Te Rautaki Whanaketanga ki tua a Wairarapa- Wellington- Horowhenua

Regional Adaptation Project: Adaptation Framework Agreement

KO TE WHAKARITE I NGĀ HONONGA | ENSURING CONNECTIONS

RAP: Adaptation Framework Report 3: PHASE 1 SYNOPSIS REPORT

A Living Agreement / He Tākai Here

to build connected, thriving and resilient communities

Te Upoko o Te Ika a Māui

For Wellington Regional Leadership Committee

Wellington Regional Leadership Committee

22 January 2026

Professor Huhana Smith

1. Introduction

This contribution to ***Ko te Whakarite i ngā Hononga | Ensuring Connections*** Regional Adaptation Project (RAP) complements the Phase 1 summary report by Professor Bruce Glavovic, whose attention was paid to local and regional governance leaders, strategic policy analysts within entities, and others who are helping forge an action-orientated, future-proofing of the region. These reports are supported by the members of the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee (WRLC).

We wish to understand local Te Ao Māori perspectives and collate their voices, as mana whenua groupings within the wide rohe, who are spearheading a series of urgent actions against climate change uncertainties.

We need to institutionalise a cooperative approach to the complexities wrought by the changing climate and address collective needs to accelerate practices and urgently shift current systems.

***Ko te Whakarite i ngā Hononga | Ensuring Connections* will:**

- Be a "living arrangement" with agreed principles and practices for regional governance actors to collaborate and act for urgent climate adaptation, with resourcing and financing within the Te Ūpoko o Te Ika rohe/region of Te Rautaki Whanaketanga ki tua a Wairarapa – Wellington – Horowhenua.

- Solidify a collaborative understanding and way of working for climate governance; provide a foundation for coordinated and inspired adaptation action alongside iwi, hapū and community leaders; support flexible local adaptation planning; and strongly reflect Te Tiriti roles and responsibilities.

- Build on extensive engagement undertaken throughout the planning, scoping and delivery of the RAP initiative in 2024 and 2025, revealing how important being robust, knowledgeable and actively joined- up is, for the needs of tangata whenua and the diverse communities of interest, such as farming and rural retail providers. This project forms a trunk from which locally relevant adaptation planning, implementation

processes and actions can branch out, and where the whole region can see how the participants are joined-up.

- Is a value proposition that goes beyond current mandate or initiatives like the Regional Policy Statement or Mauri Tūhono. It increases the unique positioning and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each regional governance actor, whether council, iwi entity, hapū groups, community or environmental group. It focuses on the nature of diverse risks faced in Te Ūpoko o Te Ika Wairarapa – Wellington – Horowhenua region, and pushes for regional action, priorities and strategic adaptation pathways that enable more climate-resilient or climate-ready development.

- Is a binding commitment of key kaimahi/kaitiaki and other active community members who work closely together on a range of connected initiatives, and which have been formally endorsed and signed by leaders. It is critical that day-to-day operations of signatory organisations remain together as proactive participants.

This report is based upon ensuring better Te Tiriti-led, co-governance opportunities with Māori leading from across the many iwi or hapū entities represented within the rohe. My preliminary conversations with a range of tangata whenua groups, included those who are Te Taiao-centric actionists working on behalf of their hapū and whanau, or others within Mandated Iwi Authorities, Runanga or Incorporated Societies.

While many emails were sent out to key Māori leaders, the coverage of representation in this report is indicative of who was readily available to engage. I remain mindful of the heavy workloads of tangata whenua, where there many competing demands and priorities that may take precedence. Some groups are extremely aware of what they can achieve within their current cultural and social-political context.[1]

1 I well recognise that it has been another tough year for iwi and hapū. For example, when groups like my Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga and affiliates are finalising the very last of their Treaty claims final submissions or are heavily engaged with Waka Kotahi and the new expressway to name but two of their many kaupapa. They have also been submitting against many bills this year, which belie Te Taiao/nature with Fast Track, deep sea mining applications, and systemic erosion of culture via Regulatory Standards and Treaty Principles processes. We have also had to pivot quickly to changes made for customary marine titling (MACA), despite years of professional Māori legal team engagement and interface with High Court processes. This means that despite effective acknowledgement of unbroken ancestral ties to coastlines and estuaries, iwi and hapū groups must mobilise again, which shifts their priorities yet again. This is a Māori reality - untenable and exhausting.

Therefore, I was mindful of repeated requests to engage with some groups, noting that they were not available to assist. I have managed to corral important voices and perspectives from a range of proactive kaimahi who are individually and collectively reflecting the distinctiveness and uniqueness of lived experiences with whenua, their marae, Te Taiao, and their active biodiversity protection via major ngahere enhancement and wai protection. Their lead comes from a concerted exercise of a Mana Mātauranga-a-Hapū.

While their voices resonate across the Te Ūpoko o Te Ika region, the voices gathered are not exhaustive in reach at present. We know we will reach more iwi participants at a consolidated hui / wānanga on 9 February 2026, at Te Rau Karamu Marae, Pukeahu Campus, Massey University, Wellington.

