

Greater Wellington Regional Council **BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**



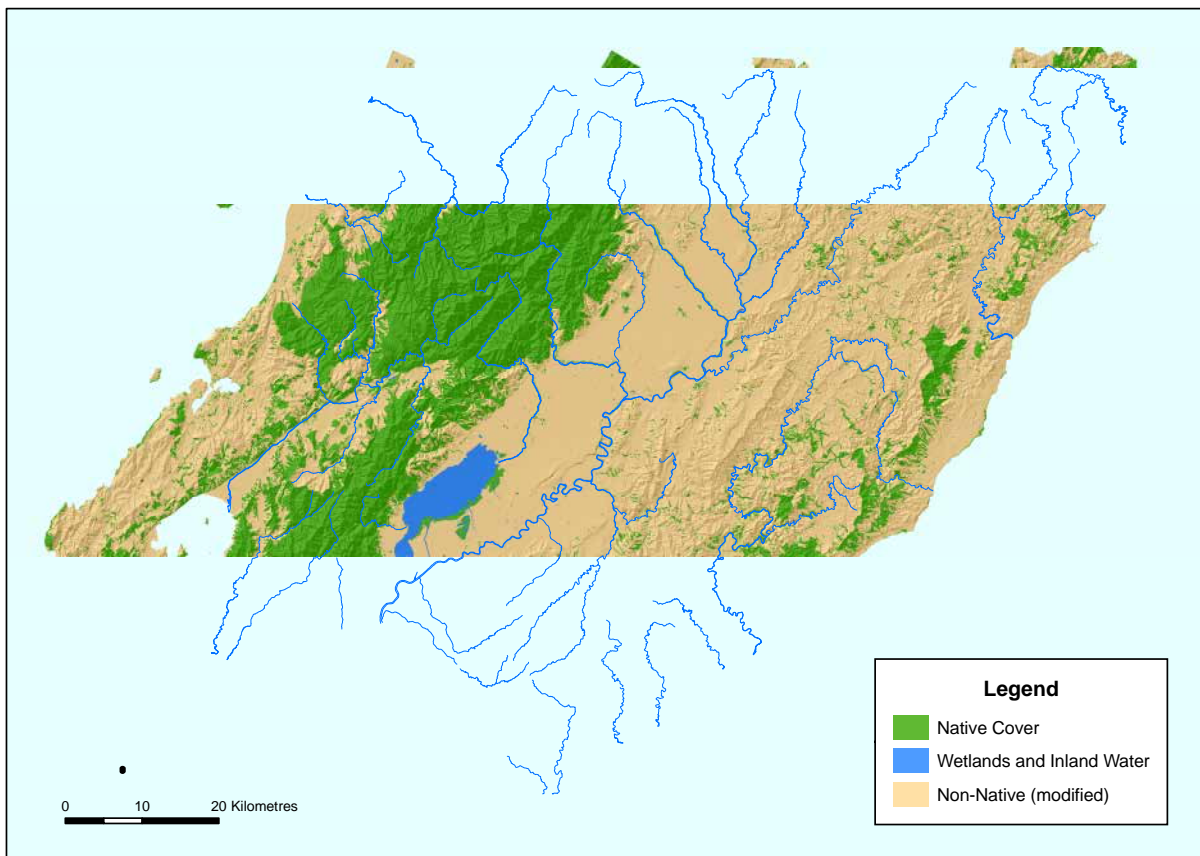
greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Pane Matua Taiao



1.1. Biodiversity in the Wellington region: status and threats

Since the arrival of people in New Zealand, many native plants and animals have become extinct or persist only in reduced numbers. The Wellington region reflects this national picture. For example, before human arrival around 98% of the region was forested while today just 28% is left. Remaining forest is mostly on the hill country, while forest on the fertile lowlands has been cleared to make way for various land uses (see Figure 2, below). The situation is worse for other ecosystem types such as freshwater wetlands, of which only 2.3% remain in the region.⁴

Figure 2. Current extent of native cover in the Wellington region

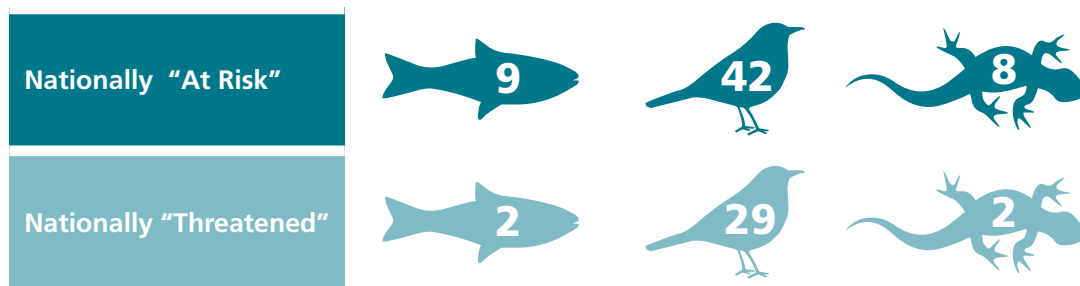


Data source: Land Cover Database III © Landcare Research (2012)

In recent decades, much effort has been directed towards responding to this historical degradation. However, the Wellington region's native biodiversity is still under pressure and we need to maintain our efforts to support it. Introduced pest plants and animals are one of a number of factors that are putting further pressure on the remaining native ecosystems. We also have a number of species that are under threat. Figure 3 shows threatened animal species in the region (note that information on threatened plant species in the region is currently being compiled).

⁴ Ausseil A-G, Gerbeaux P, Chadderton WL, Stephens T, Brown D, Leathwick J 2008. Wetland ecosystems of national importance for biodiversity: Criteria, methods and candidate list of nationally important inland wetlands. Landcare Research Contract report LC0708/158. 174p.

Figure 3. Number of threatened native animal species in the Wellington region⁵



A variety of activities and events are placing pressure on the Wellington region’s biodiversity, including:

- Intensive and, in some cases, poor management of land
- Growth of the human population and the development that accompanies it. In particular, this increases the pressure on waterways through the input of pollutants and modification of riparian margins
- Spread of introduced pest plants and animals
- Harvest of plants and animals
- Fire (both natural and human induced)
- Climate change-related events, including increased frequency of floods, damaging storms and sea level rise

These factors can cause ecosystems to become degraded, which reduces their ability resist invasions from pests and support native biodiversity. They can also reduce the extent of native ecosystems and cause them to become more fragmented across the landscape. This, in turn, can lead to local losses of native species and reduced regional biodiversity.

1.2. GWRC’s role in biodiversity management

GWRC has a major role in managing biodiversity. Our mandate comes from international, national and regional sources. The following section describes these sources of mandate. For more detailed information about them see Appendix 1.

International and national context

The New Zealand government is a signatory to the *International Convention on Biological Diversity 1993*⁶ (CBD). One hundred and ninety four nations are parties to the convention which recognises the global scale of the threats to biodiversity and provides targets for countries to achieve at a national scale. The *New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (2000)* was developed as part of the country’s responsibilities under the convention. This non-statutory document sets out national goals and principles for managing New Zealand’s biodiversity.

