Te Komiti mō te Kaupapa Here me te Whakamahere
Policy and Planning Committee

Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau
Te taiao taketake me ngā reiti kounga wai kua āta whakaritea

Auckland Council natural environment and water quality targeted rates

Ngā mea hirahira 2024/2025

Highlights 2024/2025

Rārangi kōrero

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He kupu nā te Kaihautū o te Komiti mō te Kaupapa Here me te Whakamahere (2024/2025)

E koa ana au ki te whakatakoto i tēnei pūrongo mō te koke tāpua a Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau me ō tātou hapori ki te haumanu, ki te tiaki hoki i tō tātou taiao māori me ngā arawai o te tau 2024/2025.

He mea tāpae e ngā tāngata o Tāmaki Makaurau, mā tō Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau Tahua Pūtea i te 2024-2034, tō rātou tino pai ki ngā hōtaka ka utua ki ngā reiti whāiti. Kua whakaaetia e Te Kāhui Hautū te whakapaunga o te $350 miriona mai i te reiti whāiti ki te taiao māori hei āwhina i ngā mahi a te kaunihera, i ngā mahi hoki e arahina nei e te hapori, hei tiaki, hei haumanu hoki i ngā pūnaha hauropi māori e mātāmua ana me ngā momo e noho whakaraerae ana, tae atu ki te tukunga o te pūtea hei tautoko i te uruparenga ki te aukatinga o te horapa o te rimurimu nō tāwāhi, o Kaurēpa, e whakararuraru nei i ngā pūnaha hauropi o ō tātou moana puipuiaki.

Kua herea tētahi $661 miriona atu anō mai i te reiti whāiti mō te kounga o te wai hei utu i te tūāhanga hou e hua mai ai ētahi taunga hauora mō ngā otaota me ngā kararehe i te wā hoki e whakapainga ai ō tātou tāhuna, ngā whanga me ngā arawai. Ka whai wāhi atu ki tēnei ko te pūtea e mahi tonu ai mātou ki te whakatika i ngā raruraru kua tauroa e pā ana ki te kounga o te wai puta noa i Tāmaki Makaurau, otirā, ko te kaupapa me kōrero, ko Eastern and Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Programme.

Ka miramira ēnei mahi i te ara e noho ai ēnei reiti whāiti hei pūtea tiaki i ā tātou tāonga, i ngā momo mōioio me ngā pūnaha hauropi o Tāmaki Makaurau e whakawhirinaki nei ki ā mātou whakapaunga kaha o ia tau ki te tautiaki i te noho ora tonu o te taiao māori, i te mā hoki o te wai.

Ko te reiti whāiti hoki o te tau 2024/2025 e whakaata ana i te putanga o ēnei hua whakamīharo rawa atu nā te nui o te tautoko me te mahi tahi ki ngā mana whenua me ngā hoa patui o te hapori.

Ko tētahi tauira rawe rawa atu o tēnei mahi tahitanga, ko te tukunga inamata o ngā kiwi 10 ki runga o Waiheke, koia rā hoki te whakahokinga tuatahi o te kiwi ki te rohe tāone o Tāmaki Makaurau. He hua tēnei nō ngā mahi me te ū a Te Korowai o Waiheke ki te whakakore haere i ngā tori e ngakoro ai te kiwi me ētahi atu manu. He hua ōkiko e kitea ana; kaua noa iho i ō tātou papa rēhia, i ngā rāhui me ngā tāhuna, engari i ō tātou ake papa hoki me ngā pae kiritata.

E mihi ana au ki ngā mana whenua e tū mai nei hei kaitiaki, hei rangatira hoki mō Tāmaki Makaurau, ā, e rere nei hoki ngā whakamānawa i tā rātou noho hei hoa patui, i ā rātou mahi hoki ki te haumanu i te mauri o te taiao. E ū ana mātou ki te tautoko tonu i ngā mana whenua e āta wātea ai rātou ki te whakatinana i tō rātou mana kaitiaki i te taiao.

E pēnei nei te whakahirahira o ēnei mahi nā te mutunga kore o te ū me ngā mahi, kua oti i roto i ngā tau e whitu kua hori, mai i ō tātou hapori me ngā pakihi i te taha o ō mātou kaimahi e whai wāhi ana ki te puāwaitanga o ngā manako nui whakaharahara e pā ana ki te taiao me te kounga o te wai.

Ngā mihi nui!
Richard Hills
Te Kaihautū o te Komiti mō te Kaupapa Here me te Whakamahere

Message from Policy and Planning Committee Chair (2024/2025)

I am pleased to introduce this report on the significant progress Auckland Council and our communities have made towards restoring and protecting our natural environment and waterways in 2024/2025.

Through Auckland Council's 10-year Budget 2024-2034, Aucklanders once again submitted strongly in favour of the targeted rate programmes. The Governing Body approved $350 million for a natural environment targeted rate for council and community-led action to protect and restore priority native ecosystems and threatened species, including funding to support the response to stop the spread of the exotic Caulerpa seaweed threatening the ecosystems of our treasured moana.

Another $661 million was committed for a water quality targeted rate for new water infrastructure to create healthy habitats for plants and animals while also cleaning up our beaches, harbours and waterways. This includes funding that has allowed us to continue work on resolving long-term water quality issues right across Auckland, with notable mentions the Eastern and Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Programme.

This mahi highlights how the targeted rates protect our taonga, the delicate species and ecosystems of Tāmaki Makaurau, so dependent on our annual efforts to maintain a healthy natural environment and clean water. The 2024/2025 targeted rate also reflects that we don't get these fantastic results without the significant support and collaboration of mana whenua and community partners.

An amazing example of this collaboration is the recent release of the 10 kiwi on Waiheke Island, the first reintroduction of kiwi in urban Auckland. The result is due to the mahi and persistence of Te Korowai o Waiheke in reducing stoat numbers so kiwi and other manu can flourish. We are seeing tangible benefits, not only in our parks, reserves and beaches but in our backyards and neighbourhoods as well.

I acknowledge mana whenua as kaitiaki and rangatira of Tāmaki Makaurau and thank them for their partnership and work in restoring the mauri of te taiao. We are committed to continue to support mana whenua to actively exercise kaitiakitanga of te taiao.

What makes this mahi always so exceptional is the tireless commitment and mahi over the last seven years, from our communities and businesses alongside our kaimahi who have contributed to achieving our remarkable environmental and water quality aspirations.

Ngā mihi nui!
Richard Hills
Policy and Planning Committee Chair

Reiti taiao taketake kua āta whakaritea

Natural environment targeted rate

Plant pathogens

0 infected kauri trees found in Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua Ranges, despite an extensive survey, indicating this forest is free from kauri dieback disease.

9270 visitors to local and regional parks engaged with the 2024-2025 Summer Ngahere Champions programme.

Resurfaced and improved drainage on **over 35km** of regional parks tracks to meet track standards and reduce the spread of kauri dieback disease.

12 local park reserves had track resurface and drainage improvements to meet track standards for kauri forests and prevent closure.

Biodiversity Focus Areas

50 forest plots monitored, and **990** bird counts conducted across the region to assess the outcomes of our biodiversity protection work.

35 threatened or at-risk species surveyed across the region to identify priority protection areas.

41 priority ecosystem sites managed to address key causes of biodiversity decline.

10 years of monitoring completed confirming the successful translocation of **3** at risk lizard species to Papakōhatu / Crusoe Island.

Expanding community action

520 community-led initiatives across Tāmaki Makaurau have been supported with **$3** million in funding. Highlights include:

$1.7 million to **46** groups through the Regional Environment and Natural Heritage (RENH) and Community Coordination and Facilitation (CCF) grants.

$534,000 in tools and equipment provided to **202** community-led conservation entities to support their efforts in protecting native biodiversity.

$430,000 in grants for the protection of high-value biodiversity areas on private land.

$330,000 to enable community events, engagement initiatives and training programmes.

20% increase in monthly users on the Tiaki Tāmaki Makaurau website.

Mainland

45,500ha of ground-based possum control delivered region-wide by contractors and the community, protecting high-priority ecosystems and species.

2554ha of pest plant control undertaken in regional parks to protect high-priority ecosystems.

17 kōkako translocated from Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua Ranges to Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari in Waikato. Population recovery has been made possible by NETR-funded pest animal control.

Pest plant control was undertaken in **1150** private properties bordering parkland to protect high-priority on-park biodiversity.

All known sites of **3** species of pest plants (great reedmace, nassella tussock and broomsedge) have been eradicated from the Auckland Region.

Aquatic weeds and pest fish controlled in **two** high priority freshwater lakes to protect native biodiversity.

2554ha and over **250** feral pigs controlled across Waitākere, Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua Ranges, Te Arai and Atiu Creek Regional Parks to reduce ecological damage.

Islands

255 stoats caught to date by Te Korowai o Waiheke, contributing to a 76% increase in birds on Waiheke Island between 2020 and 2025. The stoat control enabled **10** kiwi to be released onto Waiheke Island.

Over $1.4m contributed to community- and iwi-led pest control on islands, including the Te Korowai o Waiheke and Tū Mai Taonga projects.

More than 500 wallabies and **more than 100** possums were dispatched in the southern half of Kawau, as we work towards restoring forest habitat and food sources for native species on the island.

2.3km of existing wallaby-proof fence repaired and a further **3.2km** of temporary fencing installed to create management areas for the Kawau pest eradication.

Over 200,000 field camera images processed to help inform the Kawau pest eradication operation.

1390 rabbits controlled on Aotea / Great Barrier Island, protecting vulnerable ecosystems and threatened plants.

302 feral cats trapped and **17** owned cats desexed and microchipped, progressing feral cat eradication on Aotea / Great Barrier Island.

Marine and pathways

7 sites managed for exotic caulerpa with surveys, treatments, mana whenua and community partnerships.

100% of vehicle sailings to Rakino and **92%** to Aotea / Great Barrier Island inspected to protect these islands from pests.

41 high-risk loads inspected by the biosecurity dog team before departure to help maintain pest-free Hauraki Gulf Islands.

32,150 engagements through the Protect Our Hauraki Gulf campaign (including **11,335** digital views and **18,335** in-person interactions) to build awareness of biosecurity best practice.