2. Context

My aim was to garner iwi and hapū leaders voice, their actions and influence as we further develop this initiative. I was keen to hear their commitments to enabling a vibrant, thriving Tiriti-centred region that is characterised by strong interconnections within and between tangata whenua, distinctive local communities, diverse businesses, and governing authorities. Much work is required to join up efforts in terms of the range of climate change actions underway. To this end, I explored the following questions with my informants:

- How we can action adaptation better across Te Upoko o Te Ika a Maui with direct input from Māori leaders, to help future proof Māori communities from each unique place-based perspective;
- How would each group or entity like to partner in this process?
- What are the challenges or opportunities for building agreement and support in future proofing actions?
- How can we ensure that the relevant people/leaders from across the region are involved?
- How do we maximise the value for each Māori organisation / entity?

3. Methodology

This document summarises the Phase 1 research completed to date, based on some key conversations had with acknowledged regional leaders, particularly from Te Ao Māori perspective, and as understood by them within the local, regional or global context of human induced climate change uncertainties.

Bruce and I decided to undertake a range of conversations. I led the 'get to know' who the key tangata whenua representatives are within the Climate Change Adaptation-Te Taiao space, and how distinct place-based positioning, natural solution-focused actions, safe food production, strategizing, planning and resourcing for Te Taiao from a Mātauranga Maori perspective, are generally the priorities highlighted by different iwi and hapū groups. As many work from a hapū-led or 'whenua up' community-orientated basis, they are guided by te reo, tikanga and korero-tuku-iho. Notably too, both Bruce and I were keen to not homogenise their Māori voices – they each speak from their unique tūrangawaewae.

In working alongside Professor Bruce Glavovic, he is an esteemed climate change expert and astute social and political justice advocate. He has also worked closely with key Māori groups within the Whanganui-Manawatū to Taranaki regions, as featured in a multi-entity research collaborative about complex community-led approaches that institutionalize relationships between entities/iwi/hapū and wider communities so together, as robust mutually respectful groups, they might deal better with wild weather vulnerabilities. His leadership within a team of specialists was evident in *Embedding Adaptations,* funded by the Deep South National Science challenge from 2022-2024.[2]

Similarly, I have many years of action-orientated, 'whenua up' transformations of Māori land holdings underway for freshwater water ways, wetlands, forests and have completed with a team – compelling emission reduction visualisations for a Māori coastal farm. Each is a climate change readiness project developed by the hapū for Māori land holdings, and also applied to my own small farm and grove, where I produce safe organic/hua parakore vegetables, fruits and extra virgin olive oil. I advocate for critical Māori strategic approaches

2 https://deepsouthchallenge.co.nz/research-project/embedding-adaptation/

that interface well with local and regional governance, policy making and planning. As recommended by the Māori informants in this document, the clear imperative is to get this interface in its complexity, right from outset.

What follows is a summary of conversations completed to date, with respected regional leaders from Te Ao Māori, whose collective efforts are understood within a local, regional or global context to enable more urgent climate action.

4. Summary of Conversations with Key Iwi/Hapū Leaders

Ngāti Toa Rangatira

In speaking to key informants (who have been de-identified here but listed in Table 1), I begin this endeavour, priviledged to speak to key Māori leaders from Ngāti Toa Rangatira. They are critical forces behind implementing the priorities for Pou Take Āhuarangi - the Climate Pou for the National Iwi Chairs Forum.[3]

At a national level, a designated Ngāti Toa Rangatira technician within this group, has been developing marae climate exposure assessments, facilitating marae, hapū and iwi climate resilience wānanga, developing adaptation plans and project managing resilience initiatives. This also includes advocacy and response on various climate policy programmes including the incoming National Adaptation Framework. This Māori rangatahi advocate also represented Aotearoa New Zealand in Brazil at COP30.[4]

While wider latest climate resilience work by Ngāti Toa Rangatira operates at a regional level too, they have been focused on delivering the Mana Whenua Assembly as part of the Porirua Citizens Assembly on climate change, as underway from early to mid-2025.

This assembly, alongside concentrated environmental and climate engagement, has informed the development of Ngāti Toa Rangatira's Climate Change Strategy - now drafted and undergoing iwi and marae engagement. This work can be found on Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira's website.[5] The key technical driver of this work is also involved in the Steering Group for the Regional Adaptation Project hosted by WRLC. She acknowledged that there is putea available from the Iwi Chairs Forum that: supports a framework for action; identifies key vulnerabilities of climate change within a Te Ao Māori space; builds capacity for whānau, hapū and iwi, and supports why and how to be more flexible with a changing climate.

Ngāti Toarangatira are dedicated to generating support for: evidence based research; enabling climate-resilient initiatives; being active in the needs of stock taking for their

3 https://iwichairs.maori.nz/aa-matou-korero-our-kaupapa/pou-ilg-contacts/

4 https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/environment/578440/nine-rangatahi-maori-depart-for-the-brazillian-amazon-for-cop30. Email correspondence with Ms Anahera Nin on 25 November 2025.

5 https://www.ngatitoa.iwi.nz for full details on future proofing strategies and planning.

communities, and creating an evolving picture of how an iwi-led bespoke approach must organise their priorities alongside Porirua City Council. As mentioned, this is manifest through the Porirua Citizens Assembly that drives an evidence-based stocktake alongside climate change strategising, and their report is in final stages of action planning.

Ngāti Toarangatira have scoped the needs and priorities for adaptation and mitigation, with a focus on water resilience within their rohe. They have also been talking carbon and solar farming.

Later conversations were had with Ngāti Toarangatira leadership[6] where their CEO outlined how Ngāti Toarangatira and their iwi-led approaches are premised upon a Waka Hourua anaolgy - a robust double hulled canoe[7] on water, with Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Porirua City Council working closely together to ensure all their communities are travelling/paddling in same direction. It is imperative that they are surviving and thriving with a changing climate and its demands on peoples and infrastructure.