Biodiversity management in New Zealand is mandated and governed by a range of statutes, national policies and strategies. The most important of these is the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) which guides local authorities (regional, district and city councils and unitary authorities) in managing indigenous biodiversity by allocating roles and responsibilities. Regional biodiversity management and decision making is also influenced by other national legislation, including the Biosecurity Act 1993 and the Reserves Act 1977.

Under the RMA, key functions of regional councils include maintaining indigenous biodiversity and protecting significant indigenous biodiversity. They are also tasked with maintaining and enhancing the quality of the environment and have a more general responsibility related to ecosystem functioning (see Appendix 1 for more detail). The central government provides

⁵ Data from Greater Wellington Regional Council 2015. Threat categories are from the Department of Conservation Threat Classification System which can be found at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/valuing-nature/threatened-species-categories/>

⁶ www.cbd.int/convention

direction on local implementation of the RMA through national policy statements. The most relevant of these cover coastal management and fresh water management, and a statement on indigenous biodiversity has been proposed.

GWRC's response at the regional level

By preparing and implementing this Biodiversity Strategy GWRC is contributing to international biodiversity protection efforts and following international trends in managing biodiversity.

To implement the RMA at a regional level, GWRC develops and implements regional planning documents including the *Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region* (RPS, 2013) and regional plans. These documents contain objectives, policies and rules and other methods that drive many of GWRC's activities and underpin decisions on how natural resources are used in the region. The key objective in the RPS that guides the management of significant indigenous biodiversity is Objective 16, which is that:

Indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant biodiversity values are maintained and restored to a healthy functioning state.

Figure 4 presents the key factors, from international to regional, that contribute to biodiversity outcomes in the Wellington region.

In response to these mandates, a range of departments across GWRC contribute to managing both biodiversity and wider ecosystem function.

GWRC takes a leadership role in supporting native biodiversity through managing a network of high value sites and advocating for the maintenance and protection of biodiversity. GWRC is also a significant landowner in the region and demonstrates best-practice biodiversity management throughout its extensive network of parks.

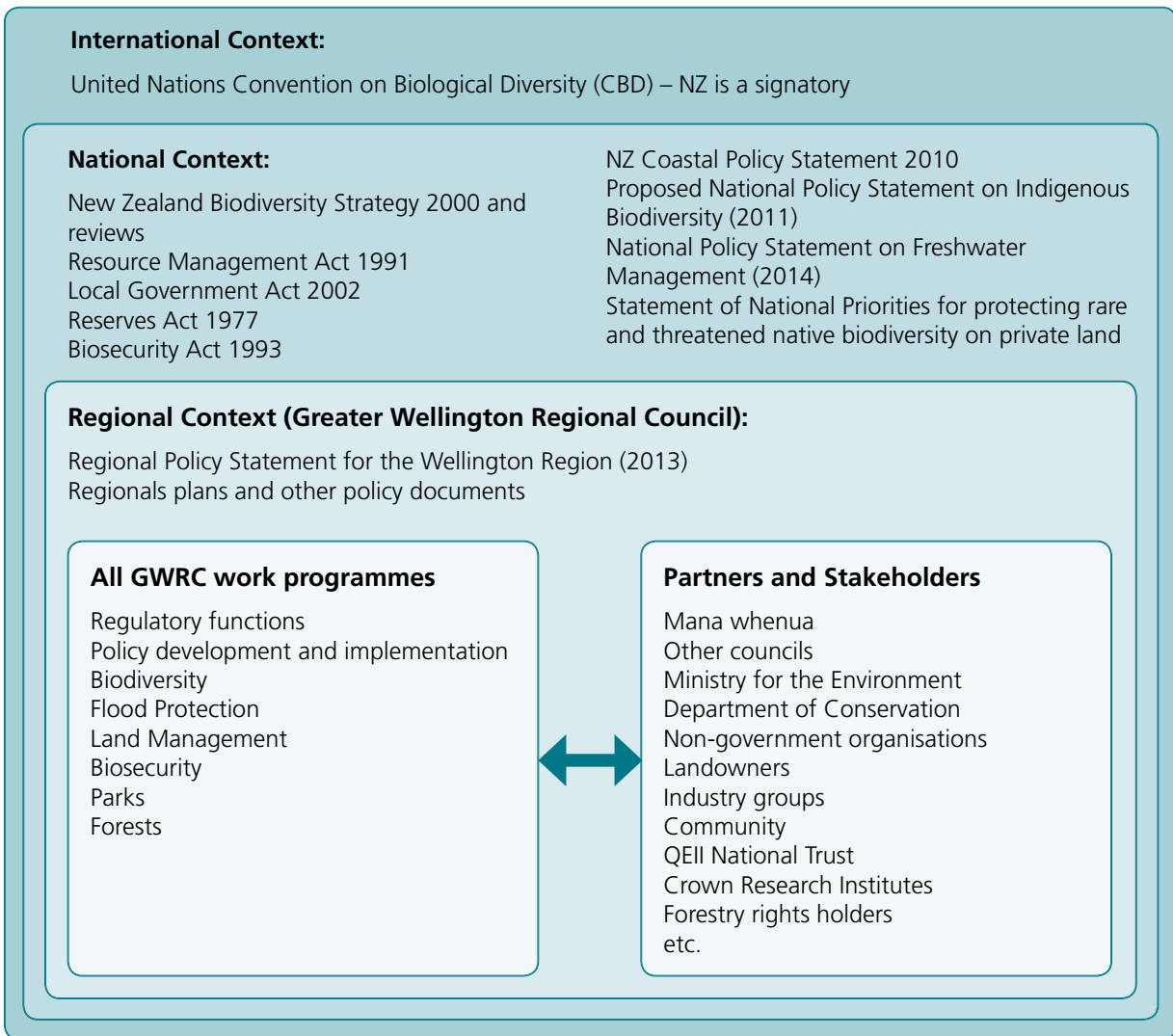
Other core functions carried out by GWRC that support biodiversity include the following:

- The Environmental Policy and Environmental Regulation departments develop, implement and ensure compliance with the regional policy statement, regional plans and resource consents under the RMA.
- The Biodiversity department helps to protect and restore the Wellington region's biodiversity values by advocating for best practice in managing biodiversity and ecosystems. The Biodiversity department also manages the Key Native Ecosystem network of high value sites.
- The Biosecurity department manages pests and weeds in the region.
- The Land Management department works with landowners to help embed best practice biodiversity management on private land. The department also works with forestry rights holders who run commercial forestry operations on GWRC land.
- The Parks department manages the network of regional parks and forests for the community's use and enjoyment. The department works with the community to protect and enhance the environmental, heritage and recreational opportunities in the parks.
- The Environmental Science department provides the underpinning evidence to support good planning and practices for managing biodiversity, and helps GWRC to track whether our efforts are achieving our aims through research and monitoring, including state of the environment monitoring.
- The Flood Protection department works collaboratively with the community to enhance biodiversity within river corridors where flood protection works are undertaken. Flood plain management plans, ecological strategies and a code of practice are key tools for this.



Learning about our environment at Kaitoke Regional Park

Figure 4. GWRC’s role in managing regional biodiversity in the context of international obligations, national drivers, and local partners and stakeholders.



