



Annual Report FY25/26

1 July 2025-30 June 2026

To reimagine the Mātaura River system by bringing together catchment by design methodologies and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) to build cultural, environmental, and economic resilience in the catchment.



Reimagining Mātaura - Annual Report

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1. Chair's Report



Terry Nicholas

As Chair of Reimagining Mātāura, I am pleased to present this Annual Report and reflect on another year of progress toward our shared vision for Te Au-Nui Pihapiha-Kanakana, the Mātāura River.

Reimagining Mātāura was established through a partnership between Hokonui Rūnanga, Awarua Rūnanga, Waihopai Rūnanga, Ōraka/Aparima Rūnanga, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Fonterra, and Toitū Te Whenua | LINZ to explore a new future for the Mātāura catchment by combining catchment design methodologies with mātauranga Māori. Our vision is to build cultural, environmental, and economic resilience while restoring the health and mauri of one of Murihiku's most significant waterways.

The need for this work has never been clearer. Throughout this year, we have listened carefully to the voices of whānau whose lives and identities are deeply connected to the Mātāura River. Their stories describe an awa that was once central to swimming, camping, whitebaiting, gathering tuna, kanakana, watercress, and other mahinga kai, while also serving as a place for learning, connection, and the passing of knowledge between generations. At the same time, those same voices have expressed concern about declining water quality, the loss of safe recreation opportunities, degradation of tributaries, flood risks, loss of habitat, and the diminishing health of traditional food sources. Despite these concerns, whānau share a strong belief that restoration is both necessary and achievable.

Responding to these aspirations has been a defining focus of our work this year through the development of the Reimagining Mātāura 100-Year Strategy. Guided by facilitator Katerina Kupenga, the strategy was developed through a series of wānanga involving mana whenua, whānau, project partners, and community representatives. The process explored the historic significance of the river, the challenges facing the catchment today, and the opportunities available to future generations. The resulting strategy provides an intergenerational framework focused on protecting taonga tuku iho, strengthening cultural identity, restoring ecological health, and embedding sustainable and climate-resilient practices across the catchment. A

detailed 12-month action plan has also been adopted to move the strategy from aspiration to implementation.

A major achievement this year has been building the knowledge base required to support informed decision-making. Through our partnership with Takiwā Analytics, Reimagining Mātaura has begun bringing together extensive environmental, cultural, and land-use information that has historically been scattered across numerous agencies and databases. For the first time, information on catchment boundaries, river networks, biodiversity records, fish species, floodplains, land tenure, and historical imagery is being assembled into a single platform governed by rūnanga. This initiative not only strengthens our understanding of the catchment as a connected living system but also supports Māori data sovereignty and ensures that future decisions can be informed by both science and mātauranga Māori.

Practical restoration continues to be equally important. The Glen Lapa Road Riparian Planting Project, developed in partnership with the Wilkins whānau, has progressed significantly during the year. The project will see approximately 1,075 metres of tributary margins restored through the establishment of more than 9,000 eco-sourced native plants. This initiative will improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, stabilise stream banks, and contribute to the long-term restoration of habitats throughout the catchment while demonstrating the positive outcomes that can be achieved through collaboration with landowners.

Our support for the Edendale Aquifer Group has also continued to deliver positive results. Through a combination of community leadership, scientific investigation, farm system analysis, and wetland development, the group has strengthened understanding of nutrient movement within the catchment while identifying practical solutions to improve water quality. The establishment of pilot wetlands, nutrient modelling tools, farm case studies, and extensive community engagement activities has created a strong foundation for future action.

Together, these initiatives reflect a shift from understanding challenges to implementing solutions. They also align closely with the priorities identified by whānau, including restoring wetlands, improving water quality, enhancing mahinga kai opportunities, strengthening biodiversity, reducing flood risks, reconnecting communities with the river, and ensuring future generations can safely enjoy and learn from a healthy awa.

On behalf of the Steering Group, I extend my sincere thanks to Te Rūnanga o Ngai Tāhu, our rūnanga partners, whānau, landowners, community organisations, scientists, funders, contractors, and volunteers who continue to contribute their time, expertise, and passion to this kaupapa. The restoration of Te Au-Nui Pihapiha-Kanakana will take generations, but the progress made this year gives me confidence that we are laying the foundations for lasting change.



Terry Nicholas

Chairperson

Reimagining Mātaura

2. Mihimihi & Whakapapa

Mihimihi

Ko aku waka whakairo ko Kapakitua, ko Uruao, ko Takitimu,
Kei ruka ko Ōparure, kei raro ko Mataura e rere ki te moana o te Ara a Kiwa.
Ko Māruawai taku whenua taurikura e takoto nei,
Takoto mai ko Matamata, te mōkai tapu o Rakitauneke, te taniwha!
Ko Te Au-nui Pihapiha Kanakana te rere,
Ko Hoka-nui, Kowhaka-ruru, Tarahau-kapiti kā puke.
Ko Tūtemakohu rāua ko Te Rakitauneke kā tipuna,
Tū mai ko Ō Te Ika Rama, te whakaruruhau o te mano.
Tēnei te reo o Hāwea, Rapuwai, Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Kāti Kuri, Kāi Tahu kā iwi!

*Kapakitua, Uruao, and Takitimu are my waka,
Above lies Ōparure, below flows the Mataura towards the waters of Foveaux Strait.
Māruawai is the prosperous land that lies before me,
There lies Matamata, the sacred guardian of Rakitauneke, the taniwha!
Te Au-nui Pihapiha Kanakana are the falls,
Hoka-nui, Kowhaka-ruru, and Tarahau-kapiti are the hills.
Tūtemakohu and Te Rakitauneke are the ancestors,
Standing tall is Ō Te Ika Rama, the shelter for the multitudes.
This is the voice of Hāwea, Rapuwai, Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Kāti Kuri, Kāi Ta*

Karakia

Ko Rakinui e tū nei,
Ko Papatūānuku e takoto nei.
Kia haumanutia ko te taiao kia ora,
Kia kumanutia ko te taiao.
Kia mau, kia tina! TINA!
Haumi ē, hui ē, TĀIKI Ē!

*This is the force of the heavens above,
This is the force of the earth below.
May the environment be restored to total health,
May the environment be fostered to last.
Forever steadfast.*