In being a Mātauranga Māori-led organisation, the Rūnanga identifies and understands the lived realities of their people. In being closely engaged with Porirua City Council too they express and exercise kotahitanga where their Māori - and by association - all communities benefit. Whilst it is expected there to be positives, negatives and gaps in a framework approach such as this, Ngāti Toa Rangatira are supportive. Alongside their allies, their express aim is to work better together and for communities to recognise climate change precarities. They are ambitious to build collective resillience.

Ngāti Toa Rangatira leaders emphasised that not only do they want to lead in what *they can control*, they also readily share their learnings, approaches and actions with others. The General Manager also agreed that strong communities are all about people, being led by Mātauranga or Māori knowledges and understandings. He was adament that this was not to be misrepresented in any way. For this project to be well acknowledged alongside with how

6 Hui with CEO Helmut Modlik and Rawiri Falkner (General Manager) at Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira offices in Porirua, along with Bruce Glavovic (online), Huhana Smith (kanohi kitea) and Anahera Nin (online) on

7 This also links to ASAP and work of Akuhata Bailey-Winata. See https://www.asap.org.nz/waka_hourua

their Mana Motuhake is also looked after, it is critical to always do the right thing by Māori *first and foremost* in order for better relationships and actions to flow well.

Ngāti Toa Rangatira are thus active in demanding more coordinated actions across local and regional levels, but also according to what Ngāti Toa Rangatira can look after, rather than spread their people too thinly or ineffectively. To highlight, the Climate Citizen Assembly has been a fulsome approach whereby Ngāti Toa Rangatira as an iwi have been activating solutions from a non-victim perspective, more so, they act as an energised group who take care of "ourselves and our manuwhiri" within their rohe.

Key themes:

- Proactivity in the climate change space
- Strong leadership/Mana Motuhake to ensure strong operations
- Know your community intricately from a Te Ao Māori perspective
- Māori-led, allyship with other entities

Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai

On July 30, the project team first met with a dedicated group of younger Māori leaders at Te Whare Waka in Wellington. Each change agent in this collective from Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai (whose central office/nursery is located at Ōtaraua pā, in Waikanae), are deeply engaged in biodiversity replenishment as natural solutions to climate change extremes. They have a native nursery business and operate within their mountain to sea perspective for the direct benefit of their iwi rohe. As a Jobs for Nature trained group, they have consolidated efforts to supply trees for a range of projects such as Whareroa Farm revitalisation projects and others across the district as supported by Kāpiti Coast District Council.

Respectively, they are also engaged in water monitoring health with ScanTech; strategize and plan for food sovereignty and food security initiatives in partnership with other Te Āti Awa i Kāpiti, Muaūpoko Tribal Authority, Rangitāne Tū Mai Trust group, Te Whatu Ora Public Health, amongst others, and collectively they present a considerable force creating and

driving living food hubs between many groups. They aim to ensure safe food supplies in times of climate crisis or seismic upheaval.

The group operates out of a complex behind Ōtaraua Park in Waikanae, Kāpiti region in an area (originally Māori land) and known as Ōtaraua Pā. As a former turf farm currently owned by Kāpiti Coast District Council, the complex includes an extant native forest, former turf sheds, large flat paddock region, full native nursery with adjacent whare, with other amenities by a revegetating human-made wetland lake system. The whole land holdings are under discussion with council and key Māori leaders, with a view to iwi and hapū considering repurchasing the land and all facilities back in time.

The core five members of Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai, partner with Kāpiti volunteers and other environmental allies, and other like-minded iwi and hapū representatives from within the wider rohe. This group of effective players (each individually and collectively) understand why holding wānanga with other climate change adaptation advocates/actionists is all about forging positive relationships to affect urgent action and change mindsets for circular economies, effective policies and changes to social contracts.

This group has forged a strong direction after attending the rangatahi-driven climate change wānanga at Ōrakei, Tamaki Makaurau/Auckland and from their regular attendance at Wai Māori conferences. With a key coordinator/leader in place, the group has proactively forged stronger partnerships with Kāpiti Coast District Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai, Kapakapanui Schools, Mountains to Sea groups and local/regional Enviro Schools.

Each member moves across many Te Taiao spaces in order to benefit Te Ātiawa, working within wider groups for climate change related mahi. Each recognises how they could be better supported with more dedicated resourcing, but remain leaders in water monitoring using Scan Tech, which aligns to the work of Drs Russel Death and Mike Joy, Mr Peter Hanforth and the Ground Truth group. They lead with a range of revegetation projects both locally and regionally including southside of Ōtaki River erosion areas, Whareroa/Queen Elizabeth Park, Karewarewa at Waikanae Beach, Waimeha Stream and undertake important

work for known wāhi tapu and urupā areas. They are all active in the hands-on physical, mental and spiritual requirements of this work.

The challenges they face are ongoing legacies of injustices that accompany historic land alienation, contemporary impacts of engineering or stop banks on whenua and awa, and the effort required to deconstruct and decolonise mindsets for better actions on ground, not only for some of their own, but for some of those they interface with. Sound communication is key but sometimes they are not always listened to. They worry about pests, being low on resources, the physically tough nature of the work, demands in finding funding, and getting people to interact well with them. They are aware of the value of resilience, being prepared to listen to others and how to go about building strengths between peoples.