1239 vessel hulls surveyed for marine pests and the level of biofouling to help prevent pest spread.

162 Pest Free Warrants issued and **three** in process to help commercial transport operators avoid spreading pests to offshore islands.

10 Pest-Free Partner businesses confirmed and **four** in process to help ensure goods arrive at ferry terminals pest-free and ready for transport.

2566 hours delivered by Biosecurity Champions at boat ramps and marinas to increase awareness of above and below the water biosecurity.

Marine ecology

5600ha of Manukau Harbour seabed surveyed to understand the diversity of seabed habitats and inform management actions.

43 areas of seabed habitat and **660km** of seabed transects were surveyed with video in the Hauraki Gulf improving our knowledge of the values.

85 seabird colonies / sites monitored across the region, to inform conservation actions.

12 seabird species monitored to assess population trends.

Enabling tools

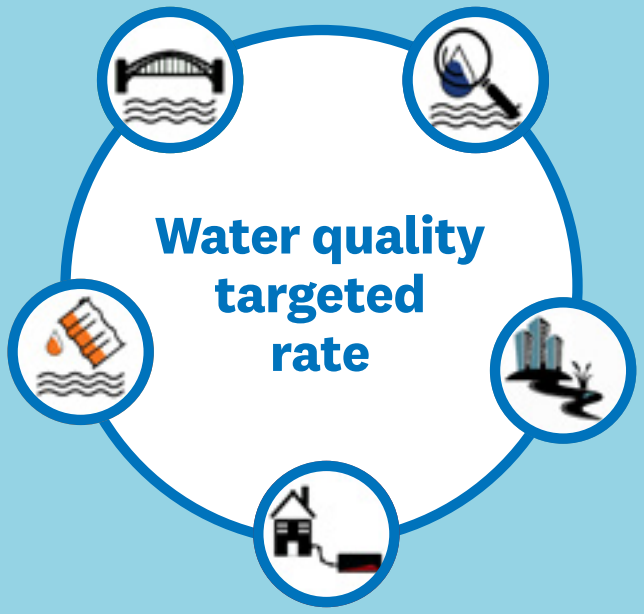
72 biosecurity and ecology contractors are using Ruru, our conservation information system to manage operational data and **899** active Ruru users are supported through our service.

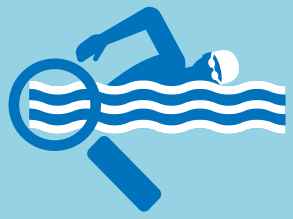
42 biodiversity management projects supported with geospatial data and digital applications.

Kauri Glen Reserve Track, Kaipātiki.

Reiti kounga wai kua āta whakaritea

Water quality targeted rate





Safe Networks

1667 samples collected across **68** stormwater catchments, finding human faecal matter at **96** unique locations.

2568 property drainage inspections completed across 19 investigation areas with **488** issues identified, with **238** resolved to date.

Since 2020, **9732** samples collected across **139** stormwater catchments, **16,286** property drainage inspections completed and **1523** issues identified.

Waitematā Harbour water quality improvement

Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement:

8.8km of public stormwater pipe was constructed .

85 of properties were separated.

36.4km of public stormwater pipe being designed to facilitate stormwater separation.

3469 properties are expected to benefit from identified separation.

Eastern Isthmus Water Quality Improvement:

1.5km of public stormwater pipe was constructed.

17.4km of public stormwater pipe being designed to facilitate stormwater separation.

1331 properties are expected to benefit from identified separation.

Safe Septic

2984 faulty systems repaired following compliance investigation.

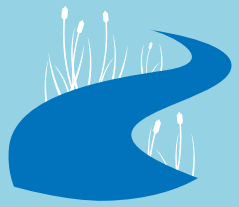
50,180 estimated total number of septic tank systems in Auckland.

15,555 (45%) are up to date with maintenance records and compliance.

3,180 (9%) require attention.

330 critical failures under active monitoring by compliance for repair.

15,375 (45%) overdue for providing maintenance records.



Urban and rural stream rehabilitation

Over $643,000 allocated to grant recipients across two grant programmes – Waterways Protection Fund and Fonterra & Auckland Council Wetland Restoration.

254km of fencing to be installed, **17.8ha** of wetlands to be protected, **49ha** of riparian margin to be protected, through co-funding programmes.

657,603 plants planted or to be planted through new work plans.

Contaminant reduction

15,685 compliance site visits to small construction sites, with **1398** notices issued (91% compliance rate).

797 visits to high-contaminate risk industries through the Industrial Trade Activity Proactive Programme, with **45** notices issued.

400% increase in notices issued on previous year, due to focus on automotive dismantler sector.

Southern catchments alignment

This sub-programme has not been started yet.

Ngā reiti kua āta whakaritea mā tō tātou rohe

Targeted rates working for our region

Natural environment targeted rate programmes

Plant pathogens

Investing to reduce the risk of spread of plant pathogens threatening native species, in particular kauri dieback.

Mainland

Increasing pest plant and pest animal control in and around public parks and in important habitats on private land.

Expanding community action

Supporting community conservation, environmental innovation and Māori-led projects.

Enabling tools

Improving data management and developing digital tools for connecting Aucklanders with conservation activities.

Islands

Taking action to reduce pest plants and pest animals to protect unique island ecosystems and native species.

Marine and pathways

Managing and educating about pest pathways and preventing pest spread.

Marine ecology

Conducting research into marine habitats and seabirds so we can better protect them.

Biodiversity Focus Areas

Protecting a range of species and ecosystems.

Water quality targeted rate programmes

Urban and rural stream rehabilitation

We're investing to restore local waterways across the region, and to support the work of local communities.

Safe Networks

We're investigating issues with our water networks and identifying solutions to make popular Safeswim sites more swimmable.

Waitematā Harbour water quality improvement

This programme aims to reduce wet weather overflows into the Waitematā Harbour and minimise stormwater intrusion into the wastewater network.

Western isthmus water quality improvement

A major infrastructure programme that will significantly reduce wastewater overflows into the Waitematā Harbour and reduce stormwater volumes going into the Manukau Harbour.

Eastern isthmus water quality improvement programme

A major infrastructure programme that will significantly reduce wastewater overflows and improve water quality from Hobson's Bay to St Heliers.

Safe Septic

We're introducing a regional inspection and maintenance regime for properties with onsite wastewater systems.

Contaminant reduction

We're preventing litter and road pollutants from entering waterways in urban areas, and in rural areas the focus is on reducing sediment and erosion along our waterways.

Southern catchments alignment

We're improving water quality in the Manukau Harbour by aligning the timing of stormwater improvements with other scheduled major infrastructure projects.

As we enter the sixth year of delivering a targeted rate-funded portfolio of natural environment work, we are proud to report on the continued success and impact of our efforts across the Auckland region. This programme has been instrumental in reducing pest numbers in key biodiversity areas, safeguarding the pest-free status of islands in the Hauraki Gulf, managing the impact of kauri dieback and maintaining exclusion zones for deer and goats in the Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua and Waitākere Ranges. These achievements reflect our commitment to protecting Auckland's unique ecosystems and native species for current and future generations.

Our work extends beyond regional boundaries through strategic partnerships with central government and other regional councils. Together, we are strengthening Auckland's biosecurity readiness and response capabilities to address emerging threats such as exotic freshwater gold clam and highly pathogenic avian influenza. These collaborative efforts ensure that we remain vigilant and prepared to protect our environment (and communities) from new pest incursions.

Central to our success is the strong and enduring relationships we have built with mana whenua across the region. We work in partnership to plan, deliver, and monitor our programmes, ensuring that Māori values and aspirations are embedded in our approach. We also support Māori-led initiatives that enhance environmental outcomes and uphold the principles of kaitiakitanga. These partnerships are vital to the long-term sustainability and cultural relevance of our work.

Community involvement continues to be a cornerstone of our programme. We support over 500 conservation groups across Auckland, providing funding, technical expertise, and capacity-building opportunities. By fostering local leadership and empowering mana whenua, community groups and schools, we expand the reach and impact of conservation activity. Together, we are creating a resilient network of environmental stewards who are helping to protect Auckland's natural taonga for generations to come.

Samantha Hill
General Manager Environmental Services

Wāhanga Tuatahi: Reiti taiao taketake kua āta whakaritea

Section 1: Natural environment targeted rate

The natural environment targeted rate (NETR) provides critical additional investment, along with business as usual funding from general rates, to protect and enhance our natural environment. This funding enables us to deliver on our Regional Pest Management Plan, the council's Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy, and our responsibilities under the Biosecurity Act, Local Government Act, and other legislation, plans and strategies. Some of the work enabled by NETR includes:

- significantly increasing weed and pest animal control in and around local and regional parks, and important habitats on private land to enable indigenous species to thrive
- reducing the spread of kauri dieback disease and other plant pathogens
- providing greater protection for indigenous ecosystems and species, including on the terrestrial mainland and in the islands and marine and freshwater environments.
- developing better systems and support to empower community-led stewardship of the natural environment.

This year, key programmes included preparing for and responding to new biosecurity threats, such as exotic caulerpa seaweed and freshwater gold clam, controlling mammalian pests and pest plants, deepening our understanding of threatened species in the region, and enabling and partnering with mana whenua and communities on survey and biodiversity management activities.

Protecting a range of species and ecosystems

Hōtaka: Ngā Wāhi ā-Kanorau Koiora ka Aronuitia

Programme: Biodiversity Focus Areas

The Biodiversity Focus Area programme delivers activities to protect the rich biodiversity of Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland by informing and guiding conservation efforts at high priority locations, ensuring native species and ecosystems thrive across the region.

Highlights

Regional Conservation Status Report

We've achieved a significant milestone by publishing the first-ever regional conservation status report for Tāmaki Makaurau's birds, complementing existing reports on reptiles, amphibians, bats, freshwater fish and vascular plants. We found that 32 bird species are already regionally extinct, and another 54 species are threatened or at risk of going extinct in Tāmaki Makaurau, highlighting the urgency of conservation actions for vulnerable native species. These comprehensive assessments form the foundation of our biodiversity programme, directly informing how we prioritise species surveys, pest control and other conservation management and research initiatives across the region.