Whakatauki

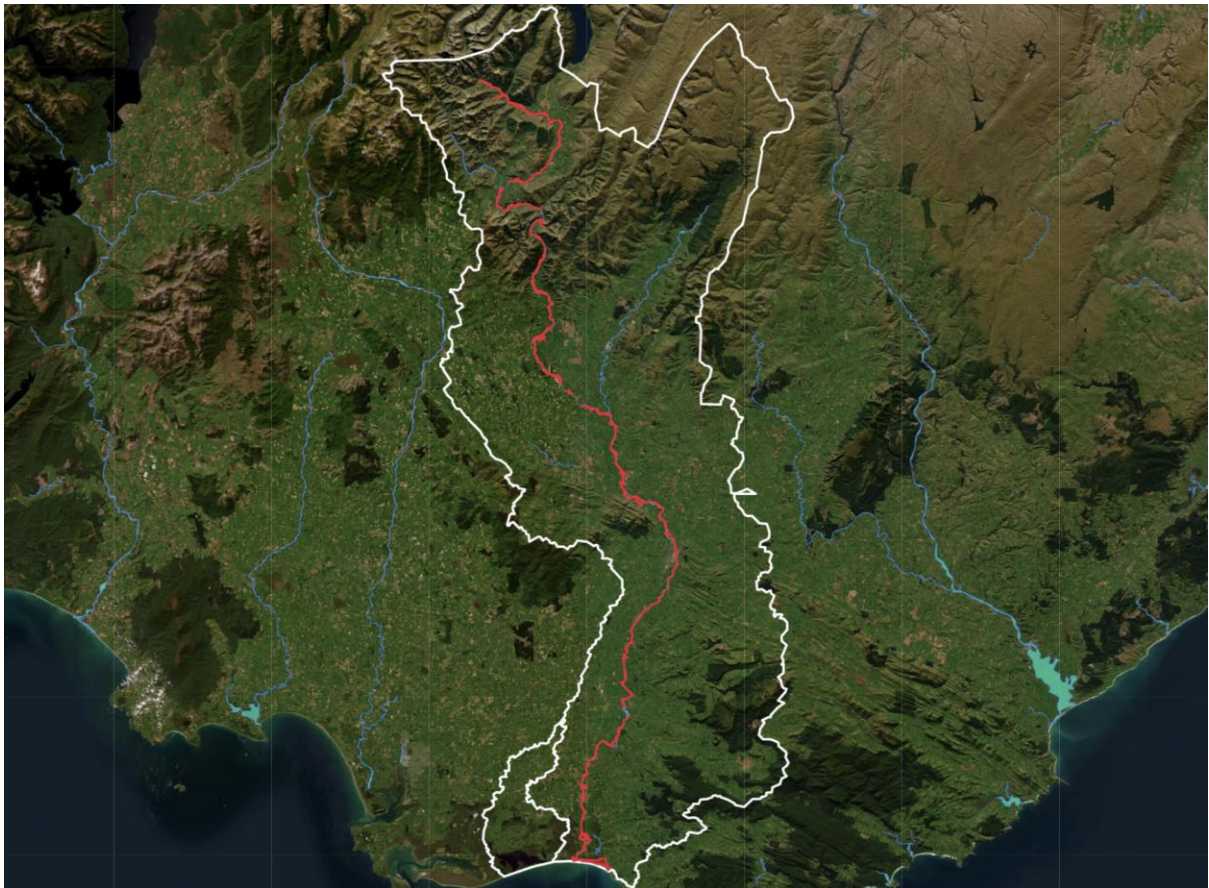
Toitū te marae a Tāne-mahuta, toitū te marae a Takaroa, toitū te iwi.
When land and ware are sustained, the people will prosper.

3. Background

The Mataura River is found in the Murihiku Southland region and is approximately 240km long. The river's headwaters are in the Eyre Mountains to the south of Lake Whakatipu. From there it flows southeast towards Gore, where it turns southward. It then passes through the town of Mataura and enters the Pacific Ocean at Toetoes Bay on the southern coast of the South Island. Much of its channel was braided.

Prone to flooding and ad hoc responses by local Government, there is a need to reconsider the current flood investment and flood plain management to move towards a climate resilient platform in support of enhanced cultural, economic, biodiversity and community outcomes.

Hokonui Rūnanga, Awarua Rūnanga, Waihopai Rūnanga and Ōraka/Aparima Rūnanga have worked together with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Fonterra and Toitū te Whenua |LINZ since 2022 to consider a re-imagined Mataura River system, based on the bringing together of catchment design methodologies and Mātauranga Māori (Māori Knowledge).



Caption: Mataura awa catchment (white) and Mataura Statutory Acknowledgement (red) in Murihiku.

Key Objectives and Goals

To ensure that effective planning and research informs future investment across the Mataura River system, the following goals/ objectives provide focus for project development:

- Improve the current Mataura River system management and re-establish natural buffers
- Reduce the intensity of flood peaks in downstream bottlenecks such as Gore and Mataura townships
- Enhance mahinga kai, cultural values and taonga species
- Reintroduce mid-system wetlands
- Restore riparian habitat
- Provide alternative livelihood pathways for ngā rūnanga and communities.

Reimagining Mataura Project Governance

The project is governed by a Project Steering Group with representatives from:

- Hokonui Rūnanga
- Awarua Rūnanga
- Waihopai Rūnanga
- Ōraka/Aparima Rūnanga
- Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu
- Fonterra

The Project Steering Group meets monthly to provide project direction and oversee delivery of the work programme.



4. Reimagining Mātaura 100 Year Strategy



100 YEAR STRATEGY

Te Au-Nui Pihapiha-Kanakana

Te Au-Nui Pihapiha-Kanakana (the great falls of lamprey) has long been a place of abundance, connection, and sustenance for Ngāi Tahu. For generations, the Mātaura River supported thriving mahinga kai, strong cultural practice, and a deep relationship between people and awa.

This 100-Year Strategy looks back so we can move forward. It is about gazing again upon Te Au-Nui Pihapiha from the past, restoring the mauri of the Mātaura River as a whole natural system, and ensuring the awa can thrive once more for future generations.

Grounded in mātauranga Māori and informed by catchment-by-design thinking, this strategy sets out a long-term, intergenerational pathway to protect taonga tuku iho, strengthen connection and identity, restore the health of the awa, and embed sustainable, future-focused practices across the Mātaura River system.



REIMAGINING MATAURA

100 YEAR STRATEGY

Te Au-Nui Pihapiha-Kanakana: To gaze again upon Te Au Nui Pihapiha from the past

Restore the mauri of the Mātaura River as a whole natural system, enabling the river to thrive once more as it once did

1.0 TAONGA TUKU IHO

Treasures passed on

Enhance mahinga kai, cultural values and taonga species

1.1 Strengthen the Knowledge of Mātaura

1.2 Revitalise Cultural Traditions and Identity

Mahinga kai, taonga species, and cultural values are visibly restored and thriving

2.0 KANAKANA KŌRERO

Connection & Identity

Provide alternative livelihood pathways for nga rūnanga and communities

2.1 Strengthen Our Relationship with Our Awa

2.2 Create Opportunities to Gather and Connect with Our Awa

New pathways are established that strengthen community wellbeing and resilience

3.0 MAURI ORA

Health & Wellbeing of the Awa

Reintroduce mid system wetlands. Restore riparian habitat

3.1 Protect and Enhance the Health of Our Awa

3.2 Regenerate Indigenous Biodiversity

Wetlands and riparian areas are re-established and functioning as healthy, natural ecological systems

4.0 WAI KŌURA

Sustainability & Adaption

Improve the current Mātaura River system management and re-establish natural buffers

4.1 Strengthen Climate Awareness and Collective Responsibility

4.2 Embed Sustainable and Future-Focused Practices

The river system is well-managed, with natural buffers restored and supporting long-term stability

Executed on behalf of Murihiku Rūnaka:

In the presence of:

R. M. Hallier
Chair of Hokonui Rūnaka (signature)

Robyn Hallier
Full name (please print)

Glarena
Witness (signature)

Shelley Karen
Full name (please print)

12/6/2026
Date

Cyril Raymond Gray
Chair of Waihōpai Rūnaka (signature)

R. Gray
Full name (please print)

Arlene Stehlin
Witness (signature)

A. Stehlin
Full name (please print)

19/2/2026
Date

Tracy Wright-Tanaka
Chair of Te Rūnanga o Ōraka-Awarua (signature)

Tracy Wright-Tanaka
Full name (please print)

Glarena
Witness (signature)

Shelley Karen
Full name (please print)

5-8-26
Date

Photo
Chair of Te Rūnanga o Awarua (signature)

Pana Tei Cook
Full name (please print)

Photo
Witness (signature)

Andrea Cross
Full name (please print)

5th June, 2026
Date



Annual Reporting – Reimagining Mātaura 100-Year Strategy

Background

In 2024, the Reimagining Mātaura Project Steering Group commissioned a review of suitable governance arrangements to guide the long-term restoration of the Mātaura River and support positive environmental, cultural, social, and economic outcomes across the Mātaura Catchment. Through this process, it became clear that a shared long-term vision was needed to align stakeholders, establish clear priorities, and provide a strategic framework to guide decision-making, investment, and collaborative action over time. Developing a strategy would also help ensure that restoration efforts are coordinated, intergenerational in focus, and grounded in the aspirations of mana whenua and local communities. To support this work, Katerina Kupenga was engaged to facilitate a planning day, lead stakeholder engagement, and assist in the development of a 100-year strategy that reflects the collective aspirations for the future of the Mātaura River and its people.