In a comprehensive email issued by Te Atiawa preceding the inter-iwi hui on 15 August 2025, this call was for iwi/hapū leaders to gather and talk a range of important topics. For this group iwi hui, key leaders facilitated this meeting of minds, hearts and ambitions, supported by core Te Ātiawa teams. With Te Whatu Ora presenting on comprehensive safe kai strategy, the hui was held at the Ōtaraua Pā centre.[8]

This was a day of sharing environmental and climate change kaupapa, kai and future orientated conversations on a range of action-orientated opportunities including: silvo pastorialism with olives as a potential large scale carbon sequestration initiative and economic training base for young Māori, and seeing first-hand how Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai have developed this centre, productive native nursery and neighbouring native ngahere as outdoor place of learning.

At its nexus is an Ōtaraua action-orientated team grounded in worldviews that generate a strong counter narrative to business as usual. Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai have generated a space where as Māori or indigenous peoples, they carry a wealth of socio-cultural, political, ecological and health initiatives, whilst actively enhancing key biodiversity regions within their mountain to sea, iwi and hapū catchment. They are key leaders in terms of the following:

8 For full list of participants see Table 1.

a. Adopting regenerative and agroecological practices

The team had been inspired by the Zero Carbon Act,[9] where many communities were already restoring soil health through composting, cover cropping, and no-till farming. This group is also dedicated to enhancing biodiversity by planting native species and creating pollinator habitats.

Despite negative shifts in central government climate policy making at present, they still aspire to reduce emissions by transitioning to low-carbon farming methods, with renewable energy remaining high on their agendas. While it is unfortunate that current Zero Carbon initiatives are being weakened, the group remain keen to apply for government support or grants if available. The group is keen to partner with local experts in regenerative agriculture and more recently have been in close conversation about silvo pastoralism with olive groves on iwi and hapū land or willing partners' land holdings. They encourage the use of Mātauranga Māori and Maramataka approaches to guide planting and harvesting cycles.

b. Building Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Models

For this group, their interest in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives is to connect whānau directly with local growers whereby members invest in a share of the harvest and are supporting growers upfront. They advocate for promotion of food sovereignty, seasonal eating, and local resilience. They are committed to strengthening community ties and reduce reliance on external food systems. Their initiative is to start small with marae-based gardens or nursery produce, then create a subscription model for weekly kai boxes, and involve whanau/hapū/iwi in planting, harvesting, and distribution of fresh seasonal produce.[10]

c. Reducing food waste and recycling organics

9 Conversely this is undergoing changes under the Zero Carbon Amendment Act by this current government. See https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/578170/the-government-s-dismantling-of-climate-laws-breaks-years-of-cross-party-agreement and https://thespinoff.co.nz/the-bulletin/07-11-2025/zero-carbon-act-overhaul-signals-end-of-political-consensus-on-climate-change However, ambitions from Te Taiao-centric groups like this should not be undermined by the limitations set by current government. Not to be discouraged Māori groups should continue to aim for best practice and deemed best outcomes for their hapū and whānau.

10 A similar initiative or trial was set up in 2025 dubbed the Hauora Kai Co-op supported by long term organic community garden groups/co-ops such as Food and Vege Co-op, Kaibosh, circular economy expertise, Kaicycle, and Everybody Eats initiatives.

In moving towards more enhanced sustainability, another aspect to their food waste reduction strategy is to upscale composting food scraps that supports soil health, redistribute surplus kai to address food insecurity, and reduce landfill emissions to support better circular systems. In terms of waste reduction and circular kai systems they are keen to set up compost hubs at marae/community gardens and partner with local food rescue organisations and educate whānau on waste sorting and kai preservation.

They also ask: What successful models of kai sovereignty and self-sustaining food systems exist across the rohe? How can we adapt and apply these learnings to the context at Otaraua? How might we explore regenerative and agroecological practices aligned with Mātauranga Māori? In building marae-based CSA models to enhance food resilience, how do we initiate this? How might we refine past attempts via critical review of previous initiatives that didn't meet expectations. What are the barriers and opportunities for improvement? How might we develop a framework for continuous learning and adaptation? Noted too, was that all collaborative framework feedback requires reflection and review on the aspirations and practical needs of iwi and hapū.

Key themes:

- Encouraging more environmental restoration and kai sovereignty
- Mapping local ecosystems and how they can be better enhanced and connected
- Aligning kai initiatives with expanded environmental priorities.

Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki

Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki were unable to assist, but they are closely aligned with initiatives led by Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai.

Muaūpoko Tribal Authority (MTA)

MTA was unavailable to assist at this time, but were present at the initiative led by Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai on 15 August 2025.

Te Whatu Ora / National Public Health Agency

On 25 September 2025 an online hui was held with Public Health Agency officials who discussed climate change initiatives from health management perspectives. The participants hold critical roles in public health planning, conducting important work with Civic Defence, NIWA and Met Service. They look at public health through a climate change lens and how best to work with councils and iwi. Their strategic approaches are tailored to the needs of Māori. At the time of speaking they were finalising their kai strategy, particularly on climate change heatwaves and the impacts had on food production. With the Te Whatu Ora Heat Health Plan beginning in 2023, they were just finalising the guidelines, which they then launched on 30 September 2025.[11]

While the Heath Health plan was their current key priority for action, they also have internal engagements with other Māori staff and Te Taiao partners. They work closely with Hauora Māori services via partnerships with their boards. While their reach excludes Horowhenua, they run along the lines of the former DHBs and are in close alignment with Greater Wellington Regional Council.