Threatened Species Discoveries

Our extensive regional surveys have yielded important findings while identifying priority conservation sites:

- **Freshwater fish:** Surveys have confirmed populations of the threatened bluegill bully in Aotea's northern streams (Coffins Creek, Kaiaraara, Wairahi and Akapoua Streams) - the only known regional location for this species.
- **Coastal birds:** We located 10 active matuku moana / reef heron nests across the region, including four in the Manukau Harbour. However, the concerningly low numbers highlight the need for continued monitoring and protection.
- **Native plants:** Targeted surveys identified new locations for five threatened plant species (including *Leptinella rotundata* and *Lophomyrtus obcordata* / rōhutu), while documenting twenty additional threatened plants, significantly expanding our knowledge of their distribution and the threats to their ongoing survival.
- **Amphibians:** Ongoing surveys of Hochstetter's frogs in north Auckland streams are helping identify priority management sites for this native species.

Giant Kōkopu Protection

We're safeguarding the Auckland region's only known giant kōkopu spawning site through intensive pest control on Waiheke Island. Our efforts target mice, rats and hedgehogs that prey on the eggs of this critically endangered native fish. Alongside predator management, we're restoring essential wetland and stream habitats while expanding control efforts to adjacent catchments to ensure the species' survival.

Coastal Wildlife Protection

In partnership with Animal Management and the Waitākere Ranges Local Board, we've enhanced protection for threatened shore and seabirds through beach dog patrols at critical nesting and roosting sites along the West Coast. Our outreach extends to Aotea / Great Barrier Island, where we provide bird-aversion training for dogs and their owners to protect vulnerable native species, including kiwi and burrowing seabirds. Our ecological specialists also provided input into the regional dog bylaw review.

Case study: Forest ecosystem monitoring on Te Kawau Tūmārō o Toi / Kawau Island

Auckland Council has established 21 permanent forest ecosystem monitoring plots on Te Kawau Tūmārō o Toi / Kawau Island. This supports the pest-free Kawau Island programme, Te Hōtaka kia Riha kore ki Kawau, which is delivered in partnership with Ngāti Manuhiri, the Department of Conservation, and the local community.

Kawau is a unique island ecosystem, home to many native species and a nationally significant site for North Island weka and sneezeweed. The forest has been heavily impacted by introduced species, resulting in a sparse understory and an ageing kānuka canopy that threatens the long-term health of the ecosystem.

The pest-free Kawau Island programme aims to eradicate, in the first step, wallabies and possums, and in the second step, rats and stoats. The goal is to restore the island's mauri (life force), enable recovery of its ecosystems and create a safe environment for natural recolonisation by native species. If successful, Kawau could become one of Aotearoa's largest inhabited pest-free islands.

Monitoring plots were established in 2023/2024, and detailed plant and bird surveys have now created a baseline for future comparison. Long-term monitoring will help measure biodiversity recovery and guide any necessary interventions.

This will help us to identify changes in forest communities and determine where things are going well and where additional interventions, such as weed control, may be required.

Monitored plot showing devastation by pests.

Hōtaka: Ngā iro kitakita ā-otaota

Programme: Plant pathogens

The Plant Pathogens programme delivers activities that protect Aotearoa's iconic trees and the ecosystems they support from the impacts of kauri dieback, myrtle rust, and other emerging plant diseases. Activities are delivered in collaboration with mana whenua, scientists, industry, and communities.

Highlights

Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua Kauri Health Survey

In a landmark collaboration with the Department of Conservation and mana whenua partners (Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Tamaoho, Ngāti Whanaunga, and Ngāti Tamaterā), we completed an extensive health assessment of over 500 kauri in Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui /Hūnua Ranges. Encouragingly, we detected no *Phytophthora agathidicida* (kauri dieback pathogen), confirming this area as one of Aotearoa New Zealand's largest kauri dieback-free forests. This successfully co-designed and co-delivered project sets a benchmark for future monitoring efforts.

Protecting kauri and supporting visitor access to Waimaringi / Fairy Falls

After being closed since 2018 to protect kauri, the iconic Fairy Falls track has been reopened as part of the 2019-2024 Waitākere Ranges Track Reopening Work Programme. Existing boardwalks and stairs had reached the end of their lifespan and were replaced with new boardwalks and stairs in similar locations, with bridges added to the network. Adjustments were made to enhance views and safeguard kauri root systems, especially where visitors had previously climbed over and damaged the fragile roots of ancient kauri to access the pools. Hygiene stations were also upgraded at the track entrance to

prevent the spread of infected soil. It has been fantastic to welcome visitors back to this special place now called Waimaringi / Fairy Falls, a name gifted by Te Kawerau ā Maki.

Aotea Kauri Health Initiative

Building on the Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua survey model, we have initiated a similar kauri health assessment on Aotea / Great Barrier Island in partnership with Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai Ki Aotea Trust and the Department of Conservation. After a positive initial hui in May 2025, the project will collect samples during summer 2025/2026, combining mana whenua knowledge and scientific expertise to protect these important trees.

Ngahere Champions Programme Success

The Ngahere Champion Programme continues to make an impact, with four champions engaging 9,270 park visitors this summer at key locations in Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua and Kaipātiki. These ambassadors play a vital role in educating the public about kauri dieback prevention, explaining the cultural and ecological importance of kauri, and demonstrating proper hygiene station use. Their on-ground presence has significantly increased compliance with protection measures in monitored areas.

Students learning to protect Kauri with Virtual Reality

Our innovative Kauri VR programme immerses Auckland school students in the majesty of kauri forests through virtual reality experiences. Developed in partnership with the Sustainable Schools team, this taonga (treasure) teaches students about kauri ecology, cultural significance, and kauri forest visitation practices. By engaging young minds with this cutting-edge technology, we foster a new generation of kauri guardians who understand how their actions can protect these keystone species for the future.

Community Nursery Support

We support community nurseries in improving biosecurity through the Plant Pass certification scheme, ensuring only healthy, pest-free plants are used in restoration projects. Through mock audits and targeted funding, we have raised the standards across the region to prevent the accidental spread of pathogens during planting activities. This proactive approach enhances ecological restoration success while safeguarding native ecosystems.

Case study: Kauri Protected in Local Parks

Kauri are under threat from a deadly microscopic pathogen, Phytopthera agathidicida. This pathogen lives in the soil and attacks the tree roots, preventing kauri from absorbing the water and nutrients they need to survive. Movement of soil can spread the pathogen, risking the lives of more kauri trees. There are legal requirements to reduce the risk of the spread of infected soil along tracks.

To keep kauri protected, tracks need to be maintained to a kauri-safe standard, which enables track users to comply with the legal requirements at hygiene stations (footwear is easy to clean if no mud has been picked up while using the track). When tracks are built and maintained to this standard, and users follow hygiene protocols, the risk of spreading the pathogen is significantly reduced.

We have made substantial progress in protecting kauri forests across the region by upgrading and maintaining tracks, including reopening 40km of kauri-safe tracks in local parks since 2018.

To ensure those tracks can be kept open, we have developed a specialised audit programme for tracks around kauri. This checks that drainage systems are fit for purpose, track surfaces are performing to kauri-safe standards, hygiene stations are fully functioning and that steps, boardwalks, and bridges are safe and performing their intended purpose.

Last year, 33 audits led to upgrades being completed on ten tracks in local parks, with three more underway, allowing them to remain open for public use. Public engagement with hygiene stations has also increased significantly.

Hygiene station at the recently upgraded track in Eskdale Reserve.

Pest control happening on the mainland

Hōtaka: Te tuawhenua

Programme: Mainland

Through the Mainland Pest Control programme we have significantly expanded control efforts for high-priority pest plants and animals within and around key ecosystems in Tāmaki Makaurau's regional and local parks.

Highlights

Expansion of Community-Led Possum Control

Independent monitoring has identified three large new areas where community-led possum control efforts, supported by Auckland Council, are effectively maintaining very low possum populations. These areas cover a total of 10,000 hectares and are located on the southern shores of the Manukau Harbour, the Mahurangi East Peninsula, and west of Glorit on the western coast of the Kaipara Harbour.

Feral Pig Control in Regional Parks

This year, we controlled feral pigs in four regional parks: Te Ārai, Ātiu Creek, Waitākere, and Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua. Over the past 12 months, we removed more than 250 feral pigs from the regional parks network, significantly reducing the environmental damage caused by these animals.

Expansion of Pest Plant Control on Regional Parks

We managed 2,554 hectares of parkland for invasive pest plant species this year. Many sites require ongoing management due to extensive infestations and persistent seed banks. The programme was expanded to include additional parks such as Te Rau Pūriri, the Te Ārai dunes, and Waharau.

Strengthening Small Mammal Predator Control

We control introduced predators such as stoats, ferrets, weasels, cats, rats, hedgehogs and possums across 23 regional parks, with control at each site depending on what native species we're protecting there. Predator trap networks were expanded and reinforced at Tāpapakanga, Tawhitokino, Te Muri, Ātiu Creek, Whakanewha, Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua, and Whatipū Regional Parks. These efforts support native biodiversity by reducing predation from introduced mammal species.

Ongoing Deer Control Around Key Regional Parks

We surveyed and controlled feral deer across approximately 7,000 hectares surrounding Waitākere and Te Ngāherehere o Kohukohunui / Hūnua regional parks to maintain deer-free parkland. Contracted hunters perform this work, supported by a network of trail cameras, thermal imaging drones, and indicator dogs that provide real-time data to optimise hunting strategies.

Enhanced Pest Control in High Biodiversity Local Parks

Funding through the Natural Environment Targeted Rate (NETR) enables expanded pest plant and pest animal control to take place in 40 local parks identified as having high biodiversity value across Auckland, helping safeguard native ecosystems and species.

Progress in Hornwort Control at Lake Rototoa

We have successfully controlled three of the five known sites of the invasive aquatic weed hornwort in Lake Rototoa at the top of South Head. The remaining two sites are nearing complete removal, marking significant progress in eradicating this highly invasive species from one of the region's most biodiverse lakes.

Landowner's Responsibility for Buffer Area Weed Control

We deliver pest plant control in buffers around high ecological value parks, taking a phased approach. Following an initial round of control, landowners are responsible for maintaining appropriate weed control levels on their properties. Several new buffers were passed into landowner responsibility over the last year.