Background on Katerina

Katerina Kupenga is a Lead Strategic Planning Facilitator with over 20 years of experience in leadership, governance, and strategy development. She is known for facilitating planning processes that are firmly grounded in te ao Māori, bringing together whānau, mana whenua, communities, and stakeholders to develop shared visions for the future. Her expertise spans hapū and marae strategies, catchment planning, bicultural partnership development, and community-led initiatives that transform aspirations into long-term action and measurable outcomes.



Day One

A wide range of whānau were invited to participate in the Strategy Planning Day, including representatives from Te Rūnanga o Awarua, Hokonui Rūnanga, Te Rūnanga o Ōraka-Aparima, Te Rūnanga o Waihōpai, members of the Wilkins whānau, and kaimahi from Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.

The day commenced with a presentation from Dr Gail Tipa and Maria Pērā, who shared whānau perspectives on the Mātaura River, including its historical uses, barriers, challenges, and aspirations for the future. Drawing together a range of community voices, the presentation provided valuable insight into the historical significance of the river and its role in sustaining local communities, helping to inform discussions throughout the day.

The Wilkins whānau also presented on a number of collaborative initiatives that had been developed alongside the Reimagining Mātaura Project Steering Group. These included restorative planting projects along tributaries located on Wilkins-owned land that flow into the Mātaura River, demonstrating practical opportunities to contribute to the river's restoration.

As part of the planning process, participants were invited to reflect on their personal connections to the Mātaura River by identifying places of significance and sharing the

landmarks, whakapapa connections, taonga, cultural sites, native flora and fauna, and memories associated with those locations. This exercise grounded the strategy discussion in lived experience, cultural knowledge, and collective connections to the catchment.

A key theme emerging from these discussions was the recognition that the mauri of the Mataura River has been diminished by a combination of environmental and human pressures, including pollution, habitat loss, land-use practices, water extraction, invasive species, and the impacts of climate change. Participants acknowledged that these cumulative effects have influenced both the health of the awa and the relationship communities have with it.

Participants also identified the significant benefits that could be achieved through restoring the river's mauri. These included improved ecological health, thriving biodiversity, strengthened mahinga kai practices, greater opportunities for cultural connection and recreation, and enhanced community wellbeing. Restoration was viewed as a pathway to reconnect people with the awa, support the transfer of knowledge across generations, and uphold rangatiratanga through the stewardship of a healthy and thriving river system.

Day Two

A second strategy day was held, bringing together a select group of participants who had attended the initial strategy session to develop an action plan. Participants were asked to consider what the aspirations outlined in the 100-year strategy would look like in practice within the next 12 months. They then worked backwards, identifying the actions and milestones required at three-month intervals to achieve this vision.

These actions were prioritised and assigned to members of the project steering group, with responsibility for delivery allocated to key individuals. Participants also identified tasks that would be more appropriately undertaken by external contractors.

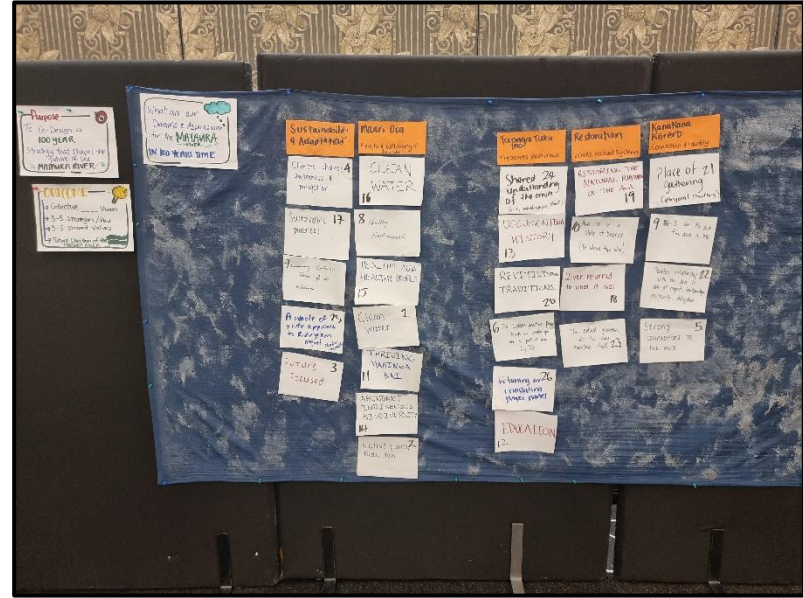
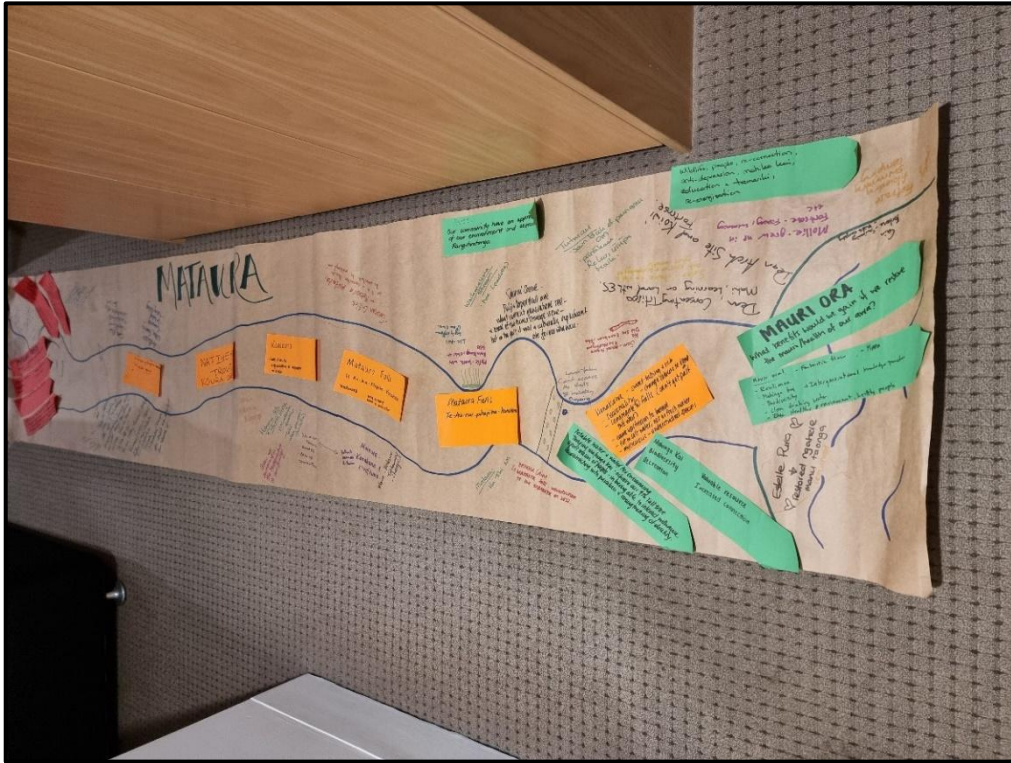
The outcome of the strategy day was a comprehensive 12-month action plan that clearly outlines the key milestones, responsibilities, and actions required to position Reimagining Mataura for the successful establishment and implementation of its 100-year strategy.

The 100-Year Strategy

The Reimagining Mataura 100-Year Strategy sets out a 100-year, intergenerational vision to restore the mauri of the Mataura River (Te Au-Nui Pihapiha-Kanakana) as a thriving natural and cultural system. Drawing on mātauranga Māori and a catchment-wide approach, it seeks to reconnect people with the awa while revitalising mahinga kai, cultural traditions, taonga species, and community wellbeing. The strategy is built around four interconnected priorities: protecting taonga tuku iho, strengthening connection and identity, restoring the ecological health of the river, and embedding sustainable, climate-resilient management practices. Ultimately, it aims to ensure the Mataura River once again flourishes as a source of abundance, resilience, and cultural identity for future generations.

