

Thank you for your submission to Horizons Regional Council's 2021-31 Long-term Plan (LTP). Your input is invaluable when it comes to guiding decisions around our work programmes and helping Council achieve their new vision for the region: Tō tātou rohe – taiao ora, tangata ora, mauri ora. Our place – a healthy environment where people are thriving.

We had a great response from our community, receiving 439 submissions, covering 2,263 submission points. Following two days of hearings in Whanganui and Palmerston North, where we heard from 46 submitters in person, Council deliberated on all submissions and feedback received.

As a result, Council has resolved to:

- Approve additional funding to support the Living Wage proposal for Public Transport Bus Drivers, resulting in an increase to rates funding of \$67,130 in Year 1, rising to \$99,960 in Year 2 and \$102,508 in Year 3.
- Approve additional funding to support the implementation of Feilding bus service enhancements, as supported by the community and approved by Council in May 2020. This results in an increase to rates of \$37,655 in Year 1, rising to \$39,102 in Year 2 and \$40,099 in Year 3.
- Approve additional funding of \$940,000 to fund remedial work on the South East Ruahine River Management Scheme. The loan will have a repayment period of 25 years, with costs of the loan to be borne by the Scheme.
- Reduce 2021-2022 targeted rates for the Upper Manawatū/Lower Mangahao River Management Scheme from 3.59 per cent to 0 per cent. This reduction will reduce the Scheme contribution to reserves for the year from \$59,000 to \$50,000.
- Approve additional funding of \$85,000 per annum to the Environmental Education programme budget.
- Make no changes to the Community Outcomes listed in the draft LTP.
- Reinstate the targeted rate for the Rangitīkei District to fund the Rangitīkei Environment Group as per current practice.
- Reinstate the targeted rate for the Waitarere area to fund the Waitarere community project as per current practice.

We received considerable feedback on the four points that we consulted on and as a result of your submissions, Council has also voted to:

- Rate for implementation of the National Environmental Standard for Freshwater.
- Fund preparation of a revised One Plan, in line with government policy on freshwater, through borrowing.
- Support a new Climate Change activity, funded from the General Rate.
- Make improvements to the Palmerston North and Whanganui bus services via rates targeted to those communities that benefit.
- Rate for Horizons contribution to funding support of the Lower North Island Passenger Rail project.

As a result of these resolutions, rates for Year 1 will be increasing by an average of 8.4 per cent across the region; for Year 2 they will be an average of 8.2 per cent and an average of 6.5 per cent for Year 3. These rates are only an average and the rate impact will differ from district to district due to factors such as changes to property values, and specific rating inputs such as river schemes and urban passenger transport rates for certain areas.

We appreciate that any rate increase is not ideal and want you to know that Council did not make these decisions lightly. It is always a fine balance between keeping rates at an affordable level while ensuring we have the appropriate programmes in place for managing our region's natural resources into the future.

Your submission noted Manawatū Source to Sea are delighted to see Horizons work on removing fish barriers and opening up more streams for native fish migration. They also note that it is sad to hear from active members that current water quality is not good enough to support a healthy trout fishery.

The Jobs for Nature project for enhancing fish populations through remediation of fish passage provides a significant further investment in the work programme to monitor fish in the region and to identify and remediate fish barriers. This includes an ongoing programme after the completion of the Jobs for Nature project for the full 10 years of the LTP. This builds on the science programme and fish barrier restoration work that has been progressed via the Lake Horowhenua Accord, Manawatū River Leaders Accord and the associated projects that received co-funding from Central Government, Horizons, Landowners and a range of other stakeholders/agencies. These projects alongside the Sustainable Land Use Initiative, other Freshwater Improvement Fund and Jobs for Nature projects combine to provide an accelerated implementation works programme in the LTP to improve water quality and aquatic habitat.

Your submission seeks that Horizons supports Awahuri Forest Kitchener Park Trusts efforts to control *Phragmites karka*. Horizons have been working alongside the Trust on this issue and will continue to do so.