Case study: Preventing the establishment of future pest plant species in the Auckland region

As part of delivering the Regional Pest Management Plan 2020-2030, we undertake a range of activities to prevent the establishment of future pest plant species in the Auckland region.

This work includes the eradication (within the short to medium term) of a selection of high-risk, low-incidence pest plants. These pest plants have limited distribution in the region, and the eradication focus aims to prevent future adverse effects on the environment, economy, human health, and social and cultural values if these plants were to become more widespread.

After several years of controlling identified plants at known sites, conducting searches beyond these sites for potential spread, and performing follow-up checks based on seed viability, we are confident that three species—great reedmace, nassella tussock, and broomsedge—have been eradicated from the Auckland region. We have made significant progress on several other species, but must continue monitoring sites until any remaining seeds in the soil are no longer viable.

In addition to our work on low-incidence pest plants, we inspect garden centres, markets, and nurseries, and investigate online sales of banned pest plants in Auckland to prevent their sale and further spread. Over 160 inspections have occurred across the region in the past year.

A new pest plant enclosure has been built at the Auckland Botanic Gardens to securely contain live pest plants, enabling contractors, community groups, and council staff to enhance their knowledge of these high-risk species and accurately report any encounters.

New greenhouse storing Low Incidence Pest Plants.

Hōtaka: Ngā moutere

Programme: Islands

The Islands Programme delivers pest management and restoration initiatives to protect biodiversity on the Hauraki Gulf islands, working collaboratively with iwi, conservation partners, and local communities.

Highlights

Working towards a Pest-free Kawau Island

The Kawau Island community has been actively engaged in the initial phase of the Pest-Free Kawau Island project, which aims to restore the forest ecology by removing wallabies and possums. In addition to providing access to 96% of the landscape, the Kawau community has donated over $800,000 in private funding through the New Zealand Nature Fund. The two-year ground-based operation has now officially commenced, with Auckland Council leading the project in collaboration with Manuhiri Kaitiaki Charitable Trust, the Department of Conservation, and community members.

Supporting mana whenua and community-led conservation groups to control pests

With support from the Natural Environment Targeted Rate (NETR), mana whenua and community-led conservation groups are controlling pests and undertaking additional conservation activities on the Hauraki Gulf islands. For example, on Aotea, we partner with Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea as they work towards eradicating feral cats and rats from Aotea through their Tū Mai Taonga project. On Waiheke, we support Ratbusters, Te Korowai o Waiheke and other groups, working hard to protect their environment.

Inner Hauraki Gulf Islands Pest Plant Management

Significant ecological protection across inner Hauraki Gulf islands is being achieved through our pest plant management. On Waiheke, pest plants have been controlled across nearly 200 hectares of critical freshwater wetlands, targeting species like moth plant, climbing asparagus and pampas grass. Detailed surveys of Te Matuku wetland will expand protected areas, with numerous landowners collaborating to safeguard priority sites. For Rakino, Motukaha and Crusoe Islands, initial pest plant control is complete, with follow-up work underway to eliminate target species.

Aotea / Great Barrier Island Site Led Pest Plant Programme

This year, we made strong progress in managing invasive weeds at high-priority sites across Aotea, surveying 343 hectares and clearing 234 hectares. Efforts focused on high-value ecosystems, visibly improving the health of forests, wetlands and dunes. Wilding pines were controlled across 370 hectares to stop their spread across native landscapes. Delivered by two local Māori-owned businesses, the programme ensures culturally grounded practices, supports local employment, and strengthens community-led conservation.

Aotea / Great Barrier Island Pest Animal Control

The island's pest animal control efforts have yielded impressive results: 1,390 rabbits were controlled, and 625 burrows fumigated, with monitoring showing an overall reduction in rabbit numbers. 302 feral cats were captured across the island by projects we support and we funded desexing and microchipping 17 owned cats. These efforts directly support local sanctuaries and trusts in protecting priority ecosystems and species from predators.

Aotea / Great Barrier Island Low Incidence Pest Plant Programme

We have made significant progress towards eradicating high-risk weeds, such as kahili ginger and climbing asparagus, from Aotea / Great Barrier Island, with over 2,000 hectares surveyed across public and private land. Success has been driven by strong community support. Local Māori-owned businesses also play a vital role in maintaining access to and knowledge of the sites. The island community has rallied around this conservation effort, reflecting a deep sense of pride in protecting Aotea’s unique natural environment.

Waiheke's Giant Kōkopu Protection

The threatened native fish, giant kōkopu found at two sites on Waiheke. At the Awaawaroa wetland site, expanded rodent control appears successful, with fish observed during likely spawning periods after heavy rains. We will extend similar protection to Te Matuku next year.

Case study: Te Korowai o Waiheke stoat eradication and kiwi release

Te Korowai o Waiheke is a community-led success story in conservation. Since the island-wide stoat eradication began in February 2020, more than 255 stoats have been removed from Waiheke Island. The removal of this many stoats has contributed to a remarkable recovery in native birdlife. Between 2020 and 2024, native bird counts increased by 76%, with kākā counts soaring by an impressive 388%. Weka and the nationally rare pāteke are also establishing and thriving.

In May 2025, the Waiheke community welcomed 10 kiwi from nearby Ponui Island / Te Pounui-o-Peretū. After a pōwhiri at Piritahi Marae led by Ngāti Pāoa and Ngai Tai ki Tāmaki, the kiwi were released on Te Matuku Peninsula, where they are settling in well. This release was made possible by the low number of stoats remaining, supported by the NETR alongside funding from Predator Free 2050 and Foundation North.

The community remains engaged, with community sightings of stoats being critical in identifying priority areas, followed up with the use of detection dogs to allow traps to be placed more effectively. The annual community survey also continues to show overwhelmingly strong support for both stoat and rat eradication.

Rat trials continue to test the operational feasibility and social acceptability of the techniques likely to be used in an island-wide rat eradication. Last year's focus was on discussing the acceptability of methodologies used in other island eradications with rural property owners.

The benefits of the Te Korowai o Waiheke programme extend beyond thriving wildlife to include strengthening community cohesion, driving innovation in conservation, and creating a premier eco-tourism destination.

Kiwi being carried ashore for release on Waiheke Island.

Protecting our island and marine environment

Hōtaka: Te moana me ngā ara kawe riha

Programme: Marine and pathways

Our pathways management approach prevents the introduction of new pest species to Tāmaki Makaurau's unique islands and marine ecosystems by disrupting pest movement routes. We use advanced tools such as detection dogs, Artificial Intelligence, and underwater cameras for ongoing surveillance and rapid response to new incursions. This work is strengthened through cross-agency collaboration and strong community engagement to safeguard our region's biodiversity.

Highlights

Conservation Dog Programme Expansion

Auckland Council has strengthened its biosecurity conservation dog programme by investing in a new rodent detection dog to ensure long-term capability. Developing a skilled dog-handler team requires at least 18 months of rigorous training to meet the Department of Conservation's Conservation Dog Programme standards, vital for protecting endangered species on pest-free islands.

Community Engagement and Caulerpa Response

Supported by the Ministry for Primary Industries, our Biosecurity Champions programme deployed eighteen ambassadors who contributed over 2,500 outreach hours at key mainland boat departure sites from December 2024 to April 2025. Focusing on exotic caulerpa awareness, additional on-island kaitiaki ambassadors engaged with 151 vessels and 1,265 people on Aotea, and 804 vessels

and 1,720 people on Waiheke Island. We actively support surveillance and treatment at new sites, including Mokohinau, southern Kawau, and Te Hauturu o Toi / Little Barrier Island. Our response combines large-scale communications, collaboration with mana whenua and communities, and innovative tools, such as underwater cameras, to find and monitor caulerpa sites.

We have produced three videos, participated in community forums, distributed collateral and encouraged boaties to help slow the spread of exotic caulerpa through advertising and media.

Reducing the Spread of Marine Pests

Marine pests can be transported on the underside of vessels. Our regional hull surveillance programme completed 1,239 inspections last year, including around Aotea / Great Barrier Island, with improving compliance levels indicating a better understanding of biosecurity rules among boat owners. Those who don't comply are required to clean their hulls to reduce the risk to our coastal ecosystems.

Protecting the Hauraki Gulf Islands

Our new Pest Free Partner programme encourages businesses connected to the Hauraki Gulf Islands to adopt simple biosecurity practices that support island pest-free goals. Early participants include marinas, landscaping companies, a yacht broker, island conservation trusts and island accommodation providers. Recognising marinas as critical gateways to the islands, our Pathways team completed pest audits at eight marinas across Auckland, providing tailored recommendations to enhance pest control measures and reduce transfer risks.

Pest-Free Warrants

Auckland Council's Pest-Free Warrant scheme uses Regional Pest Management Plan rules to regulate an important industry pathway to reduce the risk of pest threats to Hauraki Gulf islands. To date, 162 pest-free warranted commercial transport operators are actively involved in island biosecurity. Face-to-face conversations have been key to understanding an operator's business and tailoring the warrant's requirements to reflect this. Ongoing support, staff training and audits to check pest control is robust at key departure points are helping to build trust, protect the islands and reduce the risk of rodent stowaways. This has set a great foundation for embedding basic biosecurity measures amongst operators' practices for the long-term benefit of the Gulf islands. They are proactively notifying our biosecurity team of catches or pest sightings before or during sailings.

National and Regional Partnerships

We maintain strong partnerships through the Top of the North Marine Biosecurity Alliance, collaborating with the Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, and Hawke's Bay regions, along with DOC and Biosecurity New Zealand. We share information and resources with the common goal of preventing the spread of marine pests. These efforts aim to establish consistent nationwide marine biosecurity practices to minimise future marine pest incursions. Our presence at major boating events, such as the Auckland Boat Show and Hutchwilco Boat Show, resulted in thousands of meaningful interactions about marine biosecurity, demonstrating the value of these collaborative outreach efforts. We collectively manage **marinepests.nz** and the established campaign ‘Clean below? Good to go’ on a national scale.

Engaging the community in pest-free messaging

Public interest was evident in our summer social media campaign, which reached over 58,000 people and generated 96,000 impressions. A highlight was the post introducing "Bobby," one of our Argentine ant detection dogs, which reached 17,000 people and showcased the power of engaging content.