12 MONTH ROADMAP 2026					
Strategic Initiatives	SEP 26 - NOV 26	DEC 26 - FEB 27	MAR 27 - MAY 27	JUN 27 - AUG 27	SEPTEMBER 2028
1.1 Strengthen the knowledge of Mātaura	1.1.1 Complete a stocktake of what we already have, what we know, and where the key knowledge and information gaps are.	1.1.2 Develop a map of public access points and key mahika kai sites along the Mātaura awa, including taonga species, populations, and what can be found and harvested at each location, and enable real-time contributions to strengthen the information available through the website.		1.1.3 Begin recording oral histories and knowledge associated with the awa, mahika kai, access points and taonga species, and make this knowledge accessible through the website where appropriate.	1.1 Our oral histories, knowledge holders, mahika kai sites and access points are mapped and recorded on our website, strengthening our collective knowledge of Mātaura and our pathways towards a swimmable, recreational and drinkable awa
1.2 Revitalise cultural traditions and identity	1.2.1 Identify existing knowledge sources and establish appropriate processes for recording, filing and archiving this mātauranga		1.2.2 Gather pūrākau, stories and knowledge relating to traditional mahika kai practices and other taonga tuku iho	1.2.3 Share and practise this knowledge with whānau through wānanga, site visits and traditional harvesting activities.	1.2 Whānau are actively connecting with our pūrākau, stories, knowledge and traditional mahika kai practices through wānanga, site visits and hands-on practice, including trails, nohoanga, basket and kete making, stonework and other taonga tuku iho.
2.1 Strengthen our relationship with our awa	2.1.1 Conduct water sampling, data collection and lab testing at key harvesting sites along the awa, and map and analyse the findings to identify the safest and best places for whānau to harvest kai.	2.1.2 Review the findings alongside mātauranga and existing data to understand harvesting conditions across the awa and develop an action plan to support whānau to safely harvest kai and strengthen their connection with the awa.		2.1.3 Hold quarterly wānanga to share findings, strengthen knowledge and support whānau to actively harvest from the awa.	2.1 Whānau are actively harvesting kai from the awa, supported by regular water sampling that identifies the safest and best places to harvest.
2.2 Create opportunities to gather and connect with our awa	2.2.1 Identify interested whānau, rangatahi, Rūnaka and groups and develop a seasonal mahika kai calendar of opportunities to gather, harvest and connect with the awa	2.2.2 Organise a hīkoi and wānanga along the Mātaura awa, bringing together whānau, rangatahi and key stakeholders to reconnect with significant sites, share cultural knowledge, values and science, and plan		2.2.3 Deliver the first seasonal mahika kai whānau activity and establish an ongoing programme of activities.	2.2 Regular seasonal mahika kai activities are provided for whānau to build or reconnect their relationship with the awa

	throughout the year		seasonal mahika kai activities.		
3.1 Protect and enhance the health of our awa	3.1.1 Commence cultural monitoring and water quality sampling across priority areas of the awa and catchment, analysing the data to identify key issues and variables and refine monitoring and sampling where needed		3.1.2 Use the findings to inform discussions with people and communities across the catchment, particularly where activities may be contributing to issues affecting the awa.		3.1 Cultural monitoring and water quality sampling is available to help us understand the sources of issues affecting the awa and supports improved practices and mindsets of those discharging into the river.
3.2 Regenerate indigenous biodiversity	3.2.1 Identify and gather existing biodiversity data for priority tributaries and areas across the catchment.	3.2.2. Analyse the data to understand existing biodiversity and identify key information and knowledge gaps	3.2.3 Collect further data to fill identified gaps and share knowledge to build a clearer understanding of native and invasive species and the factors impacting indigenous biodiversity.		3.2 We have a clear understanding of the biodiversity within the awa and catchment, including our native and invasive plants and animals, and the factors impacting indigenous biodiversity.
4.1 Strengthen climate awareness & collective responsibility	4.1.1 Engage with farmers, whānau, and key stakeholders to understand observed and anticipated climate impacts across the Mataura awa		4.1.2 Identify and bring together existing data, mātauranga and lived experiences to understand long-term environmental and climate changes across the Mataura awa and identify key impacts, risks and opportunities for resilience.	4.1.3 Share the findings with whānau and stakeholders to build a shared understanding of climate impacts and identify collective actions to strengthen resilience	4.1 We have a shared understanding of the impacts of climate change on our awa, whenua and whānau, and what we can do collectively to strengthen our resilience to these changes
4.2 Embed sustainable and future-focused practices	4.2.1 Map current sustainable practices, initiatives and opportunities across the Mataura awa and catchment	4.2.2 Investigate sustainable and economic opportunities across the catchment, including wind, solar, carbon credits and other emerging opportunities.	4.2.3 Share the findings at wānanga to develop an iwi-led narrative and recommend future development opportunities for Reimagining Mataura.		4.2 Iwi lead the narrative across the community and catchment, with people encouraged to investigate and research sustainable and economic opportunities along the awa



12 MONTH ACTION PLAN 2026

Strategic Initiatives	By September, 2028 we will Measures of Success	Actions Priorities	Impact Priority	Project Lead Project Team	Budget Resources
1.1 Strengthen the knowledge of Mātaura	1.1 Our oral histories, knowledge holders, mahika kai sites and access points are mapped and recorded on our website, strengthening our collective knowledge of Mātaura and our pathways towards a swimmable, recreational and drinkable awa	1.1.1 Complete a stocktake of what we already have, what we know, and where the key knowledge and information gaps are. 1.1.2 Develop a map of public access points and key mahika kai sites along the Mātaura awa, including taonga species, populations, and what can be found and harvested at each location, and enable real-time contributions to strengthen the information available through the website. 1.1.3 Begin recording oral histories and knowledge associated with the awa, mahika kai, access points and taonga species, and make this knowledge accessible through the website where appropriate.	High	Hub/Jane Takiwā	RM Budget
1.2 Revitalise cultural traditions and identity	1.2 Whānau are actively connecting with our pūrākau, stories, knowledge and traditional mahika kai practices through wānanga, site visits and hands-on practice, including trails, nohoanga, basket and kete making, stonework and other taonga tuku iho.	1.2.1 Identify existing knowledge sources and establish appropriate processes for recording, filing and archiving this mātauranga 1.2.2 Gather pūrākau, stories and knowledge relating to traditional mahika kai practices and other taonga tuku iho 1.2.3 Share and practise this knowledge with whānau through wānanga, site visits and traditional harvesting activities.	High	Tāne	RM Budget
2.1 Strengthen our relationship with our awa	2.1 Whānau are actively harvesting kai from the awa, supported by regular water sampling that identifies the safest and best places to harvest.	2.1.1 Conduct water sampling, data collection and lab testing at key harvesting sites along the awa, and map and analyse the findings to identify the safest and best places for whānau to harvest kai. 2.1.2 Review the findings alongside mātauranga and	Med	Maria & Gail Contract taiao/taonga research	RM Budget

		existing data to understand harvesting conditions across the awa and develop an action plan to support whānau to safely harvest kai and strengthen their connection with the awa. 2.1.3 Hold quarterly wānanga to share findings, strengthen knowledge and support whānau to actively harvest from the awa.			
2.2 Create opportunities to gather and connect with our awa	2.2 Regular seasonal mahika kai activities are provided for whānau to build or reconnect their relationship with the awa	2.2.1 Identify interested whānau, rangatahi, Rūnaka and groups and develop a seasonal mahika kai calendar of opportunities to gather, harvest and connect with the awa throughout the year 2.2.2 Organise a hīkoi and wānanga along the Mataura awa, bringing together whānau, rangatahi and key stakeholders to reconnect with significant sites, share cultural knowledge, values and science, and plan seasonal mahika kai activities. 2.2.3 Deliver the first seasonal mahika kai whānau activity and establish an ongoing programme of activities.	High	Maria & Gail SK, Hub	RM Budget
3.1 Protect and enhance the health of our awa	3.1 Cultural monitoring and water quality sampling is available to help us understand the sources of issues affecting the awa and supports improved practices and mindsets of those discharging into the river.	3.1.1 Commence cultural monitoring and water quality sampling across priority areas of the awa and catchment, analysing the data to identify key issues and variables and refine monitoring and sampling where needed 3.1.2 Use the findings to inform discussions with people and communities across the catchment, particularly where activities may be contributing to issues affecting the awa.	High	Maria, Gail, Tāne Kaupapa Taiao, Taonga Research, Scientists, SK	Hub Funding
3.2 Regenerate indigenous	3.2.2 We have a clear understanding of the biodiversity within the awa and catchment, including our native and invasive	3.2.1 Identify and gather existing biodiversity data for priority tributaries and areas across the catchment. 3.2.2. Analyse the data to understand existing	High	Havana	