As acknowledged leaders in Māori health, who advocate from Te Whatu Ora Public Health Agency, they respect and honour the relationships they hold with iwi. They also work within the regional safe kai space and related RMA work.

Their worries include concerns for: lessening purposeful climate change engagement with communities; diminishing resources, and underestimating the impacts that arise when changes in power diminish the power of indigenous knowledge systems. They see these as big risks. As mindful experts, they are well aware that short term contracts or end of research activities may see considerable non-prioritisation of colalted efforts. Additionally, and despite the urgent need to connect more participatory action-orientated aspects together, they note increased complications arising from resourcing constraints.

These officials will however, continue to advocate for kai security conversations and better resolutions, who seek opportunties to create better arguments for better health benefits.

11 https://www.tewhatuora.govt.nz/publications/heat-health-plans-guidelines. Extreme heat can cause illness and death, but effective planning and actions can reduce its effects on health. Because effects of heat are associated with relative rather than absolute temperatures, even in New Zealand's temperate climate people can experience negative health effects with modest increases in seasonal temperature. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist health and community service providers, health sector organisations, local government and other community organisations prepare heat health response plans.

They acknowledge the need to work well with councils, and for commmunties to be collaborating better together to increase co-benefits for health. They duly encourage the positive consequences that flow when ensuring health initiatives thrive against human induced climate precarities.

Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated and Te Whare Taiao o Wairarapa (Rangitāne o Tāmaki-nui-ā-Rua)

On Wednesday 26 November 2025, a powerful online hui was held with key Māori leaders from Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated and Te Whare Taiao o Wairarapa (Rangitāne o Tāmaki-nui-ā-Rua). They each premised their kaupapa Māori-inspired work upon important proposals and a resonating analogy that guides their engagements in caring for Papatūānuku, Te Taiao and Wai, and for managing all the benefits that flow from these concerted efforts by their people, for their people, and future generations. They fully understand that the environmental and climate change problems faced cannot be resolved alone but must be exacted in close collaboration or co-design with others.

A series of Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated documents *Te Ia Wairua Proposal: Restoring the flow of our mātauranga to our Wai* proposal document grounds their actions for gathering korero-tuku-iho of ancestral place and relationships to Wai or waterways as their means to restore the flow of Mātauranga o Rangitāne back to their waterways. This is proactive work to overcome 180 years of systemic impact on Wai health within their rohe. Pollution of waterways has exacted long-term deleterious bearings upon their people. As part of *Te Ia Wairua* they re-harness deeper knowledges of place so they can move their generations forward in solutions-focussed ways and beyond what has been described as a long period of pouritanga (mourning).[12] They concentrate all collective efforts on tackling environmental/climate change issues with the express aim to mutually benefit their whanau and hapū Māori, and for those living within the wider non-Māori communities.

Their *Te Ia Wairua* forum around Wai or waterways also determines new ways of working better with Greater Wellington Regional Council staff, where co-designed actions must be fully grounded by the seven key objectives they follow: Hauora o te Wai; Tino rangatiratanga;

12 See Craig, A., 2025, Te Ia Wairua Proposal: Restoring the flow of our mātauranga to our Wai,

Mauri o Te Wai; Ako o te Wai; Tikanga a Hapū; Mana Mātauranga ā hapū and Rangahau me Auaha.[13] These objectives combine as a distinctly mātauranga Māori-led initiative[14] for underpinning enhanced actions. To reiterate, these objectives must be supported as part of meaningful engagement between parties.

Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated also collect local whānau stories of place and relationships to Te Taiao, infused with other aspects of knowledge generated from their former Treaty claims or other research initiatives. Their seven objectives are infused into the *Ka riro mai a Rua-ite pukenga, a Rua i te horahora: An expression of Mana Mātauranga a hapū mō Rangitāne o Wairarapa* document, which is all about protecting their cosmological/whakapapa or genealogical narratives of their people, within their ancestral place despite the disruptions and legacies of colonisation.

They protect this knowledge according to Rangitāne tikanga and mātauranga. Voices within *Ia Wairua* forum are only shared according to safe protection means that arise within wānanga or as culturally manifest with kaumatua, whanau, hapū and kairangahau involved. With enhanced lived experiences of place collated and retold, this is all about honouring their peoples' experiences on the ground, for Wai waterway health, and for ensuring key information and data is kept safe for future generations.

Te Whare Taiao o Rangitane (Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua) as key Te Taiao representatives were present at the table as was representation from Tu Mai Ra Trust. One of the Whaea from Te Whare Taiao o Rangitane (Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua) group, offered a resonating analogy of how to understand iwi and hapū better when strategising and planning for working better together. Her permission was granted to share as follows:

> *The analogy is a pebble thrown into the awa, slowly sinking through the river, and the water columns and ending up settling on the riverbed. To be effective, legitimate, and respectful, the "pebble" of [this] climate change discussion must sink all the way to the riverbed (Mana Whenua), being shaped and acknowledged by each layer (Hapū*

13 Ibid: 11.

14 Ibid: 11.

and Whānau) on its way down. You cannot simply skim the surface. As it sinks, the pebble encounters the fullness of that world.

