

**Environment Network Manawatu**

**Submission to Horowhenua District Council Long Term Plan 2018-2038**

**ANNUAL PLAN 2017/18 CONSULTATIO**

**Contact Details** (You must provide your contact details for your submission to be considered)

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**Hearing of Submissions**

Do you wish to present your submission to Council at a Hearing? **Yes**

Do you want to keep your submission details private? **No**

**BACKGROUND**

Environment Network Manawatu (ENM) is a charitable umbrella organisation dedicated to enhancing the environment within the Manawatu catchment. We receive funding from Palmerston North City Council, Lotteries, Eastern and Central Community Trust, Community Organisation Grants Scheme and project funding from additional organisations. We currently have over 50 active member groups, four of whom are based in the Horowhenua District and four extra groups who are routinely working in the Horowhenua.

This submission has been written in response to initial comment on the plan from our member groups. It has been revised in response to further member group feedback.

**COMMENTS ON THE 2019/2020 ANNUAL PLAN**

ENM believes that our member groups contribute towards many of the community outcomes identified by Council, particularly the thriving communities, exuberant economy, stunning environment and enabling infrastructure outcomes.

ENM recommends that council actively resources community groups that are working alongside council to achieve the proposed community outcomes for the District, as a way to engage the community and also build greater community ownership.

ENM would like to comment on two programmes of work identified in this plan being:

**Community Plans**

ENM is aware of several environmental groups working with or within communities that have been identified as targets for community plan development and ENM would hope that these groups would be actively involved with the development of these plans given their involvement in these townships to ensure these groups can participate, but also to avoid any duplication.

A particular example is Save Our River Trust in Foxton, who have a specific allotment of PGF funding to identify the feasibility around environmental enhancement for Foxtons waterways, but also NZ Landcare Trust, who are embarking on a three year programme of work (that began in November 2018) with Ministry for the Environment and Horizons Regional Council funding, to bring together the communities within the Waikawa Stream catchment (including Manakau and Waikawa Beach townships).

The NZ Landcare Trust programme of work also includes the development of a Strategy and Action Plan for the catchment. This plan should have strong links and ties with the Community Plans for Manakau and Waikawa Beach and could possibly involve some co-development to ensure these communities do not dis-engage as a result of these processes occurring independently.

**Water and Watstewater Feasibility Studies – Ohau and Waitarere Beach**

Well planned water and wastewater infrastructure is an important component in being able to increase the density of some of the smaller townships within the Horowhenua without having significant environmental impacts. However, with provision of this infrastructure, there also becomes the tendency to consume more resources and also to take less responsibility for the waste that households produce.

ENM would like to suggest that, prior to council undertaking any investment, they create and adopt a water and wastewater minimisation strategy (different from a solid waste strategy) for the district, looking to incorporate opportunities as follows:

1. Only providing supplementary water schemes to communities who have had to provide their own water supplies until the development of the proposed infrastructure and requiring them to maintain (existing) or install (new build) rainwater collection and storage. This means the design requirements of the water supplies can be smaller and, consequently, a smaller build cost and lower environmental impact for these communities.
2. Requiring water efficient, dual flush toilets to be installed as part of any building consent and/or wastewater connection agreement.
3. Offering subsidies or incentives for wastewater separation in new builds so that only black water is collected as part of wastewater and that households have the ability to store and use greywater (shower water, laundry, sink water etc.) for gardens and for flushing toilets. This is particularly appropriate for beach communities where greywater can supply significant volumes of irrigation/gardening water for summertime use.

ENM believes that this is an important component to undertake first prior to any feasibility studies being undertaken, as this will encourage the kind of thinking which will enable more cost effective solutions for the communities identified as a way to limit council debt, plus have a better environmental result. A key step to achieve this is to look at solutions around minimising water use and wastewater production.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

It is pleasing to see Council is still actively looking to weigh up its services versus its cost.

ENM would encourage council to continue taking steps to enable greater community participation in decision making. Council needs to ensure that all proposals are grounded at a community level and that plenty of time is given for a decision to be made, which will set up your council for long term success where you can generate community buy-in and ownership of project work. Your intent to undertake Community Plans highlights this and ENM would encourage that environmental matters are a key consideration in these plans.