biodiversity	plants and animals, and the factors impacting indigenous biodiversity.	biodiversity and identify key information and knowledge gaps 3.2.3 Collect further data to fill identified gaps and share knowledge to build a clearer understanding of native and invasive species and the factors impacting indigenous biodiversity.			
4.1 Strengthen climate awareness & collective responsibility	4.1 We have a shared understanding of the impacts of climate change on our awa, whenua and whānau, and what we can do collectively to strengthen our resilience to these changes	4.1.1 Engage with farmers, whānau, and key stakeholders to understand observed and anticipated climate impacts across the Mataura awa 4.1.2 Identify and bring together existing data, mātauranga and lived experiences to understand long-term environmental and climate changes across the Mataura awa and identify key impacts, risks and opportunities for resilience. 4.1.3 Share the findings with whānau and stakeholders to build a shared understanding of climate impacts and identify collective actions to strengthen resilience	High	Terry Contract Taiao/Taonga Res, SK	RM Budget
4.2 Embed sustainable and future-focused practices	4.2 Iwi lead the narrative across the community and catchment, with people encouraged to investigate and research sustainable and economic opportunities along the awa	4.2.1 Map current sustainable practices, initiatives and opportunities across the Mataura awa and catchment 4.2.2 Investigate sustainable and economic opportunities across the catchment, including wind, solar, carbon credits and other emerging opportunities. 4.2.3 Share the findings at wānanga to develop an iwi-led narrative and recommend future development opportunities for Reimagining Mataura.	High	Takiwā Hub PSG	

5. Maitara River Summary

A Summary of Whānau Perspectives of the State of the Maitara & its Impact on Whānau Livelihoods.

Maria Pera, Dr Gail Tipa, whānau contributors

The Maitara River and its tributaries are far more than a physical waterway for the whānau who whakapapa to them. Across ten interviews with whānau who hold lived experience of and long-term relationships with the awa, the river emerges as a living entity — a source of mauri, identity, kai, and intergenerational strength. It has long provided tuna, kanakana, whitebait, kōura, watercress and other kai, alongside swimming, camping, and the passing of mātauranga from kaumātua to rangatahi. Kanakana at the falls were especially prized, and trading networks once carried seafood upstream in exchange for sacks of kanakana.

Interviews were analysed through a structured, multi-layered process combining thematic, sentiment, spatial and vulnerability analysis, together with the identification of restoration projects proposed by whānau.

There is strong consensus that the mauri of the river has been impacted. Whānau describe declining water quality, sedimentation, chemical runoff, and sewage overflows during floods. Loss of safe mahinga kai is felt as both a practical and cultural loss: tuna no longer look healthy, watercress cannot safely be gathered, and children are discouraged from swimming in once-popular spots. Farming intensification, historical and current industrial discharge, commercial eeling, gravel build-up, and inadequate flood protection are all raised as concerns, with the Waimumu tributary repeatedly named as a priority. Major floods in 1978, 1981 and 2020 remain in community memory, and whānau consider that governance has not recognised kaitiakitanga or fully included hapū in decision-making.

Perspectives differ on the primary causes of degradation — whether dairy and cropping, legacy industrial pollution, or infrastructure failure — and on whether headwater changes are natural or human-induced. These divergences reflect different lived experiences across the catchment.

A vulnerability assessment applying an Exposure × Sensitivity × Adaptive Capacity framework found exposure and sensitivity to be very high, and adaptive capacity low to moderate. Whānau face multiple overlapping stressors while cultural identity, food security and intergenerational knowledge remain directly tied to the river's health. Their considerable strengths — deep knowledge, strong networks, and cultural resilience — are constrained by limited decision-making power over upstream land use, weak enforcement of pollution controls, and at-risk infrastructure. Grounding restoration in this qualitative and sentiment data helps ensure interventions are not only ecologically sound but socially legitimate and responsive to community priorities.

Despite these concerns, whānau share a clear aspiration for restoration. Proposed projects include protecting and restoring wetlands, purchasing and retiring floodplain land, eliminating all point-source discharges, setting water allocation limits, reducing tributary constraints,

replanting riparian margins, slowing water in the upper catchment, and allowing the river space to spread naturally during floods. Whānau also want people reconnected to the awa through trails, access points and safe swimming.

Interviewees seek a future in which rangatahi can gather kai safely, swim freely, and learn mātauranga through a healthy, thriving awa. We acknowledge with gratitude the ten whānau members whose kōrero made this work possible, and the Reimagining Mataura team for enabling the project.



An early painting of the Mataura Falls



The extent of flooding of Mataura township in 1978



One of the early bridges across the Mataura



The start of industry appearing in Mataura

6. Working with Catchment Groups

Summary

Reimagining Maitara has continued its collaborative work with the Edendale Aquifer Group (EAG) throughout 2025/26.

EAG was established in 2024 in response to community concerns about elevated nitrate levels in shallow aquifers across the Edendale area, with some groundwater results approaching the maximum allowable value for nitrate-nitrogen under the New Zealand Drinking Water Standards. As a sub-group of the Three Rivers Catchment Conservation Trust, EAG was formed to improve understanding of nitrate movement through the catchment and identify practical solutions to improve water quality. The group's foundation project focused on understanding the movement, interactions, and monitoring of nutrients, particularly nitrogen, through the Edendale Catchment.

Working alongside farmers, industry partners, scientists, and regulators, the project is delivered through five interconnected workstreams: community engagement, farm system nitrogen mitigation, edge-of-field mitigations, water quality monitoring, and nutrient modelling. Together, these workstreams have built a stronger understanding of catchment processes and provided a foundation for targeted actions to improve the long-term health of the Edendale aquifer and the wider Maitara catchment.

Key Outcomes

- Completed catchment-scale hydrological and nutrient pathway investigations, improving understanding of groundwater flow, nitrogen movement, springs, seeps, and priority mitigation areas across the Edendale Terrace.
- Developed a nitrogen hotspot identification tool and interactive StoryMap to support science-based decision-making and target future wetland and mitigation investment.
- Established two pilot wetland projects, including one treatment wetland and one wetland incorporating a woodchip bioreactor, creating practical demonstration sites for landowners.
- Strengthened community engagement through monitoring events, workshops, farmer discussions, and a March field day attended by more than 60 people.
- Completed five Southland farm system case studies to explore practical nitrogen loss reduction options that balance environmental outcomes with farm profitability.
- Created a platform for future investment by identifying priority wetland locations, establishing landowner support mechanisms, and building the capability of the Edendale Aquifer Group as a farmer-led catchment organisation.

Building Understanding Through Science

Understanding Nutrient Movement Across the Catchment

A key achievement has been the completion of extensive hydrological and nutrient pathway investigations across the Edendale Terrace by Land and Water Science supported by the local community. This work improved understanding of groundwater flow paths, nitrogen movement, spring and seep locations, and landscape characteristics influencing water quality. The project resulted in the development of a catchment-scale nitrogen hotspot identification tool and interactive StoryMap, providing landowners and stakeholders with a science-based framework for identifying priority areas for

future mitigation investment. The tool helps target wetlands and other interventions to locations where they are likely to deliver the greatest environmental benefit and provides an enduring resource for future catchment planning.

