and pig impacts remain a concern, particularly around indigenous habitats, QEII blocks and public conservation land.



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 — Build Understanding and Demonstrate What Works

- Continue water quality monitoring.
- Continue Mauri Compass assessments and cultural monitoring.
- Identify priority erosion sites.
- Trial practical erosion control approaches.
- Map wetlands, springs and restoration opportunities.
- Investigate options for a community native nursery.

A strong understanding of catchment health and practical evidence about what works in Urenui conditions.

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

- Implement erosion control at priority sites.
- Restore wetlands and spring-fed habitats.
- Scale up results from trial sites
- Improve freshwater habitat for tuna and other indicator species.
- Support establishment of local native plant supply.

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

Phase 3 (Years 5+) – Grow, Maintain and Adapt

- Continue monitoring and reporting.
- Repeat Mauri Compass assessments.
- Expand successful restoration approaches.
- Track indicator species and catchment outcomes.
- Adapt future investment based on evidence.
- Continue community leadership and knowledge sharing.

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

Potential Flagship Projects

- Urenui erosion demonstration network.
- Ōkoki Pā wetland and spring restoration project.
- Community native nursery.
- Tuna and Lamprey monitoring programme.
- Community-led catchment monitoring and reporting.



Meet Connected Outcomes

THREE WORKSTREAMS WITH ONE INTEGRATED OUTCOME





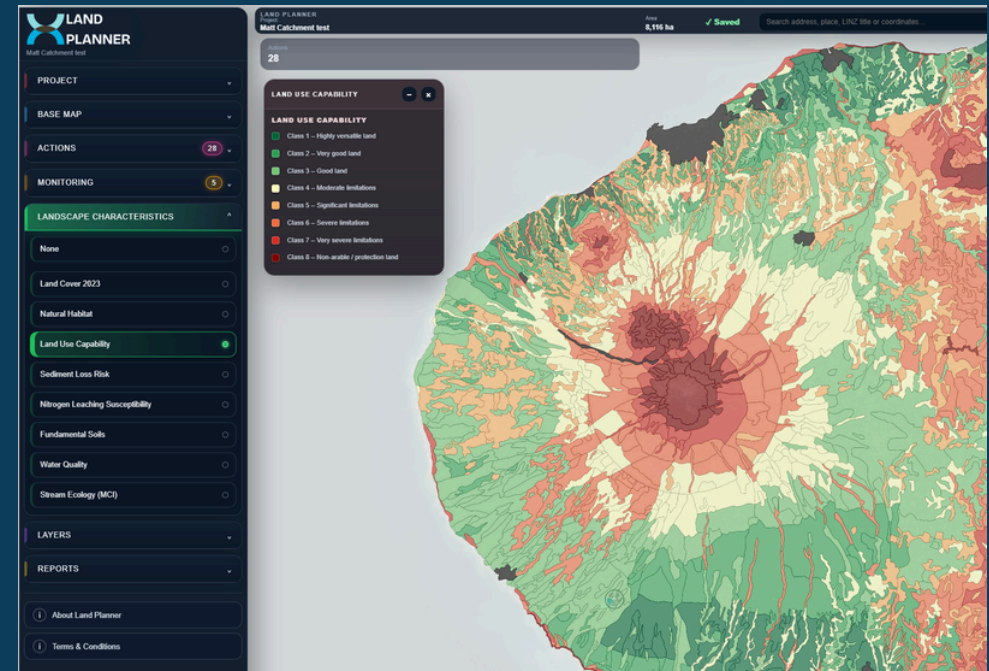
04: Implementation

Action planning is a live approach



Urenui Action Summary

Year	Quarter	Workstream	Priority Action
2026	Q3	Maui, Monitoring & Understanding	Establish monitoring programme, recruit volunteers and commence monthly monitoring.
2026	Q3	Community Action	Confirm Steering Group priorities and assign project champions.
2026	Q4	Monitoring & Understanding	Map wetlands, springs, erosion hotspots, fish passage barriers and ecological corridors.
2026	Q4	Habitat Restoration	Identify demonstration projects and flagship restoration sites.
2027	Q1	Habitat Restoration	Prepare restoration plans for priority wetlands, springs, riparian margins and erosion sites.
2027	Q1	Community Action	Develop annual workshop programme including pests, spring protection, forestry and freshwater farm plans.
2027	Q2	Habitat Restoration	Implement first demonstration projects including wetlands, erosion control and riparian restoration.
2027	Q2	Monitoring	Begin fish passage assessment and tuna/tamprey monitoring.
2027	Q3	Community Action	Investigate community native nursery and local plant supply.
2027	Q3	Habitat Restoration	Develop Quick Pick flagship restoration programme.
2027	Q4	Monitoring	Produce first State of the Catchment report.
2028	Q1	Community Action	Expand demonstration network and farm visits.
2028	Q2	Habitat Restoration	Implement additional erosion, wetland and habitat projects.
2028	Q3	Monitoring	Review monitoring and update priorities.
2028	Q4	All	Three-year review and updated implementation plan.



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.





05: Measuring success

Monitoring



MEASURING PROGRESS ACROSS THE CATCHMENT

Outcome Area	What Success Looks Like	Frequency	WhoIndicator
Mauri & Catchment Health	Improved overall health of the catchment	Every 3–5 years	Mauri Compass score and community assessment
Water Quality	Improving freshwater condition	Quarterly	E. coli, clarity, nutrients and temperature trends
Native Biodiversity	Healthy native species and habitats	Annual	Tuna, kōura, lamprey and native fish presence
Wetlands & Habitat Restoration	More connected and resilient habitats	Annual	Hectares restored, riparian planting completed, wetlands protected
Erosion & Resilience	Reduced erosion risk and improved river stability	Annual	Demonstration sites established, priority sites treated
Community Stewardship	Strong participation and local leadership	Annual	Volunteers, field days, workshops and restoration projects
Tangata Whenua Partnership	Strong partnership and cultural outcomes	Annual	Joint projects delivered, cultural monitoring undertaken, mātauranga Māori incorporated into decision-making

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.

Mauri & Catchment Health

- Mauri Compass trends improving.
- Catchment health better understood.

Water Quality

- Water quality trends improving.
- Reduced contaminant risks.

Native Biodiversity

- Tuna, kōura and native fish remain widespread.
- Improved habitat condition.

Wetlands & Habitat Restoration

- Priority wetlands and springs restored.
- More connected riparian habitat.

Erosion & Resilience

- Practical erosion solutions demonstrated and adopted.
- Improved riverbank stability.

Community Stewardship

- Active catchment participation and leadership.
- Ongoing learning and knowledge sharing.

Tangata Whenua Partnership

- Ngāti Mutunga aspirations reflected in catchment projects.
- Strong kaitiakitanga and cultural connection to the awa.



Shared kaitiakitanga

A SHARED GOAL FOR THE URENUI GROUP



Improving outcomes in the Urenui 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.

