



Toitū te marae ā Tane  
Toitū te marae ā Rongo  
Toitū te whenua

Care for the domain of Tāne Mahuta  
and Rongomatāne  
and the land will sustain you

## About the Programme

Wai Kōkopu is a community-led programme of action to replenish and revitalise the health of Waihi estuary (Te Waihi). It involves catchment-wide innovation, enlightened thinking, strong leadership, the passion within our local communities and the harnessing of collective action.

This programme focuses on environmental initiatives at a farm, sub-catchment and catchment level with an overarching objective of improving water quality in the Waihi Catchment waterways.

By fostering awareness and shared responsibility for the health of the Waihi Estuary, we hope to influence better practices, decisions and outcomes for the lands, waters, biodiversity and community within the Waihi Estuary Catchment.

## How we will work

We will be guided by the following principles:

- Kaitiakitanga (guardianship / stewardship).
- Kotahitanga (unity).

In practice this means that we will:

- be outcome, not issue, focused.
- work collectively and support each other.
- lead by example.
- encourage other landowners and land managers to demonstrate environmental excellence.

## Why is Wai Kōkopu needed?

The Waihi estuary, Te Waihi, is in a poor and declining ecological state and does not consistently meet guidelines for safe swimming and shellfish gathering.

Significant reductions of contaminants (between 30% and 60% for nutrients) and E.coli (50%) are needed to return Te Waihi to a healthy ecological state.

This is a significant undertaking and no single organisation can create large-scale and long term environmental or social change in isolation.

Our long-term measures of success are simple: When our two key indicator species, the kōkopu, are abundant, and flourishing from the sea to the mountains of the volcanic plateau; and our estuary is rich with giant pīpī again, we will then know Te Waihi is returning to good health.

## Who is involved?

Wai Kōkopu Incorporated has been established to provide the strategic direction as well as govern and manage the programme of work across the wider Waihi Estuary Catchment.

It is a community driven co-governance group that connects, informs and lobbies agencies, organisations, industry and landowners towards achieving the reductions required to meet catchment water quality targets. It will also be supported by appropriate hau kāinga representation at governance and operational levels with relevant guidance from the primary sector groups, local authorities and community care groups.

The Governance group consists of:

- Paora Tapsell
- Larissa Wharepourī
- Rick Rapana
- John Burke
- John Scrimgeour
- Andre Hickson
- Esther Kirk
- James Anderson
- Ross Bawden
- Darryl Jensen





## Our journey to date

The Wai Kōkopu Programme was developed by the Waihi Estuary Catchment Steering Group. This group was formed in February 2020 following a meeting which brought together a community of interest from the Waihi Estuary Catchment to drive action on the ground, building on from the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management community consultation process. At the meeting, landowners, hau kāinga and other stakeholders expressed their concern at the state of the Waihi Estuary and initiated a community-led initiative to combat the issues.

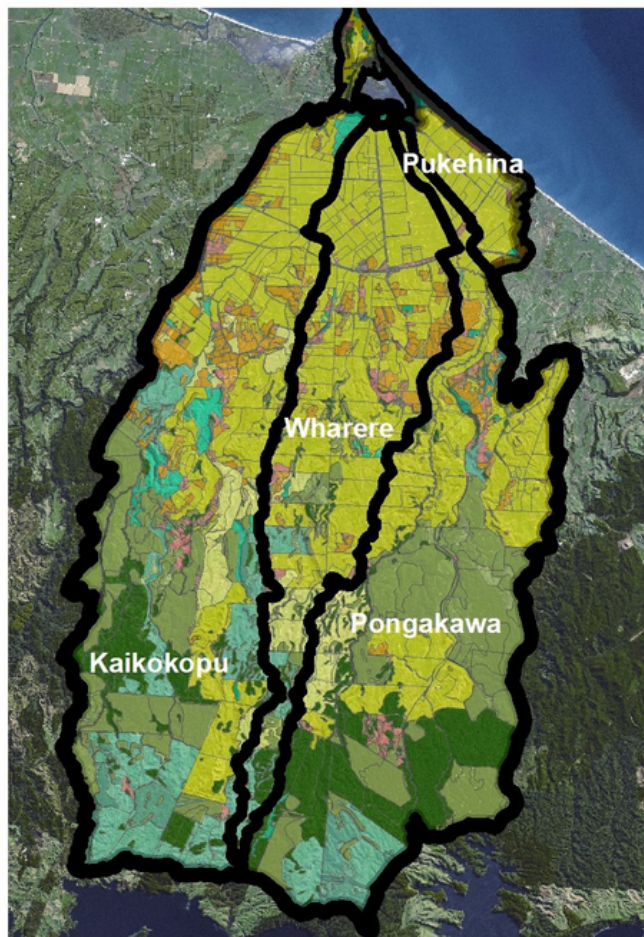
The Waihi Estuary Catchment Steering Group was replaced by Wai Kōkopu Incorporated in August 2020.