Your submission requested that Horizons consider biocontrol options for pink ragwort, including amendments to the budget for Biosecurity and Biodiversity activities where necessary.

Pink ragwort is a pest plant that Horizons has received many enquiries about and is a weed that is observationally increasing in abundance in parts of the region. There are currently no known biological control agents for pink ragwort and the development of a biocontrol agent would likely take time. Council have provided continued and additional resourcing for biological control activity in the LTP. This includes the contribution to the New Zealand biological collective and increased staff capacity to distribute and monitor biological control agents. Specific funding is also proposed for investigation of biological control for purple loosestrife, which is one of the 9 species in the Regional Pest Management Plan currently not projected to meet Regional Pest Management Plan targets. Further work would be required to assess if there are viable options for biological control for this pest and where in the priority for biological control investment these would sit (noting pink ragwort is currently not a part of the Regional Pest Management Plan).

Horizons has previously investigated the suitability for pink ragwort to be managed via pest plan designated management options. The outcome was to not attempt to rate for control programmes or to use a regulatory rule based approach. This was mostly due to the plants low impact on pasture production land. Horizons have previously put forward an application to the New Zealand Biological Control Collective for pink ragwort to be investigated as a target for biological control. At the time, 2018/19, the national ranking was lower than other potential targets. The prioritisation process is being refined and out for consultation this calendar year. Horizons will again add this plant to the list for inclusion in the nationally funded programme.

An overview study of pink ragwort published in 2002 by a New Zealand researcher noted there are no internationally known biological control agents for pink ragwort, so any attempt to use bio-agents will begin at first principles and require substantial investment; hence the desire to seek funds from a national base. Typically an initial investigation requires a strategic feasibility study which costs in the order of \$30,000-50,000; and if suitable agents are noted then the process would be again prioritised against other target species. If Manawatū District Council would like to discuss this further, including the potential to contribute co-funding to the strategic feasibility study of a biological control for pink ragwort, please contact Jon Roygard, ([jon.roygard@horizons.govt.nz](mailto:jon.roygard@horizons.govt.nz)).

Your submission noted that Manawatū River Source to Sea is pleased to see guaranteed funding for iconic places such as Te Apiti, Mount Bruce Pukaha, Bushy Park etc. Further, that you are also pleased to see contestable funding of \$260,000 for biodiversity and hope that this will include allocations to much needed coordinator time to further mobilise volunteers. It is proposed that Horizons considers non-contestable funding to allow MRStS to continue building capacity and impact which contributes to Horizons achieving its stated goals. Your submission also requested that Council considers multiple year funding for projects, e.g. sourcing seeds, growing plants, planting and maintenance.

Thank you for the support of the icon project and contestable fund model. The request for coordinator time has been voiced by several submitters and is something that it is acknowledged could be clearer in the contestable fund criteria. Council will review this prior to next years funding round. The request for dedicated funding has been considered by Council as a part of the LTP process and Council has through the LTP increased funding for community biodiversity projects via the icon and contestable fund model. The contestable fund model provides a mechanism for Manawatū Source to Sea to secure funding including for multiple year projects.

Your submission, and several others, requested increased funding for environmental coordinators. Through the LTP, Council has increased funding for the community biodiversity programme to increase community engagement in biodiversity projects through a contestable biodiversity fund. Further an additional staff position has been funded to provide additional capacity for the environmental education programme to coordinate engagement in community biodiversity projects.

The impacts of sedimentation on our River Schemes is an issue that is identified in our 30 Year Infrastructure Strategy under the heading of unsustainable land use. Work is currently underway to better understand the sources of, and processes of, sedimentation

Thank you once again for your submission. Should you wish for more detail on any part of Horizons Regional Council's 2021-31 Long-term Plan you can view it online <https://www.horizons.govt.nz/publications-feedback/long-term-plan-2021-31> or contact us at [help@horizons.govt.nz](mailto:help@horizons.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely  
Rachel Keedwell, PhD  
**CHAIR**