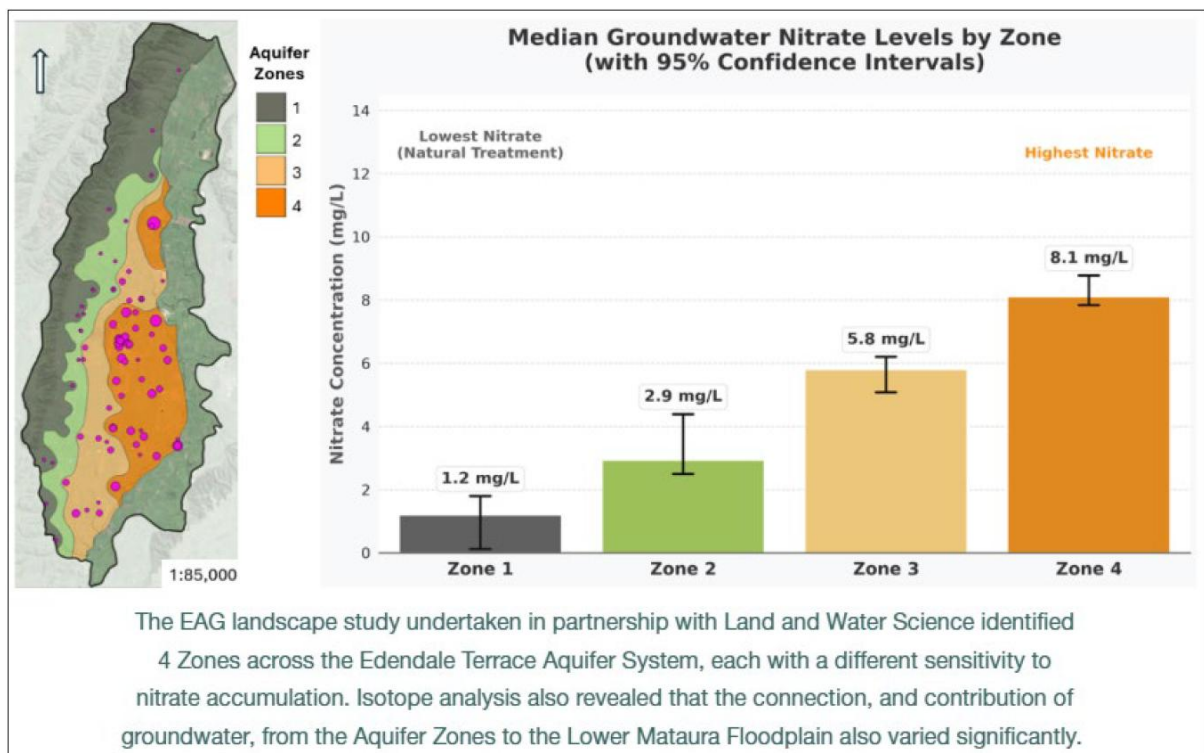


Figure 1 – Groundwater Nitrate Levels across the Edendale Aquifer

Advancing Catchment Science

The project also supported innovative work to better understand when, how and how much nitrate moves through different catchments. Using a nonlinear dynamical modelling approach, the research demonstrated that catchments with similar farming systems can exhibit very different nitrate behaviours due to differences in groundwater storage, drainage pathways, landscape connectivity, and catchment "memory". This modelling represents a shift from simply identifying nitrate trends to understanding the mechanisms driving them, providing valuable insights into how catchments are likely to respond to future mitigation actions.

Demonstrating Practical Solutions

EAG is transitioning from building a deeper understanding of how nitrogen moves, interacts and impacts the Edendale catchment to demonstrating practical mitigation solutions on the ground through the development of wetland projects.

Two pilot wetlands have been developed in the catchment as a practical demonstration for other landowners. One wetland was developed on a local dairy farm by enhancing an existing duck pond into a treatment wetland. A second wetland, supported by Fonterra, incorporated a woodchip bioreactor and is currently awaiting planting following installation.



Figure 2 – Wetland Enhancement and Construction of the Woodchip Biofilter

These sites have provided valuable insights into wetland design, consenting requirements, construction processes, and nutrient mitigation opportunities within the unique hydrological conditions of the Edendale Terrace. Importantly, they have created demonstration sites that will support future farmer learning, extension activities, and wider adoption of edge-of-field mitigations across the catchment.

Engaging the Community

Alongside the wetland programme, EAG maintained a strong focus on community engagement and knowledge sharing. Regular water quality monitoring events, workshops, field days, and farmer-led discussions helped build local understanding of catchment processes and encouraged participation in environmental improvement initiatives. Community-generated water quality data has complemented scientific investigations and strengthened confidence in the project's findings and recommendations. The group's March field day attracted more than 60 attendees and demonstrated strong farmer interest in practical, locally relevant mitigation solutions.



Figure 3 –EAG Field Day – 23rd March 2026

Reducing Nitrogen Losses on Farm

The project also examined opportunities to reduce nitrogen losses at the source through five Southland farm system case studies. Modelling undertaken with DairyNZ explored mitigation options including plantain, fertiliser management changes, stocking rate adjustments, and lower nitrogen farm systems. The work demonstrated that meaningful reductions in nitrogen losses are most likely to be achieved through a combination of practical management changes that maintain farm profitability while complementing edge-of-field mitigation investments such as wetlands and bioreactors.

Summary of modelling results					Average of 5 Edendale farms
Mitigation	Description	N leaching change per step	OP change per step	Cumulative change from baseline	
Baseline	2022.23				
Step 1	GMP: Lower CP supplement	0%	3%		
Step 4	GMP: reduce N fert by 10%	-4%	0%		
Step 6	GMP: No N applied in winter	0%	0%		
Step 8	GMP: Direct drilling kale and swedes	-1%	-1%		
Step 9	Plantain 10% of pasture DM	-7%	0%		
Step 10	Plantain 20% of pasture DM	-7%	-2%	-17% N leaching & -1% OP	Low-hanging fruit
Step 11	Baleage wintering	-5%	-7%	-22% N leaching & -8% OP	
Step 12	Retire 2.5 ha unproductive land	0%	1%		
Step 13	Retire 1 ha of milking platform	0%	0%		
Step 14	Reduce imported supplement by 25%	-4%	-7%		
Step 15	Limit fert to 100 kg N/ha	-7%	-1%		
Step 16	Limit fert to 50 kg N/ha	-3%	-5%		
Step 17	Reduce imported supplement by 50%	-1%	2%	-30% N leaching & -16% OP	
Step 18	Stand-off pad	-16%	-14%		
Step 19	Zero N fert	-7%	-9%	-43% N leaching & -34% OP	Exploring large N leaching reductions
Step 20	Wetland	-4%	-2%		

More detail in handout

Creating a Platform for Future Investment

The project has created a strong platform for future action. Priority wetland locations have been highlighted, a fund established to support landowners in developing wetlands, and the Edendale Aquifer Group has developed into a capable and well-connected farmer-led organisation. By combining robust science, innovative modelling, community leadership, and practical on-the-ground action, the project has progressed from understanding the problem to implementing tangible solutions that will contribute to the long-term health and resilience of the Maitara catchment.

Looking Ahead

Overall, the project has successfully established the knowledge, partnerships, tools, and demonstration sites needed to support future water quality improvements. The combination of improved catchment understanding, targeted mitigation planning, active community involvement, and practical wetland demonstrations ensures future investment can be directed to the right actions, in the right places, to deliver meaningful outcomes for the Maitara catchment.

7. Takiwā Analytics

Understanding the Mātaura awa through data

We cannot restore what we cannot see. This year Reimagining Mātaura began assembling a data-driven picture of the whole catchment — and put it somewhere our own people are going to be able to reach it.

The information (and data!) that describes the Mātaura has never sat in one place. It is held by regional councils, government departments, research institutes, community groups and citizen scientists. Hidden away on a database, or even on paper in someone's desk - each with a piece, none with the whole, and very little of it in a form whānau could ever open.

"For Reimagining Mātaura, we are building data and tech capability and capacity at the Rūnanga-level, we do this by investing in a foundation that empowers our whānau to achieve our aspirations. The real value lies in our ability to deeply understand context, apply our own mātauranga, and using our skills to create solutions to our unique challenges."