Pipi: The pest-free hero.

Case study: Protecting pest-free islands – keeping them pest-free

Auckland Council's team of eight pest detection dogs and their handlers play a crucial role in island biosecurity, maintaining the gains of pest-free campaigns and preventing the spread of invasive pests across the Hauraki Gulf / Tikapa Moana.

In 2025, Pipi successfully intercepted a rat hiding aboard a barge bound for pest-free Rakino Island. The barge's Pest-Free Warranted owner noticed something amiss while preparing for departure, prompting Pipi and her handler to investigate. The stowaway rodent was flushed from beneath a floorboard and removed from the vessel.

Rakino Island has remained rodent-free since 2002, a status that locals take pride in, remembering the time when rats overran homes and gardens. The relationship built with locals means they are proactively reporting any suspicious pest signs or activity. Since eradication, native wildlife has flourished, including species like pāteke (brown teal), kākāriki (red-crowned parakeet) and moko skinks.

While it is rare to find a pest animal during routine inspections, the consequence of their reaching a pest-free island is significant. Incursion responses can be expensive, so preventing pests from reaching the islands is the most cost-effective option.

Pest detection dogs are a quick and reliable way to check a boat and its load to ensure it is clear to travel. Building relationships with warranted operators and responsible skippers who contact Auckland Council for a biosecurity check before setting off to a pest-free island has been the backbone of early detections and fewer risky loads being turned away.

The growing popularity of detection dogs and their work has prompted social media profiling and new resources for biosecurity inspectors to engage with island visitors, residents and vessel operators / risk goods transporters.

Hōtaka: Te hauropi ā-moana

Programme: Marine ecology

The Marine Ecology programme focuses on effectively managing and protecting Tāmaki Makaurau's precious marine environments, by working to deepen our understanding of both marine habitats and seabird populations. These efforts help us make informed decisions about the conservation and restoration of our coastal taonga (treasures).

Highlights

Marine Habitat Research and Monitoring

In 2024, we conducted towed underwater camera surveys in the Hauraki Gulf to identify areas with potential biodiversity value. We also launched a hydrographic survey of the Manukau Harbour's deep channels to support future habitat mapping. Additionally, we initiated intertidal habitat mapping for East Coast estuaries, completing the Okura and Ōrewa Estuaries and scheduling further sites for the coming years.

Community Collaboration and New Monitoring Programmes

In partnership with local community groups, we established new monitoring programmes for kororā (little penguin) across multiple sites in the region. These initiatives aim to understand the status of kororā better and inform future protection efforts. On Mahuki Island, part of Aotea / Great Barrier Island, we used drone technology to conduct a census of the tākapu (Australasian gannet) colony, allowing us to compare current data with the 2017 population. At Muriwai, our long-running community monitoring programme continues to track gannet populations and assess breeding success annually.

Case Study: Mapping marine habitats in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland

Mapping marine habitats enhances our understanding of Auckland's extensive marine environment by focusing on habitats and biodiversity. It employs tailored techniques to map habitats such as shellfish beds, kelp forests, sponge gardens, and seagrass meadows, which support biodiversity and provide essential ecosystem functions and services. These habitats face threats from coastal development, climate change, invasive species, and land-based pollutants. Mapping their distribution allows us to assess marine health, identify rare or unique areas for protection, and establish a baseline for monitoring future changes.

In accessible estuaries like Ōrewa and Ōkura, the programme uses GPS units and geotagged cameras for rapid assessments, creating high-resolution habitat maps that reveal current conditions, habitat types, and environmental pressures. Future mapping efforts will include follow-up surveys every 10 years to monitor changes over time.

For deeper areas, the programme repurposes navigation survey data to generate maps that display seafloor features, including texture, slope, and roughness. Experts interpret these maps to identify potential ecological communities, followed by targeted underwater video surveys that fully characterise the species present. This approach is applied in a large, previously unmapped area of Tīkapa Moana / Hauraki Gulf, where key habitat features are identified for potential mapping as significant ecological areas. The collected video footage helps identify habitats, detect invasive species, and monitor nuisance algae.

Manukau Harbour will be the next focus, with seafloor surveys planned to identify potential habitats in deeper channels and slopes, thereby improving our understanding of these lesser-known ecological communities.

Marine operators use an underwater camera system for mapping.

Expanded Seabird Monitoring on Aotea / Great Barrier Island

Seabird monitoring on Aotea / Great Barrier Island remains a priority. At Glenfern Sanctuary and Medlands, we used a specially trained seabird detector dog to locate new burrows of tītī (Cook's petrel) and tākoketai (black petrel), expanding our monitoring efforts. This year, we also began monitoring shag species across Aotea and conducted new surveys in the Broken Islands in collaboration with Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea. These surveys provide valuable data to improve our understanding of seabird distribution in the wider Hauraki Gulf.

Monitoring of Priority Seabird Species Across the Region

We continued key monitoring programmes for priority species at important sites throughout the region. On the Noises islands, we monitored populations of ōi (grey-faced petrel), kororā, and pakahā (fluttering shearwater) on Ōtata and takahikare-moana (white-faced storm petrel) on Ruapuke / Maria Island. Surveys on Te Hauturu-o-Toi / Little Barrier Island showed higher nest occupancy for tākoketai, although storm events negatively impacted breeding success.

Shag Species and Marine Movement Studies

We conducted comprehensive surveys of shag species at key colonies on the mainland and in the Hauraki Gulf. We monitored kāruhiruhi (pied shag), kawau paka (little shag), māpunga (black shag), and kawau tūī (little black shag). We also continued population monitoring of kawau tikitiki (spotted shag) on Tarahiki / Shag Island and tracked their marine movements to understand their foraging behaviour and habitat needs better.

Hōtaka: Te whakawhānui i ngā kaupapa mahi a te hapori

Programme: Expanding community action

Community-led conservation efforts are thriving across Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland. The Natural Environmental Target Rate (NETR) funded Expanding Community Action programme supports more than 520 community-led entities, offering a range of assistance that continues to evolve in response to the diverse and emerging needs of our conservation community.

Highlights

Supporting community-led conservation through grants

We awarded a total of $1,704,800 across 46 projects to community-led conservation groups from the combined Regional Environment and Natural Heritage and Community Coordination and Facilitation grants. This funding supports practical, impactful landscape scale conservation activities to protect high value ecosystems, habitats and threatened species. Funding was prioritised towards project manager, coordinator and field worker wages and operational costs to enable the groups to deliver initiatives including habitat protection, restoration planting and pest control to enable native species to flourish across Auckland's suburbs.

Tiaki Tāmaki Makaurau | Conservation Portal

Our partnership with mana whenua continues to grow through the Tiaki Tāmaki Makaurau website, a vital platform for community-led conservation. This year, new content highlighted kaitiakitanga, mātauranga Māori, iwi profiles and engagement guidance. The site now features a bespoke tohu emblem and a te reo Māori definitions tool. Monthly users rose from 9,194 in July 2024 to over 11,000 in early 2025. Enhancements to mapping tools and promotional efforts are ongoing.

Engaging the Private Sector

We are building strategic partnerships with the private sector and conservation initiatives across Tāmaki Makaurau. Through two targeted pilot initiatives, we are demonstrating how business engagement can support positive environmental outcomes. Golf is Green delivers ecological enhancement plans across 27 golf courses, implementing native planting, pest control and resource efficiency while connecting clubs with local conservation communities. Our partnership with the Sustainable Business Network has delivered the Nature and Business Symposium and will establish a pilot Tāmaki Taiao Partnership Fund in collaboration with Auckland Council and Foundation North, targeting over $400,000 in collaborative investment from private businesses for local conservation projects. These pilots demonstrate scalable models for private sector engagement, delivering immediate conservation outcomes and sustainable frameworks for biodiversity enhancement across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Connecting people to nature on community parks

Community parks across Tāmaki Makaurau continue to provide meaningful opportunities for schools, groups and the public to connect with nature and contribute to conservation. This year, over 450 volunteer groups and schools received support through education, events and technical guidance. More than 2,800 people took part in planting days, adding 25,484 native plants along 4.4 km of streams. Sixteen workshops helped 585 volunteers grow their conservation skills, with nature engagement experiences reaching 9,526 participants including ranger-led activities, guided walks and the Adopt a Park programme. These efforts reflect our communities' growing commitment to restoring and protecting local natural spaces.

Celebrating and connecting community-led conservation

Natural Environmental Target Rates (NETR) funds activities that celebrate the vital restoration efforts of community groups, iwi, mana whenua, and Auckland Council across Tāmaki Makaurau. This year, we amplified conservation stories and boosted public participation through events, media, and campaigns, such as Save

Our Backyard Birdsong, distributing over 4,000 native seedlings via seven community nurseries. Digital engagement soared, with the Biodiversity Facebook page growing from 6,400 to 8,200 followers, reaching 541,000 people and recording 1.1 million video views in January. Our conservation e-newsletter increased subscribers by 14%, maintaining strong open and click rates. Together, these efforts deepen community connection to local biodiversity and build momentum for a healthier environment.

Trees For Survival Partnership

Now in its 33rd year, Trees for Survival continues to flourish in Tāmaki Makaurau through a strong partnership between the charitable trust, Auckland Council, schools, landowners, and communities. This season, 116 schools and over 4,400 volunteers helped plant more than 80,000 native plants along 11.6 km of streams. With landowners achieving plant survival rates of over 85%, sites are already showing increased birdlife diversity. Supported by Te Haumanu Taiao, our region's ecological restoration guide, the programme fosters long-term restoration, with many landowners now inspired to grow their own native plants from collected seeds. By connecting young people with nature through hands-on experiences, the programme continues to inspire community-led conservation across the region.

