

Manawatū River Source to Sea

Submission to Horizons 20/21 Annual Plan

About Manawatū River Source to Sea

Manawatū River Source to Sea (Source to Sea) is a community-led and catchment-wide initiative focused on providing positive outcomes for our community, from the headwaters of the Manawatū River in the Ruahine Ranges, through to the confluence at Foxton Estuary in Horowhenua.

The positive outcomes include:

- Enhancing biodiversity, both flora and fauna;
- Building awareness and capability through citizen science (e.g. Palmy's Plastic Pollution Challenge);
- Supporting and encouraging more nature-based experiences;
- Developing social enterprises contributing to economic wellbeing;
- Increased social and cultural wellbeing.

This community initiative has been developed by the Biodiversity Cluster, a subset of Environment Network Manawatu (ENM) member groups. It is closely aligned with Palmerston North City Council's Goal 4, an Eco-City, especially with the Biodiversity Plan; as well as parts of the Three Waters Plan and the Waste Plan. It is also well aligned with Goal 2, a Creative & Exciting City.

SUBMISSION

Rates: We are pleased to see that Horizons is recognising that rates will be a burden for many individuals and businesses in the 2020-2021 year and are reducing the rate increase from the proposed 5.95% to 1%. We believe an on-going compound increase of approximately 6% per year will not be sustainable in the future so this will be a good opportunity for HRC in how to manage reduced rates going forward.

Community Engagement: We encourage HRC to engage more with Community, seeking opportunities to increase capacity in regenerating freshwater and biodiversity for the Manawatū River Catchment. Post Covid-19 we see, in particular, opportunities around:

- Further developing Citizen Science as part of environmental health monitoring, building on the successful Palmy's Plastic Pollution Challenge initiative (partly funded through a Manawatū River Leaders' Forum Community grant);
- Taking advantage of co-funding opportunities such as Predator Free 2050;
- Increased community collaboration with native planting programmes through targeted funding to groups like ours who have substantial volunteer networks.

Freshwater: Source to Sea supports the on-going work to improve freshwater quality in the region. Investment by HRC with volunteer groups, we believe, can provide more cost benefit gains and help limit the burden on ratepayers whilst continuing to move forward improving freshwater quality.

Biodiversity and biosecurity: Our member volunteers involved in pest control have an understanding of the predator-prey modelling that has been done globally. The well-known Lotka-Volterra model explains how if you remove a pest the prey increases in number. Is this what is happening with rabbit/rat numbers in the HRC region now that stoat and weasel numbers have been reduced?

We value the income from Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency being spent to both enhance biodiversity and provide the opportunity for people to enjoy that biodiversity. Creating a UNESCO Geopark in and around the Manawatū Gorge would add further value and benefit to the wider community.

River Management: While flood protection work is critical in some locations, effort should be put into allowing waterways to retain their natural courses. Flood protection can be provided by increasing biodiversity stands that can survive occasional flooding. Purchase of land under stopbanks and more planting will also increase biodiversity further helping river management.

Climate change: The vulnerability assessment needs to include a review of ecosystems vulnerability under climate change and how regenerating ecosystems will be beneficial for biodiversity and a way to reduce climate change vulnerability. Climate change should be an important component of the farm plans prepared as part of the Sustainable Land Use Initiative so both short- and long-term gains are achieved.

Transport: The growing investment by HRC in regional transport is valued but empty big buses are a bad look. Small ones would do the job as well. Bus services need to be patronised so access to information about routes etc needs to be greatly improved using different forms of media. There needs to be on-going assessment to ensure that after a settling-in period passenger use is revisited to ensure the service is required.

Loan repayments and capital expenditure: Not enough detail is provided here to intelligently comment. It is prudent to extend loan repayment periods given the current situation. Considering refinancing may be worthwhile given the low interest rates.