
EVALUATION REPORT ON SUB CATCHMENT PLANNING

Report prepared for
Waikato Regional Council and Beef +Lamb NZ

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the results of a process evaluation of three sub catchment planning initiatives. The initiatives were located in the Whangape, Upper Pūniu and Whirinaki sub catchments of the Waikato Region. The evaluation was commissioned by Waikato Regional Council (WRC) together with Beef + Lamb (Beef + Lamb) and was carried out by Momentum Research and Evaluation Limited in March and April 2019.

The objectives of the evaluation were to: (i) describe each initiative, its aims or objectives, key components and the activities that occur; and (ii) determine strengths, challenges and/or learnings from each initiative. The methodology included reviewing background documentation, participant observation at two workshops and 16 key informant interviews with farmers, co-ordinators, Mid Northern North Island Farmer Council (MNNIFC) representatives and, Beef + Lamb and WRC staff.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVES

WHANGAPE

The Whangape sub catchment is in the north western part of the catchment and is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 1 area. The main receiving environment is Lake Whangape. The Whangape initiative is a farmer-led, extension approach, with a part-time co-ordinator who has been seed funded by the MNNIFC. As at 31 March 2019 the initiative had between five and eight farmer-led groups or 'hubs' and the co-ordinator had run workshops and hui, set up water quality monitoring sites, and undertaken other co-ordinating and relationship-building activities.

UPPER PŪNIU

The Upper Pūniu sub catchment is located in the south western part of the catchment and is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 3 area. The receiving environment is the Pūniu River which is a tributary of the Waipā River. The Upper Pūniu initiative is a farmer-led, extension approach, with a part-time co-ordinator who has been seed funded by the MNNIFC. As at 31 March 2019 the initiative was in its early stages and had included identifying farmer leaders, facilitating a workshop, identifying water quality monitoring sites, and overall relationship-building. The Upper Pūniu has one sub catchment group, although this may alter as the project progresses.

WHIRINAKI

The Whirinaki sub catchment is located north east of Lake Taupō within the Waikite Valley and Ngakuru rural districts, is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 3 area, and is one of four priority areas in the Upper Waikato Zone Plan. The Whirinaki Arm formed with the creation of Ohakuri Dam in 1961 is the main focus of the initiative. The Whirinaki initiative is primarily a soil conservation project led by WRC and characterised by having Waikato River Authority (WRA) funding and a 'working group' comprised of iwi representation from Te Arawa River Iwi Trust (TARIT), WRC staff and local landowners. WRC initially had one staff member as a project manager but this changed seven months ago and there are now three staff who share the management tasks. The initiative has been in operation for approximately 18 months, starting in 2017 and as at 31 March 2019 had eight projects underway out of a planned twenty, five of which are completed.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

REASONS FOR INVOLVEMENT

Reasons why farmers got involved in the initiatives included:

- Plan Change 1 being notified and/or WRC reports about the area were catalysts for some farmers to form groups and/or make contact with WRC.
- Farmers wanted to have control over what was being proposed or planned.
- Farmers developed a sense of ownership of the issues and wanted to be part of the solution.
- Having a belief that a catchment approach is the best way to get farmer 'buy-in' and address compliance.
- Farmers being environmentally aware.
- Financial - market drivers and/or financial incentives.
- Active community engagement work by co-ordinators, Beef + Lamb and/or WRC staff.

ENABLERS OF ENGAGEMENT

Factors which enabled and /or could enable farmer engagement in the initiatives include:

- Having respected farmer leaders who encourage others to get involved.
- Connecting issues back to their farm and their business.
- Listening to what farmers' needs and concerns are and working with them.
- Having tangible, visible projects that other farmers can see.
- Having local water quality monitoring to provide data.
- Using peer pressure to motivate other farmers to engage.
- Being community owned and led and creating a sense of ownership.
- Having Plan Change 1 as a catalyst to get involved early and access funding.

ADVANTAGES OF INVOLVEMENT

Reported advantages of being involved in the initiatives include:

- Having a sense of community, of working together, and being 'all in this together.'
- Feeling empowered through learning about waterway health and what can be done, on farm.
- Having access to support such as workshops, help with FEPs, expert advice and funding.
- Having good stories to showcase the good work that farmers are doing.
- Having access to funding for completing mitigation work.
- Learning new things about Plan Change 1 and Beef + Lamb extension work.
- Having farmer input into decisions.
- Being more prepared for Plan Change 1.

The risks of *not* getting involved were reported as:

- Financial penalties for non-compliance, having to pay for mitigations, missing out on funding.
- Having a shorter timeframe and less resources once the plan change is finalised.
- Being the community that had the opportunity to do something but did not do it.

STRENGTHS

In the Whangape and Upper Pūniu there was unanimous support for the current co-ordinator and the co-ordinator role which was valued because it 'freed up' farmer time by taking on administrative and organising tasks and enabled farmers to complete actions. The current co-ordinator being a qualified and experienced freshwater ecologist was an added advantage as she could undertake the water quality monitoring, and provide learning opportunities for land owners. The skills needed by a co-ordinator were identified as: (i) administrative and organisational skills; (ii) interpersonal communication skills; (iii)

the ability to work with farmers and understand the rural environment; (iv) being knowledgeable about environmental issues; and (v) being independent.