Toimata Foundation Partnership

Natural Environmental Target Rates (NETR) contributes to Auckland Council's partnership with Toimata Foundation, supporting 244 Enviroschools, 104 Early Childhood Education centres, and 9 Māori medium schools—engaging over 152,600 tamariki. Over the past year, 87% of Enviroschools undertook environmental action. Te Aho Tū Roa, grounded in mātauranga Māori, supported 13 kura (schools) and 5,000+ participants—connecting cultural knowledge with ecological restoration and resilience through 322 partnerships across Tāmaki Makaurau. Together, through this valued partnership, these programmes nurture a culturally grounded connection to te taiao (nature), empowering rangatahi (youth) and communities to lead environmental restoration and care across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Case study: Pest Free Howick: Empowering diverse communities for biodiversity success

Pest Free Howick exemplifies inclusive conservation in action. Recognising that over a quarter of Howick Ward residents identify as Chinese, the group adapted its outreach to better reflect the community it serves. Supported by the Howick Local Board and the NETR funded Expanding Community Action programme, the group piloted a culturally tailored engagement approach to reach new audiences and increase participation among Mandarin-speaking residents.

In 2024, Pest Free Howick received NETR funding to support a Chinese community engagement role focused on Mandarin-language outreach, breaking down language and digital communication barriers and building trusted relationships with Mandarin-speaking residents. Based on positive early results, the work was expanded in 2025.

The group connected directly with younger audiences through vibrant, culturally relevant content and interactive campaigns on WeChat and Xiaohongshu (RED Note).

Alongside funding from the Howick Local Board, Pest Free Howick gained broader support through the NETR, which strengthened the group's capacity and long-term impact. This support funded tools, resources, training, mentoring, and operational support, enabling the employment of a project manager and part-time conservation assistants and coordinators.

These roles are essential for delivering community-led restoration across the ward, promoting local employment, and increasing public engagement in environmental action. Initiatives such as the Moth Plant Pod Competition, backyard pest control, and weed swap days help restore native habitats and empower residents to undertake practical conservation efforts.

Through investing in leadership, community partnerships, and inclusive engagement, Pest Free Howick fosters a more connected, resilient, and environmentally active community. It offers a scalable model for neighbourhood-led biodiversity outcomes across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Rat traps were given to the Howick Chinese community.

Hōtaka: Ngā āhuatanga e āhei ai te mahi

Programme: Enabling tools

Enabling Tools develops and maintains digital tools that help plan and deliver natural environment conservation work within Environmental Services, alongside council partners, funded by the Natural Environment Targeted Rate.

Highlights

New Drone Technology Speeds Up Wildlife Surveys

Our unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV or drone) programme is transforming how we study the region's sensitive ecosystems. This year, thermal imaging drones were successfully tested to survey for matuku-hūrepo (Australasian bittern), a threatened wetland bird. Unlike traditional ground surveys, drones provide faster, more accurate data with minimal disturbance, enabling expanded thermal surveys for other elusive species and enhancing ecological research.

Ruru Boosts Native Species Monitoring

Ruru, our conservation information system, is improving how we track and protect native species. This year, we introduced mobile data collection for monitoring threatened geckos, replacing paper surveys with real-time digital reporting. Ruru also supports data quality across all NETR programmes by training contractors and providing managers with instant access to field data, ensuring reliable and timely information to guide conservation efforts.


Drone in flight
Marine Biosecurity
MAP308

The Water Quality Targeted Rate is more than an infrastructure investment—it's a promise to future generations that we will leave our environment better than we found it.

Through this dedicated investment, we are delivering transformative stormwater infrastructure and innovative programmes to reduce wastewater overflows, sediment, and pollutants that contaminate our waterways and marine environment. Every project under this programme has a shared purpose: to protect public health, improve the ecological health of our waterways, and reduce Safeswim warnings across the region.

Our urban and rural stream rehabilitation programmes—such as the Waterways Protection Fund and our wetland restoration partnership with Fonterra—are restoring the life force of our streams, both in our city neighbourhoods and rural landscapes. It's making a tangible difference by targeting sediment, litter, and road pollutants at their source. By focusing enforcement on high-risk sectors like automotive dismantlers, we've seen a 400 per cent increase in notices issued compared to last year—a clear signal of our commitment to stopping pollution before it reaches our waterways.

We are also fast-tracking major infrastructure upgrades through the Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Programme. In partnership with Watercare, this work is significantly reducing wastewater overflows into the Waitematā Harbour and building the stormwater infrastructure necessary for long-term water quality improvements. Already, 8.8 kilometres of new stormwater pipes have been laid, with another 36.4 kilometres in design, enabling the separation of stormwater from wastewater for over 3,400 properties.

On the eastern side of the city, we are tackling long-standing water quality issues from Hobson Bay to St Heliers. The Eastern Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Programme is being delivered in tandem with critical projects like the Central Interceptor and the Newmarket Gully Tunnel. This coordinated approach ensures every dollar spent optimises outcomes for our communities and environment. So far, 1.5 kilometres of new public stormwater pipe has been built, with 17.4 kilometres in design, supporting the separation of over 1,300 properties from the combined network.

Every metre of pipe laid, every restored stream bank, and every pollutant prevented from entering our harbours brings us a step closer to swimmable, fishable, and thriving waterways.

This is a generational commitment—and together, we are making it happen.

Craig Mcilroy
General Manager Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience

Wāhanga Tuatoru: Reiti kounga wai kua āta whakaritea

Section 2: Water quality targeted rate

The water quality targeted rate provides investment for new stormwater infrastructure and initiatives to reduce wastewater, sediment and other pollutants contaminating our waterways and marine environment. The investment is dedicated to achieving cleaner harbours, beaches and streams.

Programmes funded, in part or in full, by the targeted rate aim to reduce public health risks from wastewater overflows and pollutants, and to improve the ecology of our waterways. Over time, the aim is also to reduce Safeswim public health warnings at recreational beaches across Tāmaki Makaurau. Water quality targeted rate programmes include:

- Waitematā Harbour water quality improvement: to reduce wet weather overflows into the Waitematā Harbour and minimise stormwater entering the wastewater network.
- Safe Septic: a regional compliance system that ensures property owners with onsite wastewater units provide regular documentation that their systems have been inspected and are in good working condition.
- Safe Networks: conducts monitoring and investigations in our streams, watercourses and stormwater network to identify contaminants and track them to their source.
- Contaminant reduction: reduces litter, sediment and road pollutants from entering our waterways.
- Urban and rural stream rehabilitation: aims to improve the ecological health of waterways.
- Southern catchments: will reduce contaminants entering Manukau Harbour.

The adoption of the Long-term Plan 2024-2034 both extended and changed how the water quality improvement programme is funded, setting it at a level to only cover the annual operating and interest costs of programmes the rate funds. As such, the capital deliver programme is not directly rate funded and is instead funded by borrowing, with the rate covering the interest costs. This has not impacted the funding available to deliver the water quality improvement programme, and ensures that we can continue to fund the water quality improvements in harbours and streams across the region, at lower immediate cost to ratepayers.

Hōtaka: Ngā pikinga kounga wai i te kūitinga ki te uru

Programme: Waitematā Harbour water quality improvement

Waitematā Harbour water quality improvement is a joint initiative between council's Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience department and Watercare aimed reducing wet weather overflows into the Waitematā Harbour and minimising stormwater entering into the wastewater network.

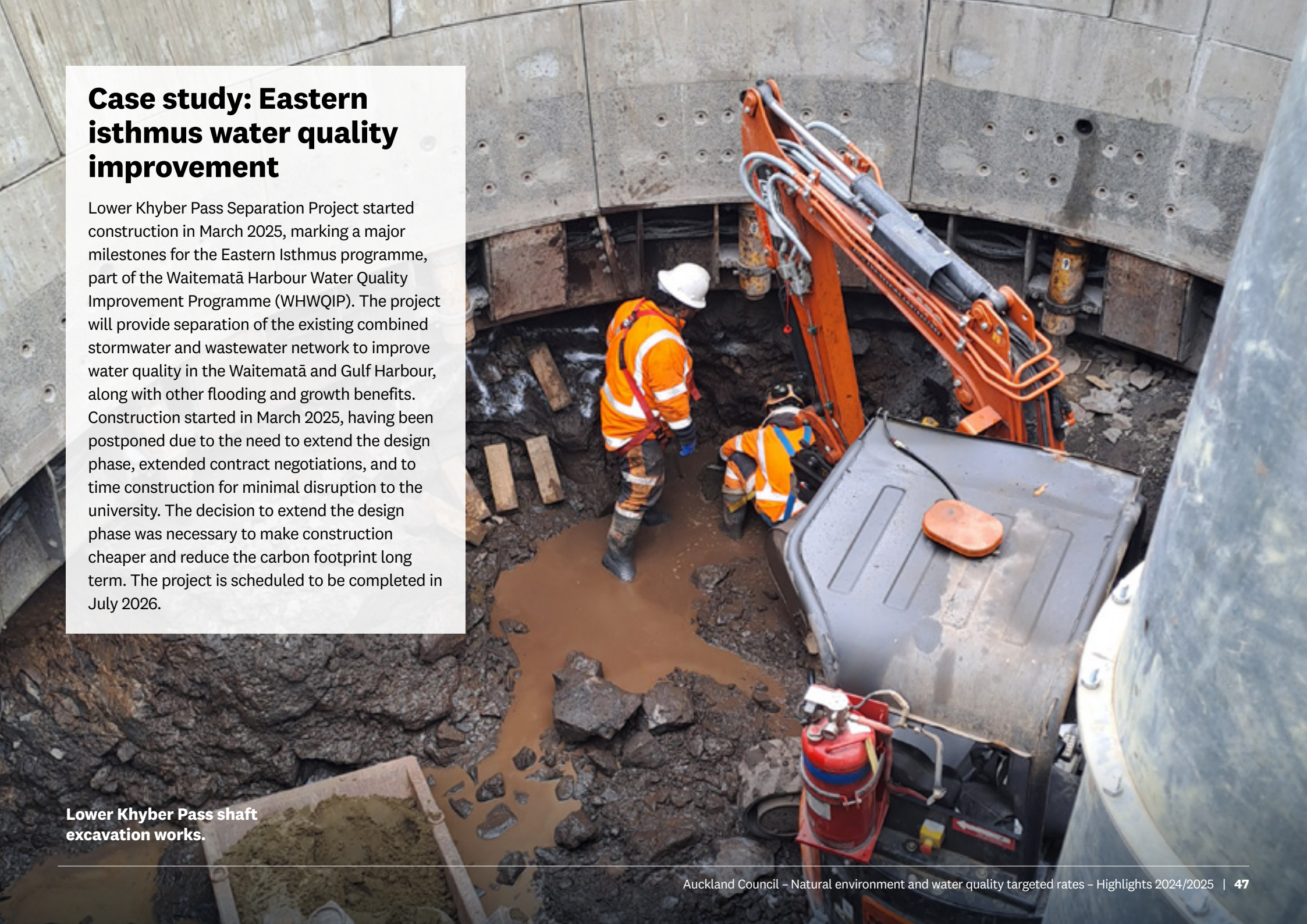
The programme involves substantial improvements to both stormwater and wastewater infrastructure, unfolding over a 13-year period. This initiative is carried out in close partnership with Watercare and aims to minimise the frequency and volume of wastewater overflows into Waitematā Harbour. The improvements primarily entail the construction of a public stormwater network, allowing private properties to link their drainage systems to dedicated stormwater infrastructure. This will also reduce the volumes of stormwater entering the wastewater treatment plant, eliminating unnecessary treatment.