2 GWRC's strategic approach to biodiversity

GWRC carries out a range of important functions that are vital to achieving the organisation's purpose, which is 'Enriching life in the Wellington region by building resilient, connected and prosperous communities, protecting and enhancing our natural assets, and inspiring pride in what makes us unique.' In carrying out their core functions each department does work that can contribute to improving how biodiversity is managed. In order to get the best results, departments across GWRC must coordinate their efforts and ensure they are working towards common goals.

This Strategy helps to coordinate these efforts by setting a vision, goals, and a suite of internal objectives to guide how departments can contribute to creating better outcomes for biodiversity. A set of overarching principles guide how all biodiversity activities are conducted.

The Strategy aims to raise awareness across GWRC of the importance of biodiversity in the region and the range of ways in which GWRC contributes to maintaining and restoring it. The Strategy also aims to highlight the important role the community has in managing and maintaining biodiversity and how GWRC can support this effort.

The subsections below explain the rationale behind the vision, principles, goals and objectives that are shown in Figure 4. Section 3 explains how we intend to implement this framework.

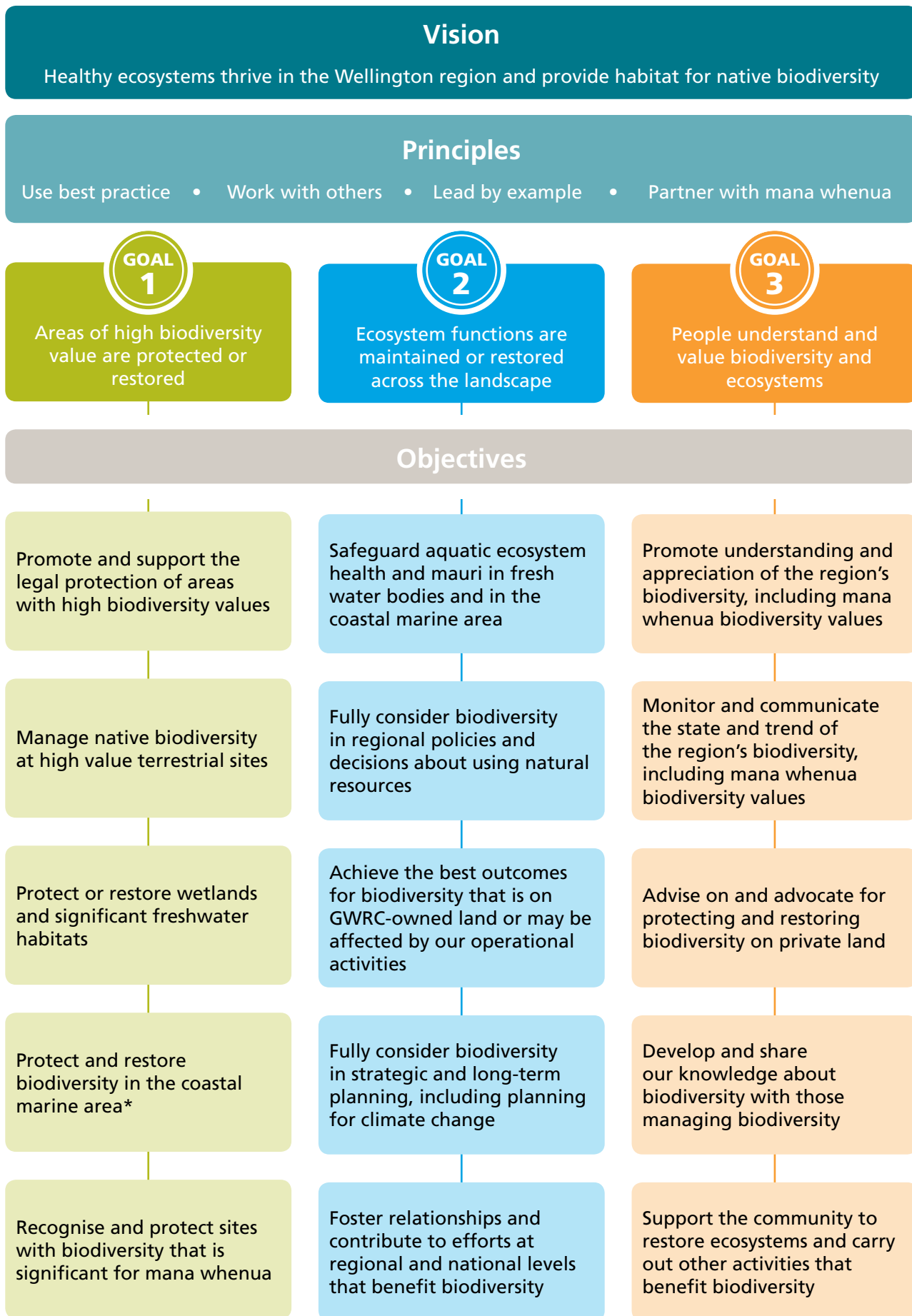
2.1. Vision

The vision for biodiversity in the Wellington region is that:

Healthy ecosystems thrive in the Wellington region and provide habitat for native biodiversity

GWRC applies this vision to the range of ecosystem types existing in the region, from remnants of original (pre-human) ecosystems to modified environments such as farmland. While we may seek different outcomes for these different ecosystems, there are many opportunities to improve their overall healthy functioning and to increase their capacity to support native plants and animals. Many people will need to contribute to making this vision a reality, so in working towards this vision GWRC will both manage and restore ecosystems directly, and engage with and support others to do so.

Figure 5. GWRC’s strategic approach to biodiversity



* The RMA defines the coastal marine area as being the foreshore, seabed and air space above the water of which the seaward boundary is the outer limits of the territorial sea [12 nautical miles from the shore] and the landward boundary is the line of mean high water springs (except in the case of rivers where it extends further inland).

2.2. Principles

In pursuing the vision, goals and objectives of this Strategy, GWRC’s biodiversity activities are guided by overarching principles. These principles are explained below, in no particular order.

Use best practice	We follow international and national best practice when developing policy and designing and carrying out work programmes. This involves adapting the way we manage biodiversity as we learn how well our interventions are working. We also apply new techniques and approaches as they arise. Finally, we also make sure that our work programmes are cost effective, efficient and practical.
Work with others	We build on existing partnerships and proactively foster new relationships with mana whenua, stakeholders and other agencies, including territorial authorities, the Department of Conservation, private landowners, non-government organisations and the wider regional community. Working together with others who share our goals leads to more efficient, coordinated and successful management of the region’s biodiversity.
Lead by example	We own and manage a large amount of land throughout the region and undertake a wide range of activities. To lead by example we manage our own land well and follow best practice as we carry out our activities. Our expertise and relationships put us in a good position to share our knowledge by providing advice to others who also work to protect and restore the region’s biodiversity.
Partner with mana whenua	We acknowledge the relationship mana whenua have with the region’s native species and ecosystems, and their role as kaitiaki for the region. We will work with mana whenua and consider how their interests and aspirations for biodiversity can best be incorporated into our activities.

2.3. Goals and objectives

The three goals described below encompass the range of work done by GWRC to fulfil our responsibilities around biodiversity in the Wellington region. The first goal focuses on protection of specific sites, while the second covers ecosystem functioning and habitats across the region more generally. The third goal underpins the other two and focuses on making sure people inside and outside GWRC understand and value biodiversity and ecosystems.