In the Whirinaki there was unanimous support for the previous project manager and for the project manager role which was valued because it kept people informed and the project 'on track.' The project manager leaving was considered to have impacted on the project resulting in less cohesiveness and lack of clarity through not having one person who stayed 'on top' of things. The skills needed by a project manager were identified as: (i) technical knowledge; (ii) the ability to work well with others; (iii) approachability; (iv) reliability; (v) having enthusiasm for the project; and (vi) good scoping and planning skills.

Reported on farm changes as a result of the initiatives include:

- Increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of Plan Change 1 and WRC.
- Improved relationships with WRC.
- A shift to include environmental thinking into the farm system.
- On farm actions completed and planned including: (i) FEPs; (ii) changes to farm systems and practices such as cropping and stocking rotations; (iii) physical works such as planting, crossings, water reticulation, retiring and fencing.

CHALLENGES

Reported reasons why people do not engage in sub catchment initiatives include:

- 'Someone else will do it for me' - letting others do the work, not choosing to engage.
- Still fighting/ arguing about the changes.
- Uncertainty about the rules - waiting to find out what will be required first.
- In denial - do not think there is a problem.
- Cannot be bothered.
- Being too busy.
- Feeling threatened and attacked.
- Preferring to work alone.
- Not seeing the benefit or opportunity.
- Misinformation about what is involved.
- Corporate or leased farms where managers do not see this as their problem.
- Not knowing about the initiative.
- Have already been proactive and undertaken a lot of work themselves.
- Financial constraints such as not being able to afford to part-fund an action and/or prioritising other compliance issues.

LEARNINGS

In terms of 'what works', the following themes emerged in the Whangape and Upper Pūniu:

- Being farmer-led and farmer-driven.
- Learning from other groups to enable sharing information and experiences.
- Having farmer leaders to engage with other farmers and encourage involvement
- Having a skilled co-ordinator.
- Setting up water quality testing sites to provide baseline information and to assist with 'buy-in.'
- Making connections for farmers between waterway health and on farm practices.
- Allowing time for the change to occur to get farmer buy in and to make on farm changes.
- Having events and activities to up-skill and provide information.

- Support from regional council, Beef + lamb, experts and advisors.
- Funding.
- Access to tools, resources and templates.
- Having a structure.
- Having FEPs and ensuring that the actions will achieve environmental outcomes.

Key themes about what works in the Whirinaki were:

- Being community-led and community-driven.
- Having farmers involved with the working group to provide local knowledge and engage others.
- Having a skilled project manager to drive the project and keep the momentum going.
- Being focused on the goals to ensure that the work happens.
- Having 'passionate' people involved to keep up the momentum.
- Having a visual 'focal point' so people can 'see' the problem – i.e. the sediment build-up in the Whirinaki Arm.
- Having funding to get projects completed.
- Having access to expert technical advice both internal and external.
- Having iwi at the table.
- Having WRC, community and iwi 'united and working together' to develop relationships, trust and a co-ordinated approach.

In terms of what else would help the initiatives to be successful the following was reported:

- Raising the profile of the initiative via completed and visible project sites, signage, field days.
- Providing education and information opportunities such as workshops.
- Having consistent and accurate messages and information from all parties including industry, WRC, farm advisors and others working in the sector.
- Having solutions that work.
- Providing resourcing for mitigations.
- Having communication tools and methods to spread the messages about the initiatives.
- Having succession planning.

In terms of future structures, no 'one' model emerged for the Whangape and Upper Pūniu however suggestions included incorporated societies, subscription-based approaches and ensuring there was an ongoing 'co-ordinator' role. For the Whirinaki whilst the working group model was viewed as creating another layer of bureaucracy it linked WRC and TARIT with landowners, enabled input from community leaders and ensured that the initiative was community-led and as such was a key factor in it being effective.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Overall, long term change is a challenge, and recurring themes to ensure success were to make sure that the farmers are invested and actively involved in the process; that is that it is farmer-led and farmer-driven and as well that there are consistent messages about Plan Change 1, waterway health and actions that work, from all parties including industry good, WRC, farm advisors and others

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1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This document presents the results of an evaluation of sub catchment planning commissioned by Waikato Regional Council (WRC) together with Beef + Lamb (Beef + Lamb) which was carried out by Momentum Research and Evaluation Limited (Momentum) in March and April 2019. This chapter provides a brief background to sub catchment planning followed by the evaluation aim, objectives and methodology.

1.2 SUB CATCHMENT PLANNING

Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 (Plan Change 1)¹ is a change to the Waikato Regional Plan to address the problem of water quality to achieve the Vision and Strategy/Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato of making the rivers 'swimmable and viable for food collection along the entire length of the river.'²

Plan Change 1 has a number of components including dividing the catchment into sub catchment areas and assigning priority ratings as well as requirements for farmers in regards to Farm Environment Plans (FEPs), Nitrogen Reference Points (NRPs) and stock exclusions for example. In addition, there is a provision in the plan for 'sub catchment planning' which includes a 'method' for how this could occur and what it would involve.³

1.3 EVALUATION

As part of determining how to implement the sub catchment planning method as described in Plan Change 1, WRC and Beef + Lamb requested Momentum to undertake a process evaluation of three sub catchment initiatives in the region.