Waitematā Harbour water quality improvement is divided into two subprogrammes to facilitate managing the stormwater separation works:

- **Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement -** Established in 2017, the Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Programme aims to enhance water quality in the Western Isthmus area, primarily focusing on reducing pollution in water bodies like Waitematā Harbour. This programme involves extensive infrastructure upgrades to both stormwater and wastewater systems over a 13-year period, in collaboration with Watercare.
- **Eastern Isthmus Water Quality Improvement -** The Eastern Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Programme focuses on enhancing water quality in the Eastern Isthmus area, with a primary goal of reducing pollution in water bodies such as central city, Judges Bay, Hobson Bay, Eastern Bays and the Tamaki Estuary and surrounding areas. Like its Western counterpart, this programme involves extensive infrastructure upgrades to both stormwater and wastewater systems over a specified period.

Case study: Eastern isthmus water quality improvement

Lower Khyber Pass Separation Project started construction in March 2025, marking a major milestones for the Eastern Isthmus programme, part of the Waitematā Harbour Water Quality Improvement Programme (WHWQIP). The project will provide separation of the existing combined stormwater and wastewater network to improve water quality in the Waitematā and Gulf Harbour, along with other flooding and growth benefits. Construction started in March 2025, having been postponed due to the need to extend the design phase, extended contract negotiations, and to time construction for minimal disruption to the university. The decision to extend the design phase was necessary to make construction cheaper and reduce the carbon footprint long term. The project is scheduled to be completed in July 2026.



Lower Khyber Pass shaft excavation works.

Case study: Western isthmus water quality improvement

The Western Isthmus is undergoing significant water quality improvement efforts through multiple stormwater and wastewater separation projects as part of the Waitematā Harbour Water Quality Improvement Programme (WHWQIP).

The **Waterview Separation Project** began construction in April 2024 and the first stage will be fully completed in September 2025. The project is divided into several phases over the next 10 years due to the complexity and size of the works required. The next stage is due to start construction in October 2025, and the design and consenting of the remaining stages are still in progress. When fully completed, the project will improve water quality in the Waitematā Harbour and Hauraki Gulf by significantly reducing the number of wastewater overflows that happen during storm events

Pt Chevalier Separation Stage 2 was completed in April 2025 marking a major milestone in the progress of this complex programme. Construction was started in October 2023, having been fast-tracked to coincide with Auckland Transport's Point Chevalier to Westmere improvements, enabling it to be delivered and the benefits achieved for less cost and with minimised disruption to the local communities. The remaining stages are in design and going through the consent process. Each stage of the large stormwater separation in Pt Chevalier aims to improve water quality at Waitematā Harbour by reducing the number of uncontrolled wastewater overflows during storm events.

Oakley Bollard Avenue Separation is a targeted separation project that started construction in January 2025 and will be completed in September 2025. When finished, 51 properties will be separated from the combined stormwater and wastewater network, improving water quality and providing flooding and development growth benefits to the catchment.

Blockhouse Bay Separation project started construction in February 2025 to separate 19 properties, resolve frequent road flooding and enable growth in the catchment. It will be completed in February 2026.

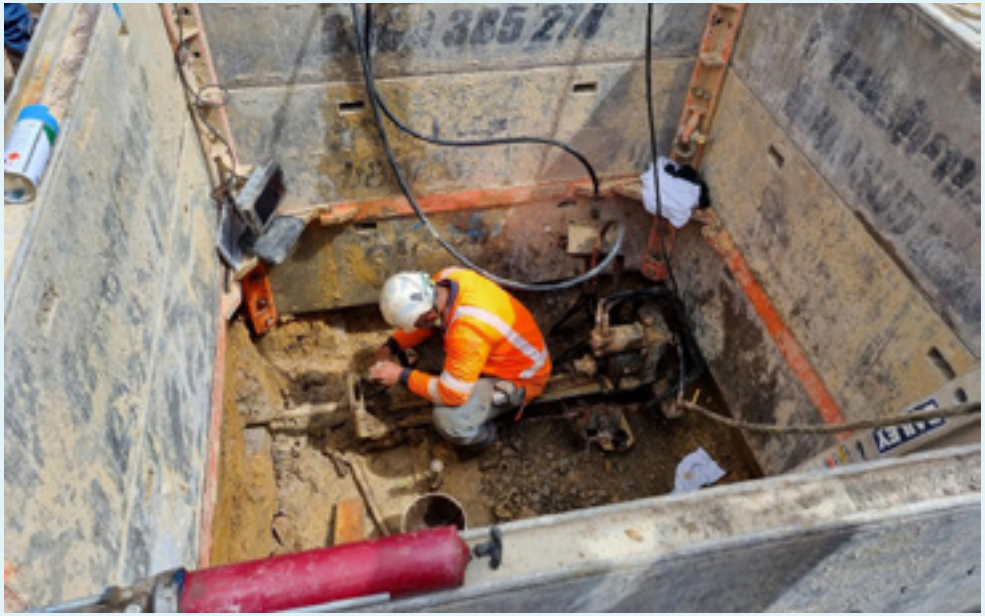
Several other major projects in the Western Isthmus are also contributing to these efforts:

- **Westmere Separation** Project targets the separation of approximately 400 properties. Design started in November 2024 and is in progress, with the project phased in several stages over several years due to the size and complexity of the programme.
- **Cox's Bay Separation** Project will separate 35 properties. Design started in January 2025 and the resource consent application was lodged in June 2025.

Smaller targeted projects, including London Street, Sutherland Rd, Parkdale Rd, and Euston Rd, aim to separate approximately 130 properties in total. Design for these projects is underway and resource consent applications are being prepared.

Additionally, the Kingdon St Separation Project, although located in the Eastern Isthmus, is part of the WHWQIP and will separate 18 properties. Construction is tied to the nearby Lower Khyber Pass Separation project and is expected to begin construction in November 2025.

These projects collectively aim to enhance water quality in the Waitematā Harbour by separating stormwater and wastewater networks, addressing flooding issues, and accommodating growth.



Waterview Separation Project.

Investigating contamination at swimming and recreation spots

Hōtaka: Ngā kōtuinga āhuru

Programme: Safe Networks

Safe Networks is a joint initiative between council's Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience department and Watercare. Where water quality poses a risk to public health – as indicated by the Safeswim Programme or other prioritised sites, the Safe Networks team then conducts sampling investigations to identify sources of faecal contamination (human, avian, dog or ruminant).

There is a high risk of poor water quality at our beaches and streams, particularly:

- after heavy rain
- in areas serviced by ageing pipe infrastructure
- in areas with ageing onsite wastewater systems (private septic tanks)
- following long spells of dry weather when rainfall can carry dirty water to our beaches, including water contaminated with bird and dog faeces.

When faecal contaminants are identified as being from human sources, detailed drainage investigations are conducted to track and find how and where wastewater is getting into the stormwater network or stream so that contamination can be mitigated.

When faecal contaminants are identified as being from natural or non-human sources (for example, birds, dogs, stock), we refer the results to other Healthy Waters programmes to look at options for management and control.

Case study: Safe Networks in the Eastern Bays

Weather is a primary factor in progressing the contaminant tracking investigations undertaken by the Safe Networks team. Dry weather is more favourable for tracking of contamination issues as rainfall can transport wastewater from anywhere in the catchment before discharging to the environment, making it difficult to pinpoint where wastewater is infiltrating the stormwater network during periods of sustained wet weather. The low rainfall received during much of the 2024/2025 financial year has helped to progress investigations that had been impacted by wetter recent years.

Overall, the Safe Networks team conducted extensive sampling investigations across 68 stormwater catchments, collecting and analysing over 1667 water samples, and completing 2568 private drainage inspections. In total over 238 private drainage issues were resolved in coordination with Watercare.

The need for a consistent water quality sampling and monitoring programme was highlighted this year when poor results were found in the Orere Point, Matakana, and Matheson Bay areas. Working with the Safe Septic programme, the poor results triggered compliance officers to conduct compliance checks of private onsite wastewater systems in these areas. Following reminders to property owners to provide maintenance records, staff were able to identify several systems with faults that need to be resolved for water quality to improve. This highlighted to importance of the Safe Network investigations in identifying issues so they can be investigated and resolved quickly in order to minimise the health risk to Aucklanders posed by poor water quality.

Ongoing post-resolution sampling is necessary to confirm the effectiveness of these remediation efforts. These achievements underscore our commitment to ensuring safe and effective stormwater management throughout Auckland.

Safe Networks sampling.

Compliance of onsite wastewater systems to reduce health risk

Hōtaka: Ngā pūnaha haumaru mō te parakaingaki

Programme: Safe septic

The Safe Septic programme is focuses on onsite wastewater system compliance and redressing the environmental impact that poor compliance has.

Maintenance of the region's 45,000 private onsite wastewater systems is needed to reduce the risk of faecal contaminants entering waterways and beaches. Consequently, the council has implemented a comprehensive compliance system, requiring property owners to provide maintenance records for their onsite wastewater systems.

The overarching aim of this programme is to improve our waterways (including awa / stream, beaches, and groundwater) water quality by ensuring proper maintenance of onsite wastewater systems.