— Terry Nicholas, Chair of Reimagining Mātaura.

Working with Takiwā Analytics, we have set out to change that. The first step was to begin a scan of the Mātaura awa system: what data exists, who holds it, and what it is able to tell us. The second was to start bringing it all together. The information and data is transformed, extracted, cleaned and loaded into the Hokonui Rūnanga workspace on the Takiwā platform, where the rūnanga controls it and whānau can be given access to it.

Held apart, these are just datasets. Held together, they become something none of them are on their own: **a view of the catchment as one living river system, ki uta ki tai.**

That view is now ours. It does not have to be requested, and it cannot be withdrawn.

What is now in the Takiwā Workspace

- Mātaura and Waituna catchment boundaries
- The named river and stream network
- Floodplains and flood protection works
- Land tenure — Crown, conservation, council and Ngāi Tahu Claims Treaty settlement land
- Freshwater fish records, some dating back to 1966
- More than 19,000 nature observations from people across the catchment
- Historical and present-day aerial imagery
- River corridor and elevation modelling from Murihiku Slow the Flow

We will continue to aggregate this data and build our understanding as the project progresses

None of this was hidden. It was simply scattered, and held by everyone except us.



Image: View from the Hokonui Rūnanga Takiwā workspace. The image shows satellite imagery of Murihiku with the Maitai Statutory Acknowledgement (red), Maitai and Waituna catchments (white), and large river systems (blue).

Putting it to work

A picture of the catchment is only worth having if it changes what we are able to do.

Building a shared understanding. We took a data-driven Ngāi Tahu perspective on the awa to the Murihiku Regen Wānanga and Harakeke Hub Hikoī 2025 to share the story of the catchment with whānau and other stakeholders in the catchment — mahika kai loss, land tenure and land use, freshwater decline, species at risk, and the climate and food-system pressures being felt here. Set out together they make a case that is hard to put down: these things affect all of us, and our interests may be closer than we assume.

Working alongside our neighbours. Project partners and willing stakeholders in the catchment have shared-data with Reimagining Maitai. That data is now visualised on the Takiwā platform, governed by a framework built jointly and grounded in Māori data sovereignty principles. In action this looks like a community member and mana whenua, looking at the same river frontage through the same evidence, and working out together what should happen to it.

Knowing where to begin. With information on things like land tenure, flood extent, river condition and species records in a single view, “where would restoration do the most good?” becomes a question we can begin to answer rather than argue about.

Telling the story of the awa. The same material carries our narratives — what the Mataura was, what it has become, and what it could be again. Told with evidence, they are harder to dismiss and easier to invest in.

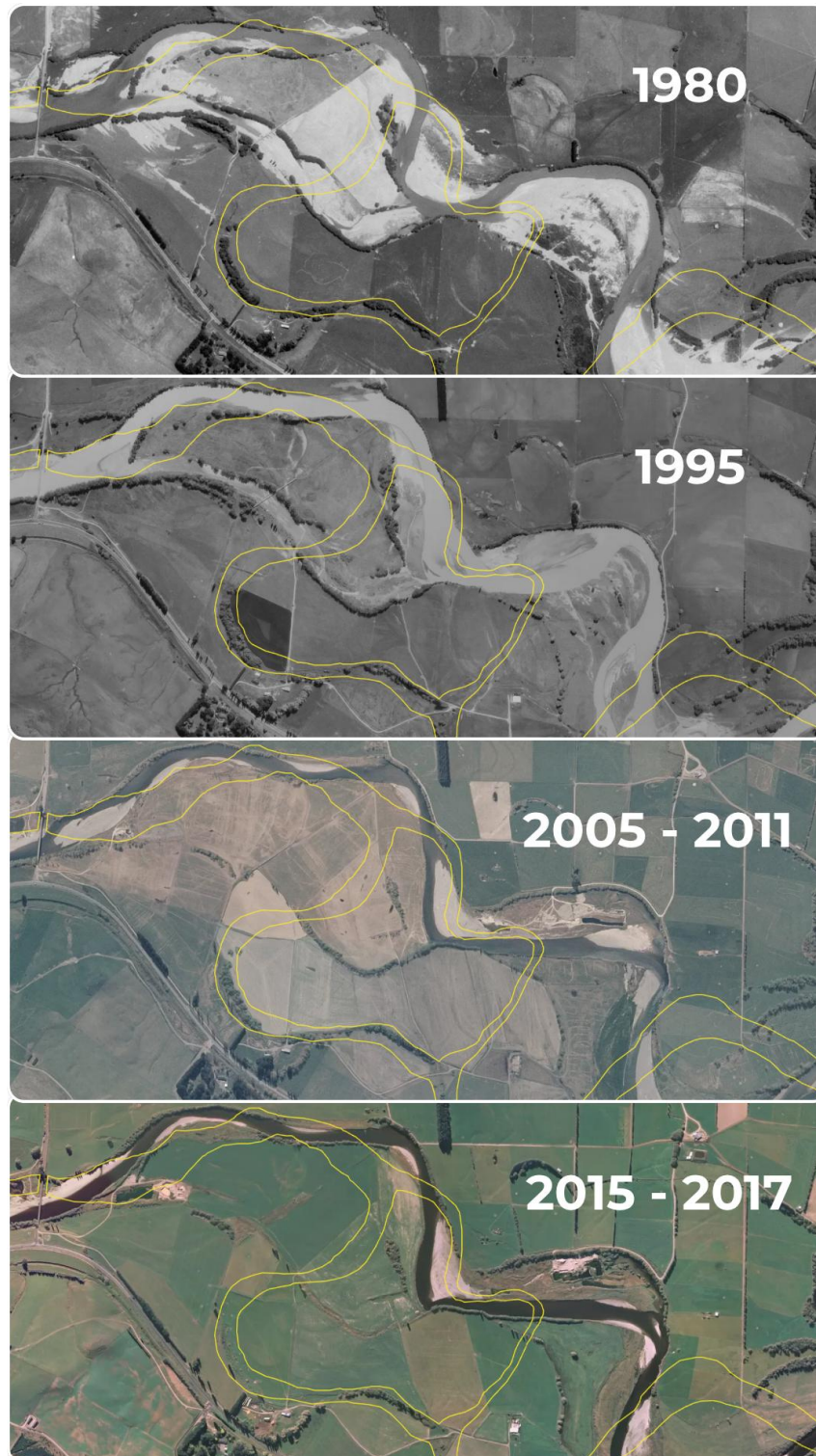


Image: Transformation of the Mataura Awa through time. In yellow is the outline of the Mataura Statutory Acknowledgement. Beginning in the 1980s the river is progressively narrowed, converted to pasture, and quarried. The modern day Statutory Acknowledgment no longer covers the awa.

Holding it ourselves

There is a reason this sits in a workspace the rūnanga controls, rather than in a folder on somebody's laptop or behind another organisation's login.

Data is never neutral. What gets measured, by whom, and who can see it afterwards decides which conversations are possible and who is able to take part in them. When the record of a place is held elsewhere, our people are asking permission to understand our own awa. When we hold it, we can put our own questions to it — and answer back.

That is Māori data sovereignty, and it is not an abstraction. It is the difference between being consulted about a catchment and being able to speak about it with the evidence in hand. When we pair data with our mātauranga and kōrero tuku iho we tell transformative stories.

Next year the work turns again. Until now we have been gathering what others have collected. From here Reimagining Mātara begins generating data of our own, for our own purposes — measuring what the 100-Year Strategy says matters, on terms we set, in a place our people can reach.

Te Au-Nui Pihapiha-Kanakana , the 100 year strategy, asks us to gaze again upon what once was. Knowing our awa as it is now, in our own records and ways of knowing the world, is part of how we find our way back.

Waituna - The same approach, further afield

This year Reimagining Mātara supported Awarua Rūnanga to better understand the whenua opportunities at Waituna, sponsoring an independent assessment of it.