The ancient stones, are the kaumātua, and they sit as anchors for the spirit. The young shoots springing up, are the rangatahi, showing us the path for tomorrow. In the essential gathering places – the marae, the kōhanga reo – resides the care, the language, and the wellbeing of the people.

The canoes of iwi navigate the broader currents. The taiao units are constantly working in the gardens of the Earth. They all must be included. That is the path. That is the correct protocol. Let the pebble be grounded, let the river thrive, and let the environment flourish.

The Central Core (The Point of Impact):

- ***Te Whatu (The Pebble):*** *The climate change kaupapa or project begins here. This is the initial point of engagement.*

The Expanding Ripples (Simultaneous & Interconnected Engagement):

1. ***Surface Ripples: Immediate Community Reach***

   This ring represents the first, broadest sphere of impact and necessary engagement. It includes the vital groups that shape everyday life and the future:

   - ***Rangatahi, Kura, Whare Kura, Kōhanga Reo***
   - ***Why they are here:*** *Engaging these groups ensures the kaupapa is accessible, educates future generations, and is woven into the language and learning of the community from the start.*

2. ***The Water Column: Operational & Strategic Layers***

   This ring represents the key organisations and committees that make things happen. They are the "doers" and strategists:

   - ***Marae Committees, Taiao Units, Iwi Organisations***

- ***Why they are here:*** *These groups provide the infrastructure, practical expertise, and strategic resourcing to turn the kaupapa into action. They connect the surface ripples to the deeper currents.*

3. ***The Deep Currents: Core Social Structures***

   This ring is the heartbeat of Māori society. The kaupapa must be integrated here to be truly adopted:

   - ***Whānau, Hapū***
   - ***Why they are here:*** *This is where the kaupapa is lived, debated, and owned. It moves from being a "project" to a part of the people's collective purpose. The lines show the natural flow—e.g., Marae Committees serve Whānau; Taiao Units are often mandated by Hapū.*

4. ***The Foundation: Bedrock Authority & Wisdom***

   The outermost ring is not an afterthought; it is the ultimate destination and guiding foundation. The ripples must reach this level to be grounded and legitimate:

   - ***Mana Whenua, Kaumātua***
   - ***Why they are here: Mana Whenua*** *provides the ultimate authority and long-term guardianship.* ***Kaumātua*** *are the timeless guides, whose wisdom should encircle and inform the entire process, ensuring cultural integrity. The line from Kōhanga Reo to Kaumātua shows the critical role of elders in guiding the youngest generation.*

The Dynamic Nature of This Model:

- ***It's Non-Linear:*** *Unlike the river diagram, this model shows that engagement can (and often must) happen at multiple levels simultaneously. You can be talking to a Kura (Surface Ripple) while also engaging with an Iwi Organisation (Water Column).*

- ***The Goal is to Reach the Outer Ring:*** *The ultimate aim is for the kaupapa to resonate so deeply that it is fully integrated and owned by the Foundation ring—Mana Whenua and Kaumātua.*
- ***It Visualises Integration:*** *The connecting lines show how these groups naturally influence and support one another. A strong Marae Committee (Water Column) is built on strong Whānau (Deep Currents). Effective Taiao Units (Water Column) are directed by the vision of Hapū (Deep Currents) and Mana Whenua (Foundation).*

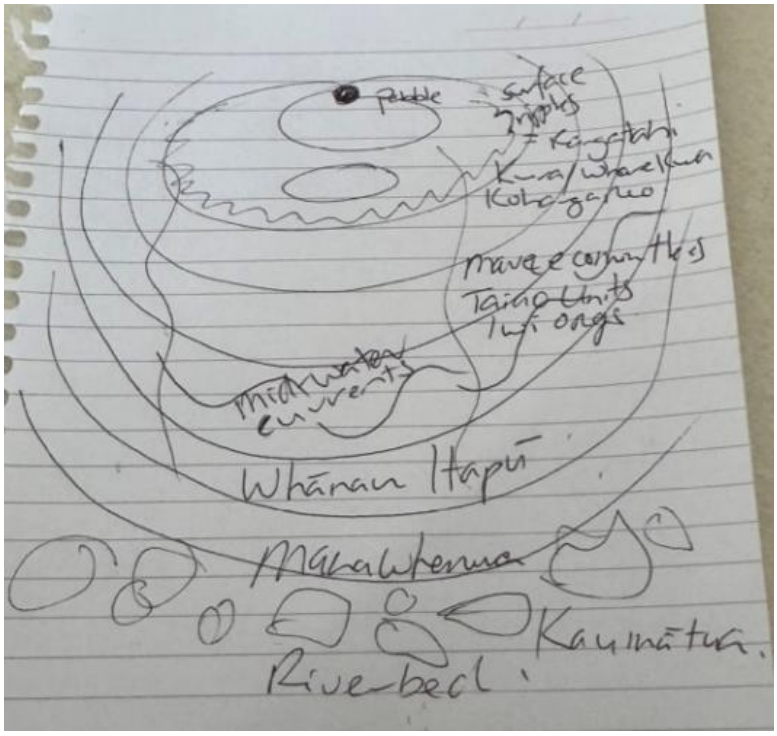

Figure 1: Image by Joanne Heperi, 2025.

Another compelling proposal document entitled *Hura Whenua Proposal: Paving the future journey to awhina Papatūānuku,* supports a co-design forum set up to instigate regularised conversations with whānau, hapū and entities, and to create meaningful engagements between everyone for sound operational working relationships and to enhance better outcomes.

Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporation works proactively, whilst acknowledging upfront the challenges of working with other entities. The group is aware that any siloed thinking or actions only leads to more complications. They each highlighted concerns about projects that: only allow for small incremental changes; lack meaningful engagment with whanau,

hapū and Rangitāne o Wairarapa Inc; might use mātauranga pulled in too late or not acknowledged in the process at all; focus on the wrong problems; and for projects that come with limited resourcing for greater engagement.[15]

The Rangitāne representatives present were also very mindful of who their Marae leaders are, and how many of them are already undertaking their own mahi in terms of health of waterways and kai sovereignty. Similarly, Rangitāne local health teams act with whanau on the ground (e.g. their Whaiora entity), again championing kai sovereignty for their whānau, hapū and marae.[16]

Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated dedicate considerable energies to knowing what their whanau are doing; what catchments developments are underway; who is able to engage in Te Taiao or climate change space well; who strategises and plans for future proofing within their rohe; what environmental management plans for Te Taiao are working well; who is taking key ideas to the table and building partnerships with whānau and councils and particularly for opportunities in revitalisation of ngahere and enhancement of taonga species.

Rangitāne o Wairapapa are adapting to changes within their rohe, and contributing to opportunties that grow and train their rangatahi as future leaders. They remain steadfast in leading from a Mātauranga Māori perspective, however they recognise their key challenges, including that there are: too many forums; too many impacts on the capacity of people to meet these demands; too many talking opportunities and not enough action; and others for example in needing to re-educate their people that indigenous or native plantings are more required, not poplars and willows.

They see definite opportunities for creating enduring capacities amongst their rangatahi via training, research and landscape/whenua development. They support their kaimahi to be well educated in this space too. This energised group of Rangitāne o Wairarapa leaders facilitate and support as many opportunties they can muster that might enhance their waterways; embed food sovereignty; replenish Te Taiao, and increase their abilities to cope

15 See Craig, A., 2025, Hura Whenua Proposal: Paving the future journey to ahwina Papatūānuku, prepared for Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated.

16 Other key local whānau and hapū leaders who are key actionists include: Raihānia Tipoki, Memory Te Whaiti and Michael Roera, to name but a few.

with increasing extreme weather events. The biggest need yet remains the requirement for dedicated and well-shared resources from robust long-term sources.

Key themes from the group are:

- Overcome disconnections to place
- Support whānau and hapū and manaaki them
- Gather their thoughts/visions for ways forward
- Maximise the value of their stories of place
- Share the stories of lived experiences of place
- Work positively with others/entities
- Look at strategies/opportunties to share costs across the rohe.

Table 1: Conversations with key informants leading whanau/hapū/iwi initiatives

Organisations or Individuals	**Representatives**
Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai [Te Whare Waka, Wellington] - 30 July 2025	Donna-Mari Ropata (TĀAkK); Tiffany Manihera (TĀAkK); Lincoln Pearson (TĀAkK).
Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai [Invited iwi leaders forum at Ōtaraua Pā] - 15 August 2025	Liam McAuliffe (TĀAkK); Dean Wilson (MTA); Richard Evans (TĀAkK); Tiffany Manihera (TĀAkK);

	Helmut Modlik (CEO TRoNToa); Mohi Eruini (TĀAkK); Hineirirangi Pearse (RTMT); Rod Lingard (TOP); Marco Nadini (TOP); Pene Kaonohi; Rangipaihuarere Te Hau-Grant; Joanna Gemmell (TWO)
Ngāti Toarangatira Climate Change leader – 29 July 2025 [Also, Rangatahi participant in COP30 in Brazil]	Anahera Nin (TRoNT)
Te Runanga o Ngāti Toarangatira, Porirua.	Helmut Modlik (TRoNT); Anahera Nin (TRoNT); Rawiri Faulkner (TRoNT)
Rangitāne o Wairarapa Te Whare Taiao o Rangitāne Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust	Hineirirangi Pearse (RTMT); Mariah Petera (TWT); Amber Craig (RoW); Joanne Heperi (TWT), Lucretia Mason (TWT).[17]

17 TĀAkK - Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongatai; MTA - Muaupoko Tribal Authority; TRoNTR - Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Toa Rangatira; RTMT - Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust; TOP - The Olive Press; TWO - Te Whatu Ora; TWT - Te Whare Taiao o Rangitāne; ROW - Rangitāne o Wairarapa.

5. Conclusion

As clearly attested in the few voices collated here, tangata whenua want to lead from cultural perspectives fully cognisant and knowledgeable, and therefore respected by others, that they know what works with other parties. The critical aspect is that all partners with iwi and hapū leaders must acknowledge Te Ao Māori perspectives deeply, to create enduring working relationships between all entities and in united readiness, tackle the complexities we all face.

With so much hard work underway as led by Tangata Whenua, they are preparing their peoples for better futures according to their unique ancestral landscape and full cultural context. Therefore, this *Ko te Whakarite i ngā Hononga | Ensuring Connections* project has to listen to the 'what, how and why' these Māori leaders are advocating for, as they act on behalf of their Whanau, Hapū and Iwi.

In order to address the numerous issues they encounter, it is from their distinctly strong, place-based, people and ancestral whenua positionalities that all collaborative action orientated planning, must be premised upon to move forward well.