To do this we:

- educate property owners about onsite wastewater systems and their environmental impact
- set up processes for monitoring and prioritising responses to system issues
- streamline communication with property owners for maintenance record requests and processing
- provide education materials to residents in sensitive and coastal areas on system maintenance

Case study: Safe Septic

The first step of the Safe Septic programme was to identify how many septic systems there are in Auckland and establish a database for monitoring compliance. As of July 2025, approximately 46,890 septic system assets are recorded across the region, comprising 43,470 regional assets and 3,420 Waitākere pump-out assets.

Of these assets, approximately 45 per cent are up to date with monitoring and compliance, confirming that each system has been inspected by a qualified professional and any identified issues were resolved.

A further 9 per cent are known to require attention, and an additional 1 per cent have a critical failure in need of repair. The remaining 45 per cent of assets are overdue for inspection to confirm their compliance status.

With over 15,000 systems overdue, including a significant portion with unknown status, there is still more to do. While strong progress has been made through the existing programme, continued focus on targeted outreach, particularly for the 11,437 systems with no recent inspection record, will be key to building on the great work already done by the compliance team.

In 2023/2024 we launched a tailored communications campaign targeting residents and property owners on Aotea / Great Barrier Island to raise awareness about the importance of regular maintenance and promote a discounted servicing offer. Recognising the unique situation of property owners on Aotea / Great Barrier Island, we developed a service discount initiative that ran until 30 June 2025. To date, a total of $28,756 in subsidies has been invested in wastewater maintenance checks and pump-outs, delivered through providers such as Aotea Maintenance and Barrier Drainage as part of the Onsite Wastewater: Great Barrier Targeted Engage Initiative. There are estimated to be close to 700 septic systems on Aotea / Great Barrier Island.

Looking ahead to the 2025/2026 financial year, an upcoming on-site wastewater plan change to the Auckland Unitary Plan aims to address regulatory barriers that currently limit homeowners' ability to upgrade systems. This presents a valuable opportunity to align future subsidy programmes with regulatory improvements, making it easier and more attractive for property owners to bring their systems into compliance.

Improving the ecological health of waterways

Hōtaka: Te whakaoranga o ngā awa ā-tāone, ā-taiwhenua hoki

Programme: Urban and rural stream rehabilitation

This programme aims to improve the ecological health of the awa. To achieve this, the following objectives must be met:

- enable urban development in specific areas (e.g., Omaru Creek, East Tāmaki) while maintaining ecological balance
- stabilise areas prone to high streambank erosion
- reduce sediment levels in harbours
- protect property and infrastructure from potential stream-related damage
- reduce contaminant load in natural waterways.

The programme utilises various funding mechanisms (direct management, grants, co-funding) to empower landowners and foster community involvement. By collaborating with various stakeholders, including community groups through restoration initiatives, private landowners through partnerships, and public land management through direct restoration efforts, the program aims to achieve several objectives. These include:

- reducing contamination reaching harbours
- minimising streambank erosion
- enhancing stream ecology
- upgrading environmental infrastructure.

Case study: Regional Waterways Protection Fund

In FY24/25, the Regional Waterway Protection Fund awarded $405,952 to 20 rural landowners to protect and restore streams and wetlands to help improve water quality across Auckland. The fund provides a great investment opportunity for Council, as landowners must agree to a 50/50 cost share with Council and complete the works outlined in the funding agreement before Council funding is paid. The fund recognises the importance that private landowners play in Auckland's water quality and a need to provide technical assistant and financial support for improvements to be made.

The 20 projects awarded funding are proposed to protect 5.9 ha of wetland, 49 ha of riparian margin, and 11.5km of streams by installing 11km of fencing and planting 84,420 native plants. This work will occur over the next two years.

Applications opened for the FY25/26 Waterway Protection Fund closed in July 2025 and offer 50 per cent funding for fencing, planting, alternative water supply and fish passage remediation works to protect and restore streams, wetlands and lakes on private rural land in the following priority catchments: Matakana River, Papakura Stream, Ōrere River, Āwhitu and Aotea / Great Barrier Island. The new funding round will prioritise wetland projects and projects with 10+ metre margins. Bolstering funds from the Water Quality Targeted Rate, Franklin Local Board committed an additional $100,000 to support WPF projects in the Franklin region.

Since the 2020/2021 financial year, over $1.3M has been awarded from the Waterway Protection Fund and matched with landowner contributions of $1.38M. Funds have supported 118 projects that have delivered the protection of 44.7 km of waterways with fencing, and planting over 300,000 native plants to restore protected areas.

Case study: Fonterra & Auckland Council Wetland Restoration

Fonterra and Auckland Council Wetland Restoration Project is a co-funded program between Auckland Council and Fonterra to revert land back to wetland, by fencing and planting natives in naturally wet areas. The purpose of the fund is to reduce the amount of nitrogen entering our waterways from Fonterra farmers in the Manukau Harbour and Wairoa River catchments. This year focused on the implementation of the funded wetland projects in the Manukau Harbour and Wairoa River catchments. Over the course of the financial year:

11 landowners were supported, resulting in the progression of 19 wetland projects.

- A total of 11.9 ha of wetland and 27.2 ha of land was protected, through 4.8km of new fencing and 60,000 native plants planted.
- The programme invested $474,123.77, with funding split evenly between Auckland Council's Water Quality Targeted Rate and Fonterra.
- Environmental modelling indicates an expected annual reduction of over 3,500 kg of nitrogen entering waterways. A more detailed analysis of contaminant reductions will be finalised in the coming financial year.

Hōtaka: Te whakaiti tukunga tāoke

Programme: Contaminant reduction

This programme, supported by funding from the Water Quality Targeted Rate, focuses on reducing contaminants from urban and rural areas that affect our waterways.

The Contaminant Reduction Programme is divided into two subprogrammes: Urban Contaminant Reduction and Rural Contaminant Reduction. This division recognises the nature of stormwater contamination differ between urban and rural areas.

- **Urban Contaminant Reduction**
  In older parts of Auckland, stormwater networks were primarily designed to convey stormwater away from urban centres as quickly as possible, with minimal consideration for stormwater quality. This programme identifies opportunities to improve water quality treatment within these existing networks.
- **Rural Contaminant Reduction**
  Sediment runoff from rural land contributes to water quality issues in the rural areas. This subprogramme supports large-scale projects that improve the health of the waterways in the rural areas.

Case study: Industrial Trade Activity Proactive Programme

Auckland has many concentrated industrial areas that pose a heightened risk for highly pollutant contaminants entering our waterways and damaging our environment. The Industrial Trade Activity Proactive Programme deploys targeted proactive compliance monitoring for high risk industries and activities in Wairau, Wiri, Rosedale, and Puhinui to support businesses to implement best practice and, when necessary, enforce compliance through the issuing of an abatement or infringement notice. We have visited almost 800 sites during the 24/25 financial year, an increase of 194 per cent on the previous year due to an expansion of the programme into Wairai and Rosedale. Only 44 per cent of the sites visited were found to be compliant, with 45 notices issued for immediate intervention.

Particular attention has been paid throughout the 24/25 financial year to automotive dismantling operations due to the high risk posed to both the environment and public health and safety. We completed 40 site visits, accounting for approximately 90 per cent of the sector. Shockingly all 40 sites were found to be non-compliant, and 30 notices have been issued to bring operations into compliance – accounting for more than half of the total number of notices needing to be issued since the programme began. To date only 17 per cent of the sites have achieved compliance, though all operators have responded with action plans to achieve compliance, and work will continue throughout the 2024/2025 financial year to follow up and ensure compliance is achieved.

Since the programme started in 2023, 1091 site visits have been completed and 60 per cent of all sites were found to be non-compliant, though thankfully only a relatively small number of notices have needed to be issued so far – 56 to date. The consistently high rate of non-compliance found highlights the need for continued investment in this programme and to expand proactive targeted compliance monitoring to more areas of Auckland.

Case study: Closing the gap

Excess sedimentation in waterways is a major environmental issue across Auckland and New Zealand. The Closing the Gap programme recognises that small construction sites (<500m2) are a problematic part of the construction and compliance industry as they are not subject to the same regulatory rigor as larger development sites, often leading to unstable soil and sediment from the site being discharged to nearby waterways.

In response to this, the Closing the Gap programme uses water quality target rate to fund compliance officers to conduct visits of small site construction activities across Auckland to inform, educate or enforce compliance where necessary. In total 15,658 site visits were made over the year which resulted in 1,398 notices being issued, a compliance rate of approximately 91%. While the compliance rate remains consistent each year, a significant number of notices are still required to be issued each year and more work is needed to be done.

Given the scale of the issue and to ensure our small compliance team operates most effectively, we are utilising new technologies such as camera monitoring, turbidity sensors and artificial intelligence to monitor compliance remotely and enhance the team's ability to respond in real time to sites with the most significant environmental or water quality risks.

In addition to continuing routine compliance site visits, future activities will prioritise utilising technology for reactive response and encouraging prevention through supporting educational and collaborative initiatives to promote best practice.

Growth enabled water quality outcomes

Hōtaka: Te whakahāngaitanga o ngā riu hopuwai o te tonga

Programme: Southern Catchments Alignment

This new programme was introduced in the council's 10-year Budget 2021-2031 to improve water quality in the Manukau Harbour by aligning the timing of stormwater improvements with other major infrastructure projects. Work continues to identify opportunities for projects where we could implement water quality improvements alongside scheduled infrastructure improvements, to minimise disruptions, maximise efficiencies and achieve better water quality outcomes.

There are several opportunities to improve water quality in the Manukau Harbour, reduce stormwater pollutants and enhance the habitat and biodiversity of the waterways. Roads and urban development are key contributors to water quality issues in the Manukau Harbour. A number of major transportation projects are planned in the next decade through southern and eastern Auckland including the South-western Gateway Transport Programme. Early engagement with infrastructure partners will enable us to inform on design and achieve the best water quality outcomes for Auckland.

Te Komiti mō te Kaupapa Here me te Whakamahere
Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau Te taiao taketake me ngā reiti kounga wai kua āta whakaritea
Ngā mea hirahira 2024/2025

Policy and Planning Committee
Auckland Council natural environment and water quality targeted rates
Highlights 2024/2025

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