**WHAT OTHER PROJECTS OR IDEAS SHOULD COUNCIL BE CONSIDERING FOR THIS PLAN AND BEYOND?**

ENM would like to HDC to consider beginning to fund key initiatives as part of their 2019-2020 Plan, targeted around enhancing the districts environmental organisations and environmental education:

**Manawatu River Source to Sea**

**Our submission is that:**

1. **Council become active participants in the Community driven project, Manawatū River Source to Sea (S2S) – a project that will enhance biodiversity and bring economic benefits to the Community;**
2. **Council include funding within the 2019-2020 Annual Plan of $10,000 per annum to help support S2S (2017 – 2040) projects and enable a work programme to begin in the Horowhenua District.**

As a way of trying to curb the biodiversity loss within the Manawatu River Catchment, promote recreation and also turn people’s attention to the wider river environment, ENM’s biodiversity focused member groups have been formulating a project over the past four years to enable the linking of existing works, fill in voids where people and organisations are not working and encourage greater participation in environmental works from the community.

Please see the attached progress report for this project which I have attached and forms part of this submission.

Manawatu River Source to Sea is now actively undertaking work programmes in and around the Palmerston North Community. The Palmy Plastic Challenge is our first action based initiative by this project to engage the community and educate people about the importance of removing plastic out of waterways**.**

The S2S project was successful in being supported by Palmerston North City Council Priority Grant funding, which will enable a coordinated work programme work to be developed to enable implementation of w wider work programme for the city. S2S has also received funding for the Palmy Plastic Challenge initiative, which is co-funded by Massey University and Manawatu River Leaders Community Grant funding.

**Enviroschools Programme**

**Our submission is that:**

1. **Council includes a budget in this years Annual Plan to begin funding up to 8 primary schools to become facilitated enviro-schools. For subsequent plans, officers having engagement with Horizons Regional Council educators about any further demand for this service in the district so they can budget for more schools to join in future years.**
2. **In all other Districts in the Horizons Region, councils pay $1000 per Enviroschool per year to provide an Enviroschools Facilitator. This would equate to a budget of $8,000 for this years Plan.**

ENM remains disappointed that **Horowhenua District Council is the only Council in the Horizons Region that does not support the Enviroschools programme**. This is despite the facts that:

* Enviroschools is a long term behaviour change programme, which has a strong focus on minimising impacts on the environment and restoring natural ecosystems – reducing the burden and associated costs of infrastructure required by communities. Providing a budget for this feeds into the councils community outcomes, particularly the ‘Stunning environment’ outcome.
* In the long term, this will save councils money. The Enviroschools programme compliments and extends Horowhenua’s existing zero waste education, which is also provided by other districts.
* Horizons Regional Council have identified that Horowhenua District currently has five schools on the ‘Friends of Enviroschools’ list, plus Opiki School who are all wanting to become Enviroschools.
* ENM also understands that Council has been thinking about providing funding to allow secondary schools to become part of this programme. This would be a useful step for those schools who desire this, but ENM believes the best resources and outcomes from Enviroschools nationally tends to come from primary school level and we believe primary schools should be offered this programme as well.

ENM would like to see HDC providing funding for any schools in the district that are currently ‘Friends of Enviroschools’ or any schools looking to join this programme. Enviro schools provides critical resourcing for schools and learning for children that will provide positive outcomes throughout the district for years to come.

**Manawatu River Loop at Foxton**

Both Save Our River Trust (SORT) and Wildlife Foxton Trust are member groups of ENM.

In SORT’S case, ENM is well aware of the their resource consent, granted by Horizons Regional Council to SORT, which has significant implications for this group implementing works on the town frontage of the river loop. The potential benefits that works around the town frontage could have for both this community and for the Councils new community facility Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom are significant and ENM would urge council to assign further funding within the 2019-2020 budget to SORT, to enable them to have a greater funding pool to undertake a robust and compliant work programme within the Foxton Loop over the period.

Wildlife Foxton Trust has also become a member group of ENM. ENM believes this organisation has a significant opportunity to create an environmental hub for Foxton, showcasing New Zealand native fauna and providing educational and tourism opportunities. ENM would encourage District Council to consider offering public land or buildings (if applicable) and also considering investment into this facility into the future.

**Manawatu Estuary**

ENM would like to highlight the Manawatu Estuary as an area where Council should be investing significant energy and resource. This Estuary is one of only six places in New Zealand to be listed as a wetland of international importance with the international Ramsar Secretariat, due to its diverse population of migratory and sedentary native and indigenous bird species.

Horowhenua District Council’s current contribution to this area is around management of the dune lands at the foreshore end of the site and also the bird sanctuary spit, both of which are habitats that require significant investment over time to keep them in good condition. We would encourage Horowhenua District Council to increase its funding for these special reserve lands with high biodiversity value and make sure that they still have these internationally recognised environments, and the flora and fauna which they provide for, for future generations.

We would also encourage Horowhenua District Council to continue to work actively with the Manawatu Estuary Trust and the Manawatu Estuary Management Team to be able to ensure that decisions about this estuary are not made unilaterally, but made across organisations and also have ownership from the community.