The voices collated here are decisive in their pursuit of strengthening Whānau-led kai sovereignty futures. Despite how legacies of historic land alienation effectively dissociates so many of them from their tūrangawaewae and whenua, to move forward well into the future, Māori leadership is challenging these difficult realities by countering deficit narratives with clear, futures-focussed, healthy-orientated emphases – all for the sake of their next generations and by association, for the wider community. As essential to building connected, thriving, and resilient local communities, each grouping is overcoming 'long mourning periods', as so succinctly expressed by a particular key informant.

In alignment with Professor Bruce Glavovic's concluding recommendations in his report, I also highlight how each key Iwi, Hapū and Whanau representative took time out from demanding schedules to meet Bruce or me.

The inter-iwi dialogue undertaken were for this collective to share future visions. Importantly, these inter-iwi groups are adamant that they will not allow any diminishing of their long-lived

lived experiences of place, nor have their wholistic indigenous knowledge leadership, their distinct tangata ways of knowing their Te Taiao, be disrespected or ignored in any way. These are confident Te Ao Māori and mātauranga Māori leaders grounded in tikanga, culture and te reo, actively innovating for the sake of their communities and readied futures.

Their actions must be exercised alongside 'local, tacit, professional and scientific knowledges'. In embedding their innovations into their planning for Iwi, Hapū and Whanau within the wider community, each iwi/hapū grouping is providing the solutions needed for more enhanced sustainable futures, and mutually beneficial for all.

This can only be achieved by working better together now, and into the future. Therefore, critical, meaningful and purposeful interface as inter-respected compatibility between knowledges, will pro-actively address the complexities we face.

References

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Craig, A., 2025, Hura Whenua Proposal: Paving the future journey to awhina Papatūānuku. A guiding proposal document protected by Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated.

He Kai Kei Aku Ringa: Strengthening Whānau-led kai Futures: A Framework for Whānau Centred Kai Sovereignty, Embedded within the Iwi-led Regional Food Systems Plan.

Wellington -Wairarapa- Horowhenua Regional Security and Food System Action Plan DRAFT: a 30-year plan that envisions a regional food system that is sustainable, equitable and locally led for the wellbeing of our environment and people.

Appendix 1:

RAP: Adaptation Framework Portfolio Overview

The Wellington Regional Leadership Committee (WRLC) Regional Adaptation Project (RAP) comprises multiple interconnected workstreams, with the RAP: Adaptation Framework portfolio contributes one component to the wider regional resilience effort. The portfolio responds to increasingly complex, uncertain, contested and climate-compounded conditions that challenge fragmented, short-term and business-as-usual approaches to adaptation and resilience work across Te Ūpoko o Te Ika a Māui.

The portfolio does not offer a fixed implementation blueprint, a stand-alone governance structure or a one-off agreement. Rather, the focus is on strengthening enduring collaborative resilience capability capable of continuing through disruption, institutional change, uncertainty and evolving governance conditions over time. The reports are intentionally structured as a cumulative, complementary and sequential suite of documents supporting governance and resilience diagnosis and engagement; Tiriti-based relational engagement; reflexive learning; staged co-design; collaborative resilience capability-building; enabling relational practice; and executive-level progression and decision-making.

No single document within the portfolio was intended to function independently or provide a complete operational framework in isolation. The reports should therefore be read cumulatively rather than in isolation, with each document playing a distinct but interconnected role within the portfolio.

The overall portfolio moves from diagnosis and relational grounding toward staged co-design and collaborative resilience capability-building, and ultimately toward practical next-step guidance for strengthening enduring local-regional resilience collaboration across Te Ūpoko o Te Ika a Māui.

The Phase 2 and Phase 3 documents build upon the Phase 1 diagnosis and engagement work by reflecting on the implications of disruption, institutional instability, governance reform and climate-compounded risk for sustaining collaborative resilience capability. The Prototype Tākai Here Companion plays a particularly important role within the portfolio by providing enabling relational-practice support for staged co-design, collaborative learning and practical resilience progression through changing and disruptive conditions.

Report #	Stage	Primary Output	Primary Role
Report 1	Phase 1A	Phase 1 Main Report	Establish governance and resilience diagnosis and rationale for strengthening collaborative local-regional resilience capability through a future Tākai Here approach
Report 2	Phase 1A	Phase 1 Appendices	Provide supporting analytical, engagement and horizon-scanning material underpinning the Phase 1 diagnosis
Report 3	Phase 1B	Māori Engagement Report	Establish Treaty-grounded relational foundations for enduring resilience collaboration
Report 4	Phase 1C	Mana Whenua Hui Visualisation Document	Distil key relational, cultural and resilience themes emerging through kōrero, hui and wānanga
Report 5	Phase 2A	Briefing Document	Broaden dialogue, understanding and support regarding staged co-design of a future Tākai Here
Report 6	Phase 2B	"Towards a Living Agreement / Tākai Here" paper	Explore possible collaborative architecture, staged pact-making pathways and future collaborative resilience directions
Report 7	Phase 2C	Phase 2 Reflexive Report	Reflect on implications of disruption, governance instability and climate-compounded risk for sustaining collaborative resilience capability and staged co-design
Report 8	Phase 2D	Prototype Tākai Here Companion	Provide enabling relational-practice support for staged co-design, collaborative resilience capability-building and practical resilience progression through disruption and changing conditions
Report 9	Phase 3	Towards a Framework for Local-Regional Adaptation and Resilience Collaboration	Provide concise executive-level advice about principles, practical priorities, collaborative resilience capability-building opportunities and staged WRLC-led progression pathways