The approach of that assessment was the one described here — build the evidence-base first, and treat the questions of who holds the data? and what does it enable? as central rather than technical. This will enable Rūnanga to consider the veracity of a business case for nature credits.

What was and is being learned at Waituna shows how data is a taonga that can support mana motuhake. Having sovereignty over data about Waituna will enable aspirations Mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri ā muri ake nei. Through this initiative, Reimagining Mātara intends to share the benefits of these learnings with Ngāi Tahu whānui, incorporating the learnings into approaches moving forward.

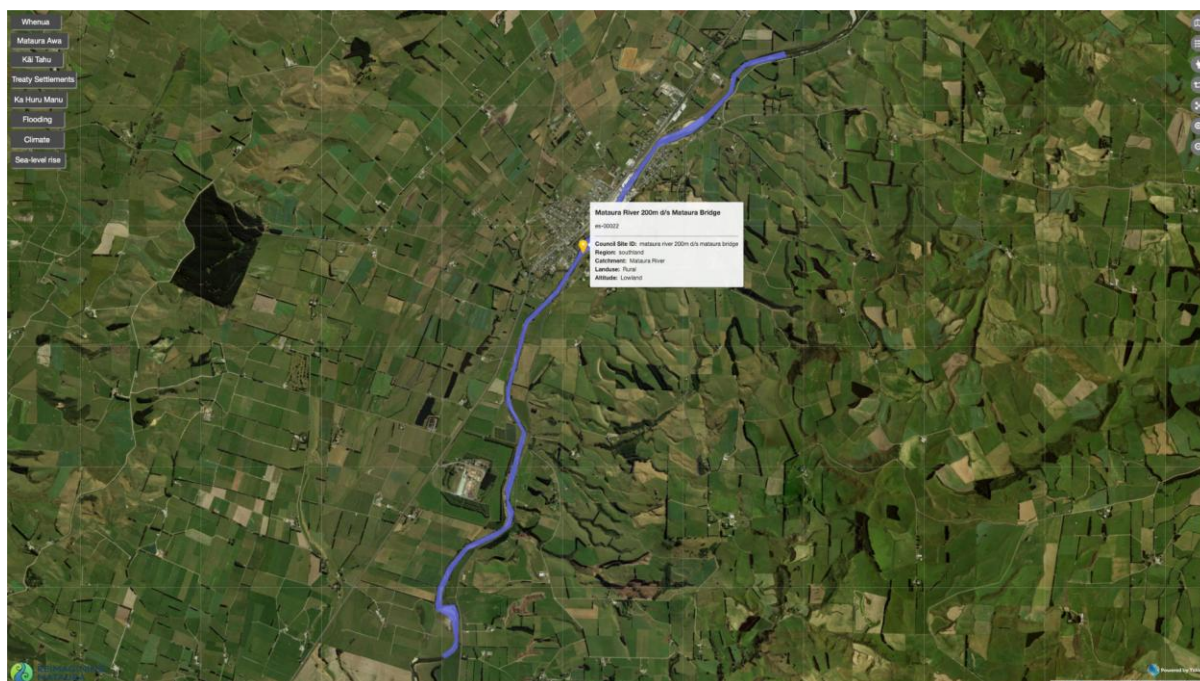


Image: Maitai mātaitai (blue) and LAWA Water Quality Monitoring site (yellow) - Viewed on Takiwā platform.



Image: Maitai mātaitai / LAWA Water Quality Monitoring time-series - Viewed on Takiwā platform

9. Glen Lapa Road Riparian Planting Project

Since arriving in New Zealand in 1860, the Wilkins family are proud to call the vast pastures that run alongside the Mataura River in Southland their home.

In 1974 Ray and Pam Wilkins started a farming partnership. This has now evolved to Wilkins Farming Co, an expansive family-based operation in Northern Southland that proudly produces high-quality pasture-finished beef, lamb, wool, venison, velvet, and dairy produce to supply both New Zealand and international markets.

As one of the largest farming agri-businesses in Southland, Wilkins Farming Co has invested in land ownership and management of their own properties and leased farms. As 6th generation New Zealand farmers, they manage land in a sustainable and responsible way for the generations who will follow.

Thanks to their Southland location, their land is blessed with many local rivers such as Mataura and the Oreti and impressive flats and hillsides.

Their farms are located across four key regions with Northern Southland -

- **Wendonside** – the main farm unit consisting of deer, beef, sheep, dairy, grazing and cropping
- **Athol** – deer beef, sheep, grazing and cropping
- **Five Rivers** – Dairy
- **Fairlight** – beef, sheep, grazing and cropping



Sarah Crooks, Environmental Manager and Pam Wilkins stand for a picture at the head of the proposed planting site.

The Glen Lapa Road planting project was born from 'Pams Planting' site. A stretch of riparian margins alongside Glen Lapa Road that Pam Wilkins has planted out over the past five years with several hundred natives.



Pam's Planting site alongside Glen Lapa Road

The Glen Lapa Road project has progressed from a visit to Pams plantings to what is proposed now. The work has been built through ongoing engagement with the Wilkins family, including meetings, site visits and review of the proposed planting approach.

The resulting plan, completed in May 2026 by Janet Hodgetts of SciArt on behalf of Reimagining Mātaura, provides a practical foundation for planting two tributary systems on the Glenlapa Road property. It identifies approximately 1,075 metres of riparian margin and an indicative requirement for 9,135 native plants across three planting zones.

A key outcome for this period is the establishment of a constructive working relationship with the Wilkins family. Their participation has enabled the planting design to respond to farm operations, local conditions and site-specific risks, while supporting the wider aspirations of Reimagining Mātaura.



The tributary systems where the planting will take place

Purpose of Plan

The Glen Lapa Road planting project supports Reimagining Mātaura by developing natural buffers within the Mātaura River catchment and preparing for restoration of riparian habitat. The project is intended to:

- improve stream shade and bank stability;
- trap sediment and absorb nutrients before they enter waterways;
- enhance local biodiversity and provide connected habitat for wildlife;
- support native birds, fish, in-stream invertebrates and other fauna; and
- contribute to improved catchment resilience and cultural and ecological outcomes over time.

Planned Planting Programme

Planting zone	Approx. length	Indicative plants	Key site considerations
Lower Tributary	330 m	3,100	Flooding, gravel banks and erosion
Upper Tributary - low slope	275 m	1,470	Wind, drought and frost exposure
Upper Tributary - high slope	470 m	4,565	Steep areas, seepage and erosion
Total	1,075 m	9,135	Exact numbers subject to site variability and availability

The initial planting comprises hardy native foundation species selected for riparian performance and resilience, including toetoe, purei/pukio, mingimingi, tī kōuka, tree daisy, kāpuka/broadleaf, harakeke, kōhūhū, mānau/ribbonwood, South Island kōwhai and koromiko. Future canopy species are proposed once initial canopy closure is achieved, generally after three to five years.

Eco-sourced plants have been secured from Pukerau Nursery, a local nursery within the relevant ecological districts. Planting is scheduled to commence in April 2028. This timeframe will allow the plants to harden off and become conditioned to Southland's challenging winter conditions before they are established on site.

Outcomes Achieved

- A positive and constructive relationship has been developed with the Wilkins family.
- Landowner knowledge and site observations have been incorporated into project planning.
- A technically informed, site-specific planting plan has been completed and reviewed.
- The scale, planting zones, indicative plant numbers and establishment requirements are now defined.
- The project has progressed into implementation planning, with eco-sourced plants secured from Pukerau Nursery and planting scheduled to commence in April 2028.

Risks and management considerations

The planting plan identifies frost, summer drought, wind exposure and flooding in low-lying areas as the principal establishment risks. Successful delivery will depend on thorough grass and weed control before planting and ongoing maintenance for at least the first two to three years. Plant guards, mulch or weed matting, appropriate seasonal timing and locally sourced plants will further support establishment.

The plan also notes that mānuka has been excluded because scale insect is present on the property, and that South Island kōwhai must be positioned away from fence lines because all parts of the plant are toxic to stock.