The objectives under each goal are intended to guide our activities towards achieving the goals. The following sections set out the rationale for each goal and explain the objectives.



Areas of high biodiversity value are protected or restored

This goal recognises the importance of a range of different sites that are highly valued for their biodiversity. We apply the term ‘high biodiversity value’ to ecosystems with characteristics that mana whenua and the wider community hold to be important, and that are valuable for sustaining biodiversity in a national and global context. Ecosystems are valued for a range of reasons, including how rare or unique their species or other components are, where they are situated and how they connect to other aspects of the landscape. They may represent examples of ecosystems that were more common in the past or have particular cultural significance, for example as mahinga kai.

This goal also responds to section 6(c) of the Resource Management Act 1991. It states that the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna are matters of national importance.

Sites with high biodiversity value are prioritised for protection because this is a better use of time and resources than trying to restore significantly degraded sites. High value sites have a better chance of becoming self-sustaining with the support of GWRC’s available resources than they do without it.



Barking gecko
Photo: Richard Romijn

We recognise sites with high biodiversity value in a number of ways. They can be prioritised for inclusion in biodiversity management programmes. Sites are also formally recognised in regional and district plans, many of which list sites that are acknowledged to have particular value. Specific rules can be included in these plans to protect the sites from being degraded or otherwise impacted by activities.

Protecting and restoring these sites means either maintaining the populations and condition of native plants and animal species and their habitats, or restoring them if some values of the site have been degraded. For sites that we manage this involves work such as plant and animal pest control, restoration planting, and fencing. For sites that are protected through the regional plan or through district plans (as guided by the RPS) this involves reviewing resource consent applications for activities that may affect them and monitoring compliance with the rules that apply to them.

Significant biodiversity values can be legally protected to safeguard natural heritage for future generations. Covenanting private land is an example of this protection and GWRC supports this process by providing financial assistance to landowners in partnership with the QEII National Trust.

One of the long-term outcomes of protecting high value sites is strengthening the linkages between these sites. Linkages between sites support ecological processes (such as natural regeneration and successful breeding) that sustain biodiversity across the region.

The five objectives that contribute towards this goal are explained below.

Goal one: Areas of high biodiversity value are protected or restored		
Objectives	Promote and support the legal protection of areas with high biodiversity values	Legally protecting sites secures biodiversity values and investment for managing the sites in the long-term.
	Manage native biodiversity at high value terrestrial sites	Management of sites protects and enhances their biodiversity value. It involves a range of activities, including pest animal and plant control, restoration planting, and fencing, to address threats and improve ecological condition.
	Protect or restore wetlands and significant freshwater habitats	Wetlands are important fresh water ecosystems that have been substantially reduced in extent in our region, and many of our significant freshwater habitats face a range of threats to their health. Wetlands and fresh water habitats are afforded some protection through the regional plans.
	Protect and restore biodiversity in the coastal marine area	Modification of the coastal environment means that many ecosystem types that exist there, including estuaries and dunes, are now rare and threatened. Regional plans protect sites with significant indigenous biodiversity values in the coastal marine area.
	Recognise and protect sites with biodiversity that is significant for mana whenua	The degradation of ecosystems threatens biodiversity that is of importance to Māori for mahinga kai (food gathering) or other customary purposes, and also reduces the mauri of natural resources. We actively engage with mana whenua to identify and protect sites that have these significant values. Regional plans protect sites with significant mana whenua values.



Wairarapa Moana

GOAL 2

Ecosystem functions are maintained or restored across the landscape

All ecosystems, from intact native habitats through to highly modified urban and farmed landscapes, have the capacity to function in a healthy way. Healthy functioning includes providing habitat for native species and benefiting people by providing ecosystem services. Significant biodiversity gains can be achieved by maintaining and restoring ecological function and integrity at the landscape scale, regardless of whether individual sites are considered to be 'high value'. For example, good water quality in rivers and streams across the region will support native biodiversity, such as native fish, and enhance the mauri of these systems. Also, if pests are well controlled across the region this will improve the ability for native biodiversity to thrive in any environment.

GWRC will achieve this goal by managing the adverse effects of activities, improving the biodiversity outcomes of our own work, and partnering with others who share our aims.

Under the RMA, GWRC has specific responsibility for controlling land use effects on freshwater and coastal ecosystems (in the coastal marine area), and this focus is reflected in the first objective for this goal. GWRC sets the overarching policy direction for the region through the RPS. Policy 61 of the RPS allocates responsibility for controlling land use to maintain native biodiversity. While GWRC actively contributes to maintaining terrestrial biodiversity through the work programmes of several departments, territorial authorities (district and city councils) have the regulatory responsibility for controlling the use of land, and the effect of that on terrestrial ecosystems.

The five objectives that contribute towards this goal are explained below.

Goal two: Ecosystem functions are maintained or restored across the landscape		
Objectives	Safeguard aquatic ecosystem health and mauri in fresh water bodies and in the coastal marine area	The mauri, natural character and biodiversity of the region's freshwater and coastal environments are under threat from a range of human activities, including development and contamination. Native fish distribution is reduced because of structures in waterways that restrict fish passage up- and downstream.
	Fully consider biodiversity in regional policies and decisions about using natural resources	Many human activities have effects that can reduce the region's biodiversity. As a statutory local body, GWRC must develop and implement plans, policies and rules that recognise and account for biodiversity.
	Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity that is on GWRC-owned land or may be affected by our operational activities	GWRC manages large areas of land and infrastructure assets (including regional parks) and undertakes a wide range of operational and maintenance activities. Some of these activities have the potential for adverse impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems.
	Fully consider biodiversity in strategic and long-term planning, including planning for climate change	The region's biodiversity and ecosystems face a range of long-term environmental pressures, many of which are uncertain or may be unforeseen. These include the effects of climate change, as well as the secondary effects of human adaptations to climate change, such as work to address flooding and coastal hazards.
	Foster relationships and contribute to efforts at regional and national levels that benefit biodiversity	GWRC's work has synergies with mana whenua (with whom we have a memorandum of partnership) and many other organisations and community groups at local, regional and national scales. Open communication and active participation with other parties can support positive outcomes for biodiversity in the Wellington region and across New Zealand.



People understand and value biodiversity and ecosystems

This goal recognises that GWRC cannot achieve its vision for biodiversity without the support of others in the region. In order to have healthy, thriving ecosystems and habitats that support native species, we must encourage, engage, inform and support others to also work towards improved biodiversity outcomes. For this reason, this goal focuses on people, rather than on biodiversity and ecosystems directly.

GWRC has a role to engage with the public, inform them and advocate for the importance of biodiversity and its protection. Additionally, we have a role to communicate on biodiversity matters and to increase knowledge and capacity within our own organisation and with others involved in land and resource management, such as landowners, mana whenua, territorial authorities and other agencies.

Understanding, in the context of this goal, includes knowledge of the functions and make up of ecosystems and an awareness of the threats facing them. It involves recognition that biodiversity is important as part of our natural heritage, as well as for the services it provides to people. These services include provisioning services such as food production, regulating services such as flood mitigation, and cultural services such as recreation opportunities. Valuing biodiversity means to recognise and understand these diverse benefits and to act in a way that supports ecosystems to continue providing them.