## Developing a Strategy

Our Strategy, which will outline our collective approach to the restoration and care for the Waihi Estuary Catchment (including the contributing rivers, streams and surrounding land), is currently in development.

Having a Strategy:

- focuses our collective actions towards a shared vision.
- helps us to demonstrate kaitiakitanga and environmental leadership.
- enables greater connectivity and shared learnings.
- helps us to prepare for upcoming freshwater regulation.
- provides a platform for effective working partnerships.
- recognises the interconnectedness between the upper catchment and the estuary.
- supports applications for external funding.



ABOVE: WAIHI ESTUARY CATCHMENT

## Strategy components

Our draft Vision articulates where we want to be, while our Mission Statement describes our role in realising this proposed vision.

We have three interconnected Goals outlining what we want to achieve in delivering our projects:



### VISION:

To restore the life-giving properties of Te Waihi through connected and collective action



### MISSION:

Working together over the next 20 years to restore and replenish the Waihi Estuary; Pongakawa, Kaikōkopu, and Wharere Rivers and surrounding lands, contributing waters and associated biodiversity



### STRATEGIC GOALS:

Whenua ora | Thriving soils, waterways, biodiversity and micro-climates

Tangata ora | Healthy and resilient whenua-accountable communities

Hau kāinga | Connected, accountable and informed tangata + whenua stewardship

## Our Projects

Our projects are clustered within four workstreams or areas of focus:

### 1. BEST PRACTICE AND INNOVATION

This workstream is focused on innovative ways to deliver environmental excellence at the farm level, sub-catchment level and also nationally. Specific projects include:

- pilot plans on a range of Lighthouse Farms, which bring together the great things that leading farmers are already doing, and then igniting further innovation.
- developing a Digital Pan Sector Land Environment Plan.
- working alongside primary sector groups (dairy, pastoral, forestry, horticulture) to develop Land Environment Plans templates that meet both customer specific Global GAP standards and National Environmental Standards for freshwater.
- encouraging rapid uptake by commercial land users to develop and implement Land Environment Plans.
- detainment bunds and planting in the upper catchment area.

### 2. Information and Monitoring

This workstream is focused on ensuring there is robust data, research and monitoring available for landowners, hau kāinga and wider Waihi Estuary Catchment community. Specific projects include:

- use of drone footage and evidential capture of current state and changing state.
- live monitoring plan and contaminant source tracing.
- development of a cultural monitoring programme.

### 3. RESTORATION

This workstream is focused on creating healthy, diverse and connected habitats and ecosystems within Waihi Estuary Catchment. Specific projects include:

- estuarine rehabilitation.
- riparian corridor plan.
- riparian, wetland and ngāhere restoration and establishment.

### 4. EXTENSION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

This workstream is focused on connecting landowners, hau kāinga, sector groups, volunteers and communities to our projects, to our learnings and to each other.

The pilot project involves a targeted approach to fostering active, connected and engaged communities through the establishment of Wai Kōkopu Community enabler roles.

The role of the enabler is not to carry out consultation but to:

- foster effective working relationships.
- encourage greater involvement in the programme.
- facilitate the transfer of knowledge.
- in the case of landowners, support the progression of on-site improvements.





## Funding opportunities

We have secured funding through the MPI Jobs for Nature Programme to support several of the Wai Kōkopu projects.

The funding will provide the personnel and resources to:

- carry out the Lighthouse Farms and Farm Environment Plan pilot project.
- implement the water quality monitoring plan.
- set up sub-catchment initiatives to work on more specific water quality improvement solutions.



## What's coming up?

Our next steps are to engage with tangata whenua and the broader community on the draft strategy to confirm the guiding pathway for improved water quality in the catchment.

We all have a part to play.

Further funding requests will be developed in the coming months to ensure the projects can all be funded sustainably.



## Who to contact

If you have any questions about the Wai Kōkopu Programme, please contact:

- Andre Hickson, Chairperson – 027 228 5081 or [andre@clonmel.co.nz](mailto:andre@clonmel.co.nz)
- Thomas Grant, Bay of Plenty Regional Council – 0800 884 881 x9434 or [Thomas.Grant@boprc.govt.nz](mailto:Thomas.Grant@boprc.govt.nz)
- Alison Dewes, Tipu Whenua – 021 242 4949 or [alison@tipuwhenua.com](mailto:alison@tipuwhenua.com)

## How to get involved

You can become a member of the Wai Kōkopu Incorporated and join our mailing list to hear of upcoming opportunities to be involved:

Email: [info@wai-kokopu.org.nz](mailto:info@wai-kokopu.org.nz)

Visit: <https://www.wai-kokopu.org.nz/>