The following evaluation aims, objectives, research questions and methodology were developed with WRC and Beef +Lamb, via a meeting on 8 February 2019 and a feedback process on the evaluation plan.

1.3.1 EVALUATION AIM

The overall aim is to carry out a process evaluation of sub catchment planning being undertaken in the Whangape, Upper Pūniu and Whirinaki Sub Catchments.

1.3.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Describe each initiative, its aims or objectives, key components and the activities that occur.
2. Determine strengths, challenges and/or learnings from each initiative.

1.3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions that were identified by WRC and Beef + Lamb at the 8 February 2019 meeting, which the evaluation aims to answer.

¹ Waikato Regional Council, 2016, *Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 – Waikato and Waipā River Catchment*. Waikato Regional Council. Available online www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/read-the-proposed-plan-change

² Source: WRC, www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/read-the-proposed-plan-change/

³ See Chapter 2 of this document for further detail on PC1 and sub catchment planning and method.

1. Why are people involved? i.e.:
 - a. *What are the motivations (for involvement)?*
 - b. *What do / did they want from the initiative?*
 - c. *What level of awareness do they have about what they can get out of the process?*
 - d. *What are they getting from it?*
 - e. *What has been the value of working together?*
 - f. *What do they see as the 'risks' if they didn't do anything?*
 - g. *What have they been surprised about?*
2. What are the barriers to involvement? i.e.:
 - a. *What encourages involvement?*
 - b. *Who is not engaging and why?*
3. What is the value of the facilitator / co-ordinator role? i.e.:
 - a. *What are the benefits of the co-ordinator role?*
 - b. *What is the group participants' understanding of the role of the co-ordinator/facilitator?*
 - c. *What is it the process like for the facilitator / co-ordinator?*
 - d. *What strategies or approaches work? And why? Why not?*
4. What changes are they making as a result of the initiative? i.e.:
 - a. *What actions have occurred?*
 - b. *What have they been doing?*
 - c. *What are they planning to do?*
 - d. *How do they (the group) define success?*
 - e. *How do they (the group) assess progress?*
 - f. *Do they see the process helping them to reach their goals? And if so, how? And if not, why?*
5. What is working / not working? i.e.:
 - a. *What are the key components of the initiative?*
 - b. *What process steps have they found useful?*
 - c. *What approaches have worked?*
 - d. *What approaches have not worked?*
6. What has helped? What else would help? i.e.:
 - a. *What are the components that support a community group?*
 - b. *How can service providers help build success?*

1.3.4 METHOD

In order to meet the aim and objectives and answer the research questions, the following methodology was used:

- i. Document review of background documents including plans, reports, and relevant literature.
- ii. Participant observation at two workshops⁴ (one in the Whangape and one in the Upper Pūniu) to observe the workshop process.
- iii. Key informant interviews with 16 people including farmer participants, co-ordinators, Farmer Council representatives, and Beef + Lamb and WRC staff. Interviews were arranged via email, with farmers being emailed information about the research by the co-ordinator⁵ in the first instance. If the farmers were happy to be contacted the contact information was passed on to the researcher

⁴ Note that the Whirinaki project did not have workshops and there were no specific events/meetings within the data collection timeframe that would have been suitable to attend.

⁵ i.e. the co-ordinator or project manager of the initiative.

and interviews arranged directly. For Beef + Lamb and WRC staff, contact details were provided to the researcher and the staff contacted directly. All interviews except one, took place over the phone and were between 30 minutes and one hour in length.

1.4 THIS DOCUMENT

The document is divided into five Chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of Plan Change 1 and sub catchment planning. Chapters 3-5 reports on the findings for each initiative⁶ separately, and Chapter 6 is an overall summary and conclusions section.

The audience for this report is primarily those involved with the initiatives and whilst there is some background information provided in Chapter 2, the overall assumption has been made that the reader has a reasonable level of knowledge and understanding of Plan Change 1 and sub catchment planning.

⁶ Note that the term 'initiative' has been used to describe the three different sub catchment planning initiatives in this document. However, this does not mean that they are viewed or named as 'initiatives' by those involved and in fact they may often be viewed as 'farmer groups' or a series of 'Beef + Lamb' workshops or 'water quality testing' or 'working groups' or a 'committee' for example, rather than as an initiative.

2.0 PLAN CHANGE 1 AND SUB CATCHMENT PLANNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief overview of Plan Change 1 and sub catchment planning. It includes (i) information about Plan Change 1 and Variation 1, the submission and hearings process and the stage that the proposed plan change is at; (ii) key components of Plan Change 1 such as priority areas and requirements for farmers; (iii) what the plan change includes in relation to sub catchment planning; and (iv) a brief introduction to the three initiatives, including a map of the three sub catchments, that are the focus of this report.

2.2 ABOUT PLAN CHANGE 1 AND VARIATION 1

Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 (Plan Change 1) is a change to the Waikato Regional Plan, developed with the community, to allow for the management of nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and bacteria in the Waikato and Waipā Rivers. The aim of Plan Change 1 is to address the problem of water quality to achieve the Vision and Strategy/Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato of making the rivers swimmable and viable for food collection along the entire length of the river.⁷

Plan Change 1 was developed by the Collaborative Stakeholder Group (CSG) and notified by the WRC in October 2016. Following the notification, Pare Hauraki raised concerns with the WRC that they had not been consulted with in the manner required by the Resource Management Act (RMA). WRC withdrew part of the proposed plan change on 3 December 2016 in order for the consultation to take place. The consultation process together with other considerations led to Variation 1 to Proposed Plan Change 1.

Between October 2016 and September 2018, 1084 submissions on Plan Change 1 and on Variation 1 were received. A summary of submissions was prepared and the Hearings process began on 11 March 2019 and is planned to continue through until July 2019.

2.3 COMPONENTS OF PLAN CHANGE 1

2.3.1 PRIORITY AREAS

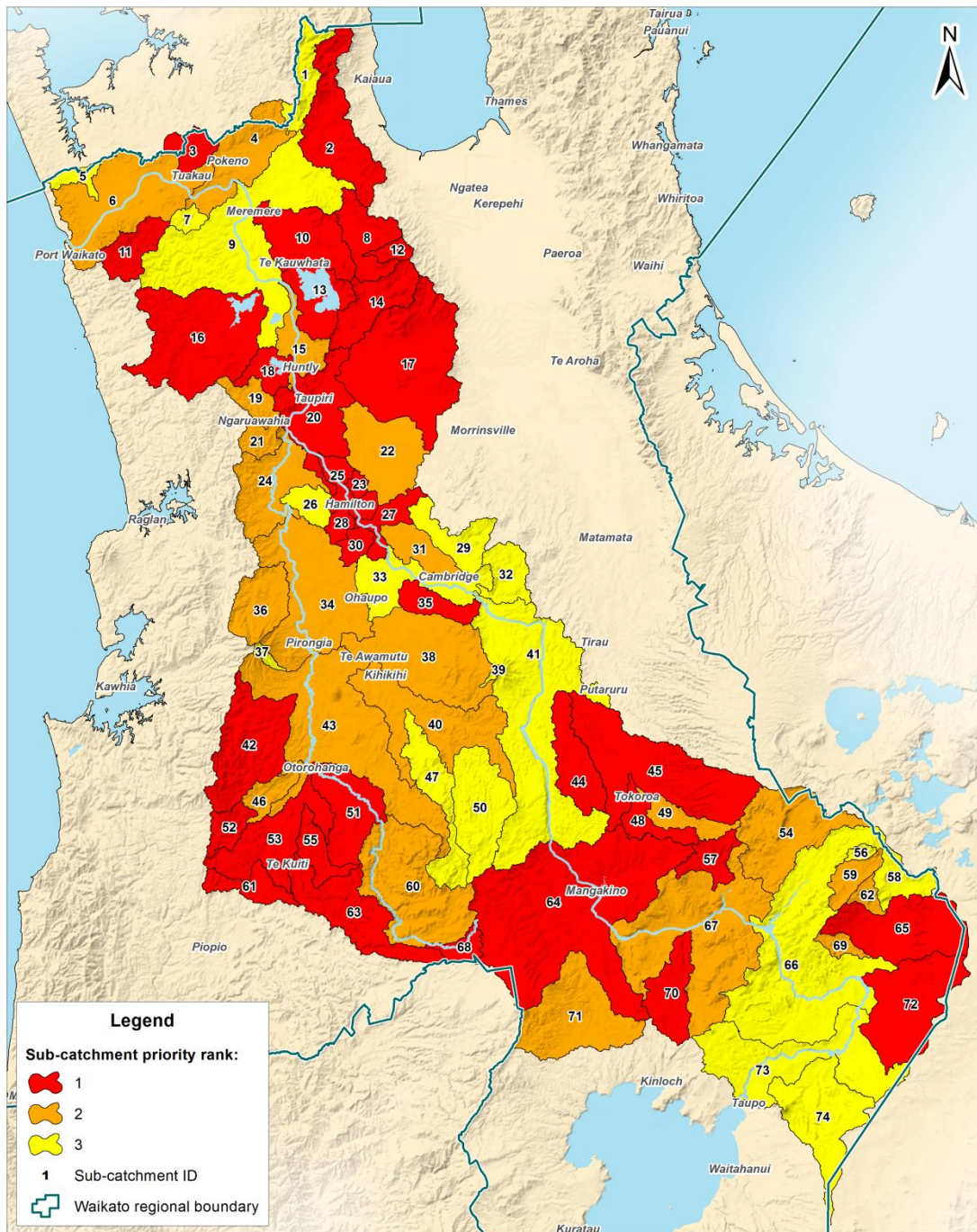
Plan Change 1 divides the Waikato and Waipā river catchments into sub-catchments. Sub-catchments have then been ordered in terms of priority for cleaning up the waterways, based on the current information about water quality in these areas and where the quality needs to be in the next 80 years.⁸ The priorities are numbered 1 to 3, with 1 being the highest priority and 3 the lowest. There are different dates for activities, such as stock exclusion or FEPs, to be completed by, depending on the priority level.

Figure 1 (page 5) is a map of the region and includes the sub-catchment areas and their priority rating.

⁷ Source: WRC, www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/read-the-proposed-plan-change/

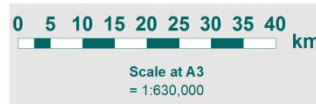
⁸ <http://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/for-landowners/key-dates>

FIGURE 1: MAP OF SUB CATCHMENT PRIORITY AREAS⁹



Acknowledgements and Disclaimers
 1. © Waikato Regional Council 2013-2016. Healthy Rivers: Plan for Change / Wai Ora: He Rautaki Whakapipipi Data.
 2. Priority ranking by sub-catchment supplied by NIWA.
 3. Digital political boundaries data sourced from Statistics New Zealand.
 4. Hydrological data sourced from Land Information New Zealand. Crown Copyright Reserved.

Sub-catchments



Created by: A Jeffries
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 Version: 1
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 File: 33102 Sub-Catchments by Priority Rank.mxd

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⁹ Map available online at: <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/collaborative-stakeholder-group/collaborative-stakeholder-group-documents/subcatchment-priority-ranking/>

2.3.2 ON-FARM MITIGATIONS

Plan Change 1 puts forward some key requirements for farmers. These include all farmers having to have a Farm Environment Plan (FEP) which covers on-farm issues relating to the discharge of contaminants (nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, microbes) and how the farmer will manage this on-farm. Other requirements include regulations relating to stock exclusions from waterways,¹⁰ Nitrogen Reference Points¹¹ (NRPs) and land use changes,¹² as some examples.

For all the requirements, there are different deadlines depending on the priority rating and, as well, the regulations differ depending on land use, farm size and farming type. For example farmers with only sheep and/or dairy goats do not need to fence off waterways, although they are encouraged to do this as part of good practice.

2.4 SUB CATCHMENT PLANNING

Plan Change 1 also provides for 'sub-catchment planning'. Sub catchment planning is described in Policy 9 (p.33) as follows:

**Policy 9: Sub-catchment (including edge of field) mitigation planning, co-ordination and funding /
Te Kaupapa Here 9: Te whakarite mahi whakangāwari, mahi ngātahi me te pūtea mō te riu kōawāwa (tae atu ki ngā taitapa)**

Take a prioritised and integrated approach to sub-catchment water quality management by undertaking sub-catchment planning, and use this planning to support actions including edge of field mitigation measures. Support measures that efficiently and effectively contribute to water quality improvements. This approach includes:

- a. Engaging early with tangata whenua and with landowners, communities and potential funding partners in sub-catchments in line with the priority areas listed in Table 3.11-2; and
- b. Assessing the reasons for current water quality and sources of contaminant discharge, at various scales in a sub-catchment; and
- c. Encouraging cost-effective mitigations where they have the biggest effect on improving water quality; and
- d. Allowing, where multiple farming enterprises contribute to a mitigation, for the resultant reduction in diffuse discharges to be apportioned to each enterprise in accordance with their respective contribution to the mitigation and their respective responsibility for the ongoing management of the mitigation¹³.

The implementation method relevant to Policy 9 is described as follows:

3.11.4.5 Sub-catchment scale planning/Te whakamāherehere mō te whānuitanga o ngā riu kōawaawa

Waikato Regional Council will work with others to develop sub-catchment scale plans (where a catchment plan does not already exist) where it has been shown to be required. Sub-catchment scale planning will:

¹⁰ The proposed plan change states that water bodies must be fenced to exclude cattle, horses, deer and pigs, unless those animals are prevented from entering the bed of the water body by a stock-proof natural barrier formed by topography or vegetation. There are setback requirements which differ depending on the degree of slope, and as well there are stock crossing requirements. <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/infosheets/fencing-waterways-and-stock-exclusion/>

¹¹ Nitrogen Reference Point' (NRP) refers to information on a property's nitrogen leaching losses, calculated using OVERSEER®, or another approved model. Under the proposed plan change, properties with an area (or cumulative area) greater than 20ha and all commercial vegetable growers will generally be required to calculate an NRP. <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/infosheets/nitrogen-reference-points/>

¹² i.e. Changing the use of land on a property to a more intensive activity may require a resource consent. The land use change rule applies when the new land use is more intensive than the land use on 22 October 2016, and when the net change in area exceeds 4.1ha. www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/infosheets/land-use-change/

¹³ Waikato Regional Council. (2016). *Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1*, www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/plans-under-development/healthy-rivers-plan-for-change/read-the-proposed-plan-change/, p.33

- a. Identify the causes of current water quality decline, identify cost-effective measures to bring about reductions in contaminant discharges, and coordinate the reductions required at a property, enterprise and sub-catchment scale (including recommendations for funding where there is a public benefit identified).
- b. Align works and services to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and microbial pathogen discharges including riparian management, targeted reforestation, constructed wetlands, sediment traps and sediment detention bunds.
- c. Assess and determine effective and efficient placement of constructed wetlands at a sub-catchment scale to improve water quality.
- d. Support research that addresses the management of wetlands, including development of techniques to monitor ecological change and forecasting evolution of wetland characteristics resulting from existing land use in the wetland catchments.
- e. Integrate the regulatory requirements to fence waterways with the requirements for effective drainage scheme management.
- f. Coordinate funding of mitigation work by those contributing to water quality degradation, in proportion to that contribution.
- g. Utilise public funds to support edge of field mitigations where those mitigations provide significant public benefit¹⁴.

As noted earlier there are a number of initiatives that have begun in the sub catchments since Plan Change 1 was notified. Some of these have been industry-led. For example Beef + Lamb have been providing a range of workshops for farmers in the catchments, as well as online information and resources for farmers. WRC has also been working in the catchment and with industry partners, both before and after Plan Change 1¹⁵ was notified, providing workshops, support and advice and with accessing and/or provision of funding to undertake mitigation works.

2.5 THE THREE INITIATIVES

There are three 'initiatives' that are the focus of this research, each located in a different sub catchment. These sub catchments are Whangape, Upper Pūniu and Whirinaki. Beef + Lamb are supporting two of these initiatives (the Whangape and Upper Pūniu ones), whilst WRC is supporting one in the Whirinaki catchment.

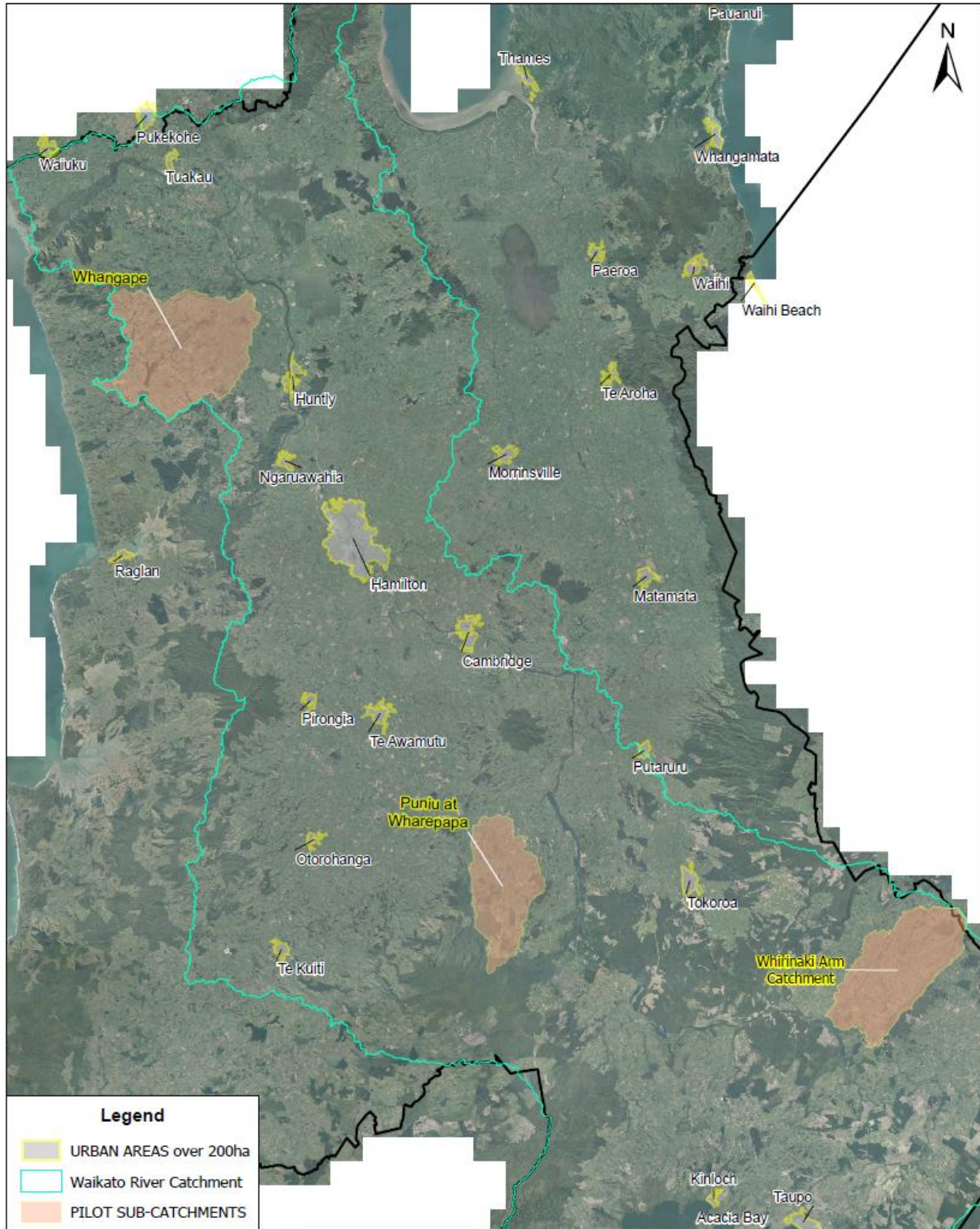
The two Beef + Lamb initiatives are being supported by a co-ordinator who has been contracted by the Mid Northern North Island Farmer Council (MNNIFC). The initiative in the Whirinaki began in 2017 with a focus on sediment and erosion management and has an established working group of farmer leaders, WRC and iwi representation.

These three initiatives are all at different stages of development and have different foci, components and approaches and as well, are geographically different areas with different soil types, land use, priority ratings and funding opportunities. Figure 2 (page8) shows the location of each sub catchment, and the following chapters present findings and answers to the research questions, for each initiative separately.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.37.

¹⁵ For example, WRC began, in 2005, an Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) pilot project which worked to assist farmers to develop individual FEPs. WRC advisors have continued to work with farmers, and industry-good partners in regards to implementing on-farm actions and in 2013 WRC worked with industry-good partners, to develop 'menus' of best practice guidelines for farmers. As well WRC has had a range of different funding opportunities (e.g. Clean Streams funding) for farmers and has been actively working in the catchment to access WRA funding for sub catchment initiatives..

FIGURE 2: MAP OF SUB CATCHMENT LOCATIONS



Legend

- URBAN AREAS over 200ha
- Waikato River Catchment
- PILOT SUB-CATCHMENTS

Acknowledgements and Disclaimers

© Waikato Regional Council 2013. Puniu and Whangape catchment extents derived from Healthy Rivers: Plan for Change / Wai Ora: He Rautaki Whakapaipai Data. Licensed under CC BY 4.0.

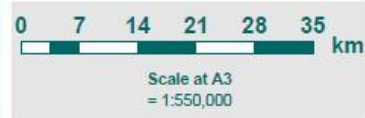
© Waikato Regional Council 2004-2012. Whirinaki catchment extent derived from WRC REC Catchment/ Watercourse/ Watershed data.

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**PILOT SUB-CATCHMENTS
Waikato Region.**



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Date: 9/05/2019
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File:
REQ148730_Pilot_SubCatchm



3.0 WHANGAPE: FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The following presents information gathered from interviews with Whangape farmer participants and those involved with the Whangape initiative in some capacity as well as reviews of the plans and documents about the initiative. Information presented is related to the two evaluation objectives and research questions and includes: (i) Description of the Initiative; and (ii) Strengths, Challenges and Learning Opportunities.

Notes about the data:

- i. There are some overlaps between the Whangape and the Upper Pūniu sub catchment findings as the same co-ordinator works across both and as well, some stakeholder interviewees are involved with both catchments. Therefore, some findings that are reported here are also reported in Chapter 4.0. Where relevant and practical¹⁶, in the following sections, clarification is made as to whether the interviewee is local (from the Whangape) or working across both the sub catchments.
- ii. Interview quotes are in *italics* and/or when quoted in a paragraph are in double quotation marks “ ”. Excerpts from documents are indented and non-italic and/or when quoted in a paragraph are in single quotation marks ‘ ’ and are referenced in a footnote.
- iii. Every effort has been made to preserve the confidentiality of interviewees including, where needed, changing some of the minor details in quotes which could identify an individual.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE WHANGAPE INITIATIVE

3.2.1 WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WHANGAPE?

The Whangape sub catchment is located in the north western part of the catchment (see Figure 2, page 8) and is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 1 area.

A feature of the Whangape sub catchment is Lake Whangape, which is located northwest of Huntly and is the second largest lake in the lower Waikato Catchment. The sub catchment was described by one interviewee as “a larger, circular catchment [which] has waterways coming from different sides and leading into the lake” and that “the lake is the receiving environment in the Whangape. This then goes out to the Waikato River catchment.”

According to the WRC, Lake Whangape ‘has a surface area of 1,450 hectares, an average depth of 1.5 metres and a maximum depth of 3.5 metres’ and ‘drains to the Waikato River via the Whangape Stream.’ The lake’s catchment area is 35,000ha and is ‘mostly pastoral, although the lake has received inflows from coal mining in the past.’¹⁷

The water quality in the lake was described in 1988 as ‘eutrophic with reasonably clear water,’¹⁸ but has deteriorated since that time and is now described as ‘hypertrophic (i.e. very nutrient enriched).’ There

¹⁶ Note that every effort has been made to protect the identity of those who were interviewed. This means that in some situations it is not possible to clarify whether an interviewee is from the local area or works across the two sub catchments, as to do so would identify that person.

¹⁷ <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/Environment/Natural-resources/Water/Lakes/Shallow-lakes-of-the-Waikato-region/Riverine-lakes/Lake-Whangape/>

¹⁸ *ibid*

are current works within the sub catchment to restore the lake including a multi-agency initiative which began in 2018 and will include fencing, planting and weed management.¹⁹

3.2.2 HOW DID THE INITIATIVE DEVELOP?

The Whangape initiative is characterised by having a co-ordinator who has been seed funded by the MNNIFC. Prior to the appointment of the co-ordinator there had been some work in the sub catchment being carried out by WRC and Beef + Lamb. Beef + Lamb was undertaking extension work in the sub catchment, including providing FEP workshops for farmers, and working with farmers and Farmer Councils to provide extension work, understand needs and support farmers.

WRC farm advisors were also in the sub catchment. They had started ‘door knocking’ in the area, around the time of the Plan Change 1 notification, in order to engage with farmers, discuss the proposed Plan Change 1 and provide information. The WRC staff were focused on engaging with the dry stock farmers in particular, and this was primarily because this sector was one that they had, at that point, been less successful in engaging with.²⁰ WRC followed the ‘door knocking’ with a series of ‘risks and mitigations’ workshops within the sub catchment, and in total an estimated six risks and mitigations workshops have been run to date, in the Whangape sub catchment.

At the time that WRC had begun their ‘door knocking’, post the Plan Change 1 notification (late 2016), a number of farmers in the sub catchment were actively getting together with their neighbours to talk about Plan Change 1. Interviewees noted that the time immediately following the notification of Plan Change 1 was difficult. It was described by various interviewees as a time when people were scared, confused and angry, but it was also a catalyst for sub catchment groups to start forming.

Regulations were coming and so there was a lot of people confused and scared about what it meant. That was the original reason [why the group got together].

As soon as PC1 was tabled ‘all hell broke loose.’

Through 2017 and 2018, Beef + Lamb and WRC were running workshops in the sub catchment, and farmer groups were forming to assist each other to write submissions and/or FEPs. As a result of the various processes, workshops, meetings, groups and discussions that were occurring, interviewees noted that farmers were becoming more involved, and were seeking to “to understand and be empowered to address the issues” that both Plan Change 1 and other factors (e.g. market trends²¹) were raising.

By early 2018, there were some sub catchment groups in the Whangape, being led by farmers, Beef + Lamb and WRC were providing extension work and the MNNIFC was involved, working to provide support for the farmers on the ground as needed. One farmer group had become an incorporated society and successfully applied for Waikato River Authority (WRA) funding in 2018 for poplar pole planting.²²

¹⁹ Source: WRC media release, *Multi-agency project to restore Lake Whangape kicks off*, 20 Sep 2018.

<http://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/community/whats-happening/news/media-releases-recent/multi-agency-project-to-restore-lake-whangape-kicks-off/>

²⁰ Note that as was mentioned earlier, WRC had been working with farmers and industry partners to encourage on farm change using FEPs and other tools, for a number of years prior to PC1. Whilst there were dry stock farmers and industry partners involved in these initiatives, the uptake was higher in the dairy sector, helped in part by the industry standards being required from, for example, Fonterra.

²¹ Note that a number of interviewees referenced that they were becoming aware via groups like the Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP) of market trends away from meat products and/or a growing consumer trend towards wanting to know where their products were coming from and to be assured that products were being grown sustainably with respect for the environment, for example.

²² WRA funded projects, 2018, Application 18-055, <https://www.waikatoriver.org.nz/funded-projects/funded-projects-2018/>

During 2018, farmers from the sub catchment worked with WRC staff and using sub catchment maps identified eight potential sub-groups or ‘hubs’ in the Whangape sub catchment. The ‘groups’ were based around features such as geography, land use, natural ‘community’²³ areas, and groups that had already established within the sub catchment.

Discussions around support options identified the need for a sub catchment ‘co-ordinator’ role to help get more groups going and to support those already in place. Members of the MNNIFC put forward a proposal and the MNNIFC agreed to seed fund a part time²⁴ co-ordinator position. The role of the co-ordinator was to assist the groups that were already in place to keep their momentum and to “support the emergence and formation of sub-catchment groups”²⁵ with the initial focus being on the Whangape and also the Upper Pūniu catchments.

A recruitment process was undertaken and a co-ordinator was appointed in mid 2018 for an initial period of six months and to work in both Whangape and Upper Pūniu²⁶ sub catchments.

3.2.3 WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

The initiative in the Whangape is a farmer-led, extension approach, with a co-ordinator who has been seed funded by the MNNIFC. The purpose of the approach, as described in the *MNNIFC Sub catchment Extension Approach* document²⁷ is:

To provide a platform to empower landowners to work together to set and improve eco system health limits in different sub catchments. The community will set interim targets, timeframes and work together to form a workable and practical approach which can be implemented by all stake holders by applying good management practices. These will be identified and set by individual environment plans that will be adopted to improve water quality issues in local tributaries and rivers.

The approach includes: ‘assessing and understanding the current water quality and sources of contaminant discharge at various scales’ in the area in order to ‘prioritise mitigations’; using FEPs to enable landowners to implement mitigations, creating, as a community, agreed eco system health limits, and enabling sharing of knowledge and resources and collective, collaborative approaches to mitigations as appropriate. Effectiveness is assessed by ‘monitoring changes on farm and tracking changes in water quality and eco system health targets over time’ and following through the implementation of environment plans set by the individual businesses.²⁸

There are eight stages to the approach and these are as follows:

- Stage 1: Identifying sub catchments and leaders
- Stage 2: Set up water quality monitoring
- Stage 3: Developing a community plan
- Stage 4: Complete an environment plan
- Stage 5: Develop a community sub catchment story
- Stage 6: Complete OVERSEER modeling
- Stage 7: Show and tell

²³ Community areas meaning areas in which people are already connected and know each other.

²⁴ 24 hours per week across both catchments.

²⁵ Beef + Lamb NZ *Farmer Led Catchment and Environment Leadership Initiatives*. Available online <https://beeflambnz.com/catchments>

²⁶ The Upper Pūniu Initiative is discussed in Chapter 4.0.

²⁷ The Beef and Lamb New Zealand MNNIFC Sub catchment Extension Approach is a working document which outlines the purpose, approach and stages of the project.

²⁸ Excerpts from The Beef and Lamb New Zealand MNNIFC Sub catchment Extension Approach.

➤ Stage 8: Reassess community plan²⁹

The Stages listed above are essentially ‘chronological’, however there is also some overlap. For example Stage 2 water quality monitoring will get set up, sites will be identified and then testing will take place at regular intervals over time, overlapping with other activities. As well, Stage 4 involves farmers developing FEPs and as noted in the previous section (3.2.2), farmers across the sub catchment are at different stages of this already with some having completed their FEPS and some not yet started.

In terms of what has been happening in the Whangape initiative, from mid-2018 to 31st March 2019:

- The co-ordinator has made contact with the farmer groups already in operation and with farmer leaders from other parts of the sub catchment (Stage 1);
- Key farmer leaders in the hubs and the sub catchment are being identified (Stage 1);
- The co-ordinator has built up contact