Communication is an important aspect of this goal. We will share our knowledge, promote our activities and encourage others to value biodiversity and act in ways that benefit it. We will also increase our own knowledge of biodiversity in the region, its condition, how it is changing and the best ways to manage it. It is important for us to share this information with others to achieve this goal.

Although increasing understanding and appreciation of biodiversity is an end in itself, this goal is also intended to contribute to goals one and two. By sharing information and promoting the importance, protection and sound management of biodiversity, we aim to influence others to protect and restore biodiversity on land they own or manage in the Wellington region.

The five objectives that contribute towards this goal are explained below.

Goal three: People understand and value biodiversity and ecosystems		
Objectives	Promote understanding and appreciation of the region's biodiversity, including mana whenua biodiversity values	When people understand biodiversity and appreciate its importance, including the valuable services it provides us, they are more likely to support and actively engage in its protection. Mana whenua have a special relationship with the land, water and its taonga. This perspective emphasises the importance of protecting biodiversity.
	Monitor and communicate the state and trend of the region's biodiversity, including mana whenua biodiversity values	We need to understand the condition of the region's biodiversity, how it changes over time and whether our interventions are having the impact that we intend. This allows us to ensure that our decisions are well-informed and appropriate and that our management of biodiversity is effective and evidence-based.
	Advise on and advocate for protecting and restoring biodiversity on private land	A large proportion of the region's land area is privately owned and supports, or has the potential to support, a variety of native species and ecosystems. Good management practices on private land can deliver considerable biodiversity benefits.
	Develop and share our knowledge about biodiversity with those managing biodiversity	Continuously developing, applying and sharing new information about biodiversity and its management will lead to more effective and efficient biodiversity management in the region.
	Support the community to restore ecosystems and carry out other activities that benefit biodiversity	The community can have a considerable positive impact on biodiversity, particularly through involvement in ecological restoration, but also through other activities such as education and promotion. Communities can also reduce threats to biodiversity by changing behaviours that threaten ecosystem health.



Restoration planting at Waimeha Lagoon, Waikanae


3 Implementing the Strategy

This Strategy helps all GWRC departments to have a clear line of sight from their day to day activities to the vision that 'healthy ecosystems thrive in the Wellington region and provide habitat for native biodiversity'.

GWRC's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) owns the document and it is expected that departments will implement this Strategy when developing operational and business plans and strategies. Departments will monitor their progress on implementing this Strategy by reporting through their regular reporting channels. The effectiveness of this Strategy will be evaluated as directed by ELT.

Table 1 below describes GWRC's core functions that relate to achieving the objectives of this Strategy and shows which departments are responsible for or contribute to carrying out those functions. Departments will consider how they can best carry out their functions to align with the objectives of this Strategy.

Table 1. Activities carried out by GWRC departments that contribute to achieving the goals of the Biodiversity Strategy
 This table summarises some of the activities that are relevant to each of the Strategy's objectives and lists the key departments that are involved in carrying them out.

Goals	Objectives	Activities	Departments
 <p>Areas of high biodiversity value are protected or restored</p>	Promote and support the legal protection of areas with high biodiversity values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support landowners to legally protect high value sites Advocate and advise on legal protection as part of best practice for safeguarding biodiversity 	Biodiversity Biosecurity Environmental Policy
	Manage native biodiversity at high value terrestrial sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritise key areas for protection Actively manage high value sites by addressing threats and improving ecological condition 	Biodiversity Biosecurity Environmental Science Parks
	Protect or restore wetlands and significant freshwater habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritise key areas for protection Actively manage high value sites by addressing threats and improving ecological condition Collaborate with other agencies to carry out restoration projects Develop regulatory policies, rules and other methods to manage the effects of activities on aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems Ensure compliance with policies and rules Work with landowners to improve how they manage their land in order to better protect wetlands and significant freshwater habitats 	Biodiversity Biosecurity Parks Environmental Policy Environmental Regulation Environmental Science
	Protect and restore biodiversity in the coastal marine area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop regulatory policies and rules to manage the effects of activities on significant coastal biodiversity and ecosystems Ensure compliance with policies and rules Manage high value coastal sites Advocate for recognition and legal protection of high biodiversity values in coastal areas 	Biodiversity Biosecurity Environmental Policy Environmental Regulation Environmental Science Parks
	Recognise and protect sites with biodiversity that is significant for mana whenua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify sites with significance for mana whenua Develop regulatory policies and rules to manage the effects of activities on biodiversity and ecosystems that are significant to mana whenua Ensure compliance with policies and rules 	Biodiversity Environmental Policy Environmental Regulation Parks

Goals	Objectives	Activities	Departments
 <p>Goal 2 Ecosystem functions are maintained or restored across the landscape</p>	<p>Safeguard aquatic ecosystem health and mauri in fresh water bodies and in the coastal marine area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop regulatory policies and rules to manage the effects of activities on freshwater and coastal ecosystems • Ensure compliance with policies and rules • Work with landowners to improve how they manage their land in order to better protect wetlands and freshwater habitats • Support maintenance and restoration of fish passage 	<p>Biodiversity Environmental Policy Environmental Regulation Environmental Science Parks</p>
	<p>Fully consider biodiversity in regional policies and decisions about using natural resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop regulatory policies and rules to manage the effects of activities on biodiversity and ecosystems • Ensure compliance with policies and rules • Share expertise within GWRC on the most effective ways to manage activities that may affect biodiversity • Provide advice and information to territorial authorities as appropriate to support their biodiversity policy work 	<p>Biodiversity Environmental Policy Environmental Regulation Environmental Science Parks</p>
	<p>Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity that is on GWRC-owned land or may be affected by our operational activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage pest plants and animals • Identify and act on opportunities for restoration planting, legal protection and fencing where appropriate to benefit biodiversity on GWRC-owned land • Routinely consider biodiversity when carrying out GWRC activities, and appropriately manage the effects of those activities 	<p>Biodiversity Biosecurity Environmental Regulation Flood Protection Land Management Parks Public Transport</p>
	<p>Fully consider biodiversity in strategic and long-term planning, including planning for climate change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively address biodiversity issues during the development of strategic and long-term plans 	<p>Biodiversity Parks Strategic Planning</p>
<p>Foster relationships and contribute to efforts at regional and national levels that benefit biodiversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with other agencies, mana whenua, community groups and others to coordinate how biodiversity is managed across the region • Provide advice and information when appropriate to support others' work to benefit biodiversity 	<p>Biodiversity Communications Parks Te Hunga Whirihiri Environmental Science Environmental Policy Environmental Regulation</p>	

Goals	Objectives	Activities	Departments
<p>GOAL 3</p> <p>People understand and value biodiversity and ecosystems</p>	Promote understanding and appreciation of the region's biodiversity, including mana whenua biodiversity values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate the importance of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems to landowners and the wider community Communicate values that are held by mana whenua in relation to biodiversity and ecosystems 	Biodiversity Communications Land Management Environmental Policy Environmental Regulation Parks
	Monitor and communicate the state and trend of the region's biodiversity, including mana whenua biodiversity values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the state of the environment across the region and include measures of ecological integrity Communicate this information internally and externally 	Communications Environmental Science
	Advise on and advocate for protecting and restoring biodiversity on private land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate and inform landowners about good practices for biodiversity management, including legal protection and active management 	Biodiversity Biosecurity Environmental Regulation Land Management
	Develop and share our knowledge about biodiversity with those managing biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase our knowledge of how our ecosystems function Improve our knowledge of the best methods for managing biodiversity and addressing the effects of activities on biodiversity Provide advice and information to support landowners, other agencies and the wider public to manage biodiversity effectively 	Biodiversity Environmental Science Flood Protection Land Management Parks
	Support the community to restore ecosystems and carry out other activities that benefit biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with other agencies, mana whenua, non-government organisations and community groups to carry out ecological restoration activities Provide information, advice and resources that enable people to carry out activities that benefit biodiversity Encourage people to reduce the adverse effects of their activities on biodiversity 	Biodiversity Biosecurity Environmental Regulation Land Management Parks Te Hunga Whiriwhiri



Hutt River Gorge, Kaitoke Regional Park

Appendix 1

The international and national context for regional biodiversity management

1. International context – the Convention on Biological Diversity

The most significant international mandate for protecting biodiversity is the international Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).⁷ The New Zealand government is a signatory to the CBD.

The three main objectives of the Convention on Biological Biodiversity are:

1. The conservation of biological diversity
2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity
3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources

The CBD was established to recognise the international importance of biodiversity and that action needs to be taken to respond to its global reduction. At its tenth meeting in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010, the CBD Conference of the Parties adopted a new 10-year strategic plan for biodiversity. The important role of local authorities is highlighted in the strategic plan:

[the CBD] urges regional organizations to consider the development or updating of regional biodiversity strategies, as appropriate, including agreeing on regional targets, as a means of complementing and supporting national actions and of contributing to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020⁸

The CBD *Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2011-2020)*⁹ specifically addresses the roles and responsibilities of local authorities. Its objectives are to:

- a. Increase the engagement of subnational governments and local authorities, in support of their Parties, in the successful implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the 2020 target and the programmes of work under the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- b. Improve regional and global coordination and exchange of lessons learned between Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, regional and global organizations, United Nations and development agencies, academia, and donors on ways and means to encourage and support local authorities to manage biodiversity sustainably, provide ecosystem services to citizens and incorporate biodiversity concerns into urban planning and development;
- c. Identify, enhance and disseminate policy tools, guidelines, and programmes that facilitate local action on biodiversity and build the capacity of local authorities to support their national Governments in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- d. Develop awareness-raising programmes on biodiversity for local residents (including major groups such as business, local administrators, non-governmental organizations, youth and indigenous and local communities) in line with communication, education and public awareness strategies.

⁷ www.cbd.int/convention

⁸ <https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12268>

⁹ <https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12288>

2. National context

GWRC's work programmes occur within a framework of national legislation, strategies and guidelines. National legislation and policy that relates to the management of native biodiversity includes the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA); Wildlife Act 1953; Reserves Act 1977; Queen Elizabeth II National Trust Act 1977; Marine Mammal Protection Act 1978; Conservation Act 1987; Forests Amendment Act 1993; and the Biosecurity Act 1993.

2.1. New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (2000)

The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (NZBS) reflects New Zealand's commitment to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. It sets out national goals and principles for managing New Zealand's biodiversity.

The first three goals of the NZBS are most relevant for our work at GWRC:

1. Community and individual action, responsibility and benefits
 - Enhance community and individual understanding about biodiversity, and inform, motivate and support widespread and coordinated community action to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity; and
 - Enable communities and individuals to equitably share responsibility for, and benefits from, conserving and sustainably using New Zealand's biodiversity, including the benefits from the use of indigenous genetic resources.
2. Treaty of Waitangi
 - Actively protect iwi and hapu interests in indigenous biodiversity, and build and strengthen partnerships between government agencies and iwi and hapu in conserving and sustainably using indigenous biodiversity.
3. Halt the decline in New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity
 - Maintain and restore a full range of remaining natural habitats and ecosystems to a healthy functioning state, enhance critically scarce habitats, and sustain the more modified ecosystems in production and urban environments; and do what else is necessary to
 - Maintain and restore viable populations of all indigenous species and subspecies across their natural range and maintain their genetic diversity.

Local authorities and regional councils particularly are clearly identified as key players for implementing many actions of the NZBS.

2.2. The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

The RMA guides GWRC's activities and decisions in respect of indigenous biodiversity. Table 1 below outlines the sections that describe key responsibilities of regional councils under the RMA.

Table 1. Key requirements of regional councils under the RMA in relation to biodiversity and ecosystems

<p>6 Matters of national importance</p> <p>In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall recognise and provide for the following matters of national importance:</p> <p>...</p> <p>(c) the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna</p>
<p>7 Other matters</p> <p>In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall have particular regard to:</p> <p>...</p> <p>(d) intrinsic values of ecosystems:</p> <p>(f) maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment:</p> <p>...</p>
<p>30 Functions of regional councils under this Act</p> <p>(1) Every regional council shall have the following functions for the purpose of giving effect to this Act in its region:</p> <p>...</p> <p>(c) the control of the use of land for the purpose of—</p> <p>...</p> <p>(iii)a) the maintenance and enhancement of ecosystems in water bodies and coastal water:</p> <p>...</p> <p>(ga) the establishment, implementation, and review of objectives, policies, and methods for maintaining indigenous biological diversity</p>
<p>35 Duty to gather information, monitor, and keep records</p> <p>(1) Every local authority shall gather such information, and undertake or commission such research, as is necessary to carry out effectively its functions under this Act or regulations under this Act.</p> <p>(2) Every local authority shall monitor—</p> <p>a. the state of the whole or any part of the environment of its region or district—</p> <p>i. to the extent that is appropriate to enable the local authority to effectively carry out its functions under this Act; and</p> <p>ii. in addition, by reference to any indicators or other matters prescribed by regulations made under this Act, and in accordance with the regulations; and</p> <p>b. the efficiency and effectiveness of policies, rules, or other methods in its policy statement or its plan;</p> <p>...</p>

These tasks require a range of regulatory and non-regulatory responses from GWRC. Successful implementation will also rely on effective partnerships with communities, iwi, other government agencies and organisations. The Department of Conservation, territorial authorities, and the Ministry of Primary Industries share responsibility for biodiversity management. Appendix 2 describes the range of functions and responsibilities of the different agencies.

The RMA gives central government the ability to provide further national-level direction through the use of national policy statements. Those that currently direct the management of ecosystems and biodiversity are:

- *New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010*¹⁰
- *Proposed National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity 2011*¹¹
- *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014*¹²

In 2007 the government also issued a non-statutory *Statement of National Priorities for protecting rare and threatened native biodiversity on private land*.¹³ This statement provides local authorities, communities and private landowners with information about the types of ecosystems and habitats on private land that, from a national perspective, are most threatened and in need of protection. The information about the national priorities can be used by local and central government agencies and landowners to coordinate their decisions and on-the-ground actions in relation to biodiversity.

3. Regional context

To fulfil its responsibilities under the RMA, GWRC sets regional policy through the key documents that are explained in this section.

3.1. The Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region

GWRC's approach and specific programmes for managing biodiversity are guided by the *Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region*¹⁴ (RPS, 2013). Regional councils are required under the RMA to prepare a regional policy statement to implement the requirements of the RMA at the regional level.

The RPS provides direction to local authorities, including GWRC, on how they are to manage the use of natural resources. It contains objectives and policies that direct how regional and district plans must manage the effects of activities on indigenous biodiversity. The objectives from the RPS in Table 2 direct decision-makers on how to manage biodiversity and ecosystems.

10 <http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/science-publications/conservation-publications/marine-and-coastal/new-zealand-coastal-policy-statement/new-zealand-coastal-policy-statement-2010/>

11 <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/more/biodiversity/national-policy-statement-biodiversity/about-national-policy-statement>. Although the proposed National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity is not operational it has been used by regional councils to inform their planning. The Environment Court has determined it is 'worthy of respect as a reflection of considered opinion' (Day v Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council [2012] NZEnvC 182)

12 <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/fresh-water/national-policy-statement-freshwater-management-2014>

13 <https://www.biodiversity.govt.nz/land/guidance/index.html>

14 <http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Plans--Publications/Regional-Policy-Statement/RPS-Full-Document.pdf>

Table 2. Significant objectives of the Regional Policy Statement that guide the management of biodiversity and ecosystems

Objectives	
Objective 3	Habitats and features in the coastal environment that have significant indigenous biodiversity values are protected...
Objective 6	The quality of coastal waters is maintained or enhanced to a level that is suitable for the health and vitality of coastal and marine ecosystems.
Objective 7	The integrity, functioning and resilience of physical and ecological processes in the coastal environment are protected from the adverse effects of inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
Objective 13	The region's rivers, lakes and wetlands support healthy functioning ecosystems.
Objective 16	Indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant biodiversity values are maintained and restored to a healthy functioning state.
Objective 26	Mauri is sustained, particularly in relation to coastal and fresh waters.
Objective 30	Soils maintain those desirable physical, chemical and biological characteristics that enable them to retain their ecosystem function and range of uses.

The key objective guiding the management of significant indigenous biodiversity is Objective 16, which is:

Indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant biodiversity values are maintained and restored to a healthy functioning state.

The policies for achieving Objective 16 are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Policies for achieving objective 16 of the RPS

Policy title	Policy content
Policy 23: Identifying indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values – district and regional plans	The policy states that district and regional plans shall identify and evaluate indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values. These ecosystems and habitats will be considered significant if they meet one or more listed criteria.
Policy 24: Protecting indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values – district and regional plans	'District and regional plans shall include policies, rules and methods to protect indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.'
Policy 47: Managing effects on indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values – consideration	The policy states that when considering an application for a resource consent, notice of requirement, or a change, variation or review of a district or regional plan, a determination shall be made as to whether an activity may affect indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values, and in determining whether the proposed activity is inappropriate particular regard shall be given to a specified list of matters (listed in the policy). This policy ceases to have effect once policies 23 and 24 are in place in an operative district or regional plan.
Policy 64: Supporting a whole of catchment approach – non-regulatory	'Take a whole of catchment approach that recognises the inter-relationship between land and water, and support environmental enhancement initiatives to restore and enhance: (a) coastal features, ecosystems and habitats; (b) aquatic ecosystems and habitats; and (c) indigenous ecosystems and habitats.'

GWRC and the region’s city and district councils share responsibility for managing biodiversity. Policy 61 of the RPS allocates responsibilities for land use controls for indigenous biodiversity. The policy states that:

- a. Wellington Regional Council shall be responsible for developing objectives, policies and methods in the regional policy statement for the control of the use of land to maintain indigenous biodiversity;
- b. Wellington Regional Council shall be responsible for developing objectives, policies, rules and/or methods in regional plans for the control of the use of land to maintain and enhance ecosystems in water bodies and coastal water. This includes land within the coastal marine area, wetlands and the beds of lakes and rivers;
- c. city and district councils shall be responsible for developing objectives, policies, rules and/or methods in district plans for the control of the use of land for the maintenance of indigenous biological diversity. This excludes land within the coastal marine area and the beds of lakes and rivers.

3.2. Regional plans for the Wellington region

Regional plans give effect to the RPS and manage the effects of activities on the natural and physical resources of the region in line with the allocation of responsibility set through the RPS (see section 3.1). Regional plans contain objectives, policies, rules, methods and schedules which regulate the use of natural and physical resources in the region.

Greater Wellington Regional Council has five operative regional plans: a Regional Coastal Plan, a Regional Freshwater Plan, a Regional Soil Plan, a Regional Air Quality Management Plan and a Regional Plan for Discharges to Land.¹⁵ As well as the operative plans there is also a Proposed Natural Resources Plan¹⁶ (PNRP) (which has legal effect). The PNRP will replace the five operative regional plans once it is finalised and operative.

Tables 4 and 5 below list the most relevant objectives, policies and methods for managing biodiversity in the operative regional plans and the PNRP.

Table 4. Relevant objectives and policies for managing biodiversity and ecosystems in the existing regional plans

Objectives	
Regional Freshwater Plan	
Objective 4.1.4	The natural character of wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, is preserved and protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development
Objective 4.1.5	The life-supporting capacity of water and aquatic ecosystems is safeguarded from the adverse effects of any subdivision, use and development
Objective 4.1.6	Significant indigenous aquatic vegetation and significant habitats of fresh water fauna in water bodies are protected
Objective 5.1.1	The quality of fresh water meets the range of uses and values for which it is required while the life supporting capacity of water and aquatic ecosystems is safeguarded
Objective 7.1.1	Appropriate uses of the beds of rivers and lakes are allowed while avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects

¹⁵ <http://www.gw.govt.nz/regional-plans-policies-and-strategies/>

¹⁶ <http://www.gw.govt.nz/proposed-natural-resources-plan/>

Regional Coastal Plan	
Objective 4.1.1	The intrinsic values of the coastal marine area and its components are preserved and protected from inappropriate use and development
Objective 4.1.4	Land, water and air in the coastal marine area retains its life supporting capacity
Objective 4.1.6	Important ecosystems and other natural and physical resources in and adjacent to the coastal marine area are protected from inappropriate use and development
Regional Soil Plan	
Objective 4.1.3	The life-supporting capacity of the Region's soils is maintained
Objective 4.1.10	Riparian vegetation cover is maintained, enhanced or established, so that erosion and sediment deposition is minimised in and around water bodies
Policies (abridged)	
Regional Freshwater Plan	
Policy 4.2.9	To have regard to the following characteristics of wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, when considering the protection of their natural character from the adverse effects of subdivision, use, and development...
Policy 4.2.11	To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of the use and development of water bodies and river and lake beds on aquatic habitats and freshwater ecosystems...
Policy 4.2.12	To promote the maintenance and enhancement of aquatic habitats and ecosystems when considering the adverse effects of the subdivision, use and development of land outside river and lake beds
Policy 4.2.13	To protect the nationally threatened indigenous aquatic plants identified in Part B of Appendix 3 and to protect nationally threatened freshwater fauna, in the water bodies identified in Part A of Appendix 3 ...
Policy 4.2.14	To avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects on important trout habitat in the Region, identified in Appendix 4 ...
Policy 5.2.1	To manage water quality in its natural state in those water bodies identified in Part A of Appendix 2 (subject to Policy 5.2.10)
Policy 5.2.2	To manage water quality in Lake Wairarapa in accordance with the National Water Conservation (Lake Wairarapa) Order 1989 (subject to Policy 5.2.10)
Policy 5.2.3	To manage water quality for trout fishery and fish spawning purposes in those rivers, or parts of rivers, identified in Appendix 4 (subject to Policy 5.2.10)
Policy 5.2.6	Except for rivers and streams identified in Appendix 7, to manage the water quality of all surface water bodies in the Region for aquatic ecosystem purposes (subject to Policy 5.2.10)
Policy 7.2.2	To not allow the use of river and lake beds for structures or activities that have significant adverse effects on ... natural or amenity values ...
Policy 7.2.3	To not allow new uses within the beds of rivers and lakes, and subdivision, use and development on the floodplain where the potential effect of flooding significantly increases the risk to human life, health, and safety; or ... natural values
Policy 7.2.11	To ensure that the use of any river or lake bed which is not covered by water does not disturb nesting birds or any of the nationally threatened plant species identified in Part B of Appendix 3
Regional Coastal Plan	
Policy 4.2.1	To recognise that the intrinsic values of the coastal marine area and its components are the heritage of future generations and are worthy of protection in their own right, while allowing for appropriate use and development
Policy 4.2.2	To recognise and distinguish between those parts of the coastal marine area which retain natural character, and those areas where natural character has already been compromised, and to encourage appropriate new developments only in the latter areas

Policy 4.2.10	<p>To protect sensitive, rare, or unusual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habitats; • natural and physical resources; and • ecosystems <p>from the adverse effects of use and development. In particular, the values of the areas identified by this Plan either as an Area of Significant Conservation Value or an Area of Important Conservation Value shall be protected</p>
Policy 4.2.35	<p>To consider placing conditions on resource consents for the purpose of avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects which are associated with, or are a consequence of, an activity, particularly where adverse effects impact on the following matters ... fauna, flora or habitat ...</p>
Policy 10.2.9	<p>To have particular regard to the adverse effects of the discharge of water or contaminants to land or water in the coastal marine area on areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • containing important ecosystems or species; ... • which are significant because of their natural values; ...
Policy 10.2.12	<p>To seek to reduce any adverse effects on water quality in the coastal marine area which are caused by "non-point source discharges" to land or water in the coastal marine area</p>
Regional Soil Plan	
Policy 4.2.14	<p>To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of vegetation disturbance by promoting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the maintenance and enhancement of vegetation in erosion prone areas; • the conversion of erosion prone areas to forestry or soil conservation woodlots, or regeneration or active restoration to native bush; • riparian management, including where this will help safeguard the life-supporting capacity of aquatic ecosystems;...
Policy 4.2.15	<p>To regulate soil disturbance activities to ensure that they are unlikely to have significant adverse effects on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • erosion rates; • soil fertility; • soil structure;... • aquatic ecosystems;...

Table 5. Relevant objectives and policies for managing biodiversity and ecosystems in the Proposed Natural Resources Plan (proposed 31 July 2015).

Objectives	
Objective O3	Mauri is sustained and enhanced, particularly the mauri of fresh and coastal waters.
Objective O4	The intrinsic values of aquatic fresh water and marine ecosystems and the life-supporting capacity of water are recognised.
Objective O5	Fresh water bodies and the coastal marine area, as a minimum, are managed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) safeguard aquatic ecosystem health and mahinga kai, and (b) provide for contact recreation and Māori customary use, and (c) in the case of fresh water, provide for the health needs of people.
Objective O25	To safeguard aquatic ecosystem health and mahinga kai in fresh water bodies and coastal marine area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) water quality, flows, water levels and aquatic and coastal habitats are managed to maintain aquatic ecosystem health and mahinga kai, and (b) restoration of aquatic ecosystem health and mahinga kai is encouraged, and (c) where an objective in Tables 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 or 3.8 is not met, a fresh water body or coastal marine area is improved over time to meet that objective.
Objective O27	Vegetated riparian margins are established and maintained.
Objective O28	The extent of natural wetlands is maintained or increased and their condition is restored.
Objective O29	Use and development provides for the passage of fish and koura, and the passage of indigenous fish and koura is restored.
Objective O30	The habitat of trout identified in Schedule I (trout habitat) is maintained and improved.
Objective O31	Outstanding water bodies and their significant values are protected.
Objective O33	Sites with significant mana whenua values are protected and restored.
Objective O35	Ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values are protected and restored.
Policies (policy titles only)	
Policy P22	Ecosystem values of estuaries
Policy P23	Restoring Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour, Wellington Harbour (Port Nicholson) and Lake Wairarapa
Policy P31	Aquatic ecosystem health and mahinga kai
Policy P32	Adverse effects on aquatic ecosystem health and mahinga kai
Policy P33	Protecting indigenous fish habitat
Policy P34	Fish passage
Policy P35	Restoring fish passage
Policy P36	Effects on indigenous bird habitat
Policy P37	Values of wetlands
Policy P38	Restoration of wetlands
Policy P39	Adverse effects on outstanding water bodies
Policy P40	Ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values
Policy P41	Managing adverse effects on ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values

Policy P42	Protecting and restoring ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values
Policy P43	Restoration and management plans
Methods (non-regulatory methods for managing natural resources)	
Method M8	Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour restoration
Method M9	Wairarapa Moana
Method M12	Sustainable land management practices
Method M20	Wetlands
Method M21	Fish passage
Method M22	Integrated management of the coast

Appendix 2

Roles of agencies in biodiversity management¹⁷

	Habitat Quality			Species protection/population management & recovery
	Legal protection of sites	Management of adverse effects of resource use	Operational investment in habitat protection and restoration	
Private (including Maori) land	DOC [Nga Whenua Rahui, Nature Heritage Fund QEII - covenants Territorial authorities [consent conditions/notices, reserves acquisition] Regional councils [parks acquisition]	Territorial authorities/ unitary authorities Regional councils* (when accepted)	Regional councils [soil conservation & rivers control]	DOC – Wildlife protection MPI [Indigenous forest harvesting] DOC [Wild animal control] MPI [Biosecurity – incursion response]
Freshwater environments	-	Regional councils*		DOC – [Freshwater fish and whitebait management] MPI [Fisheries management]
Marine environments <12NIM	DOC [Marine reserves]	Regional councils*	Regional councils* [Oil Spill recovery]	MPI [Biosecurity – incursion response] MPI [Fisheries management]
Marine environments 12NIM – 200NIM	DOC [Marine reserves]	Minister for the Environment/EPA	-	MPI [Biosecurity – incursion response] DOC [Marine mammals protection]
Other public conservation estate	DOC [Ownership]	Regional councils*	DOC	DOC – Access and concessions system DOC [species recovery, mainland islands, pest control] Regional councils [pest management]

*Mandatory regional council biodiversity functions in italics

17 Willis, 2014. Biodiversity: Roles and functions of regional councils. Unpublished report of the Regional Councils' BioManagers Group.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council promotes **Quality for Life** by ensuring our environment is protected while meeting the economic, social and cultural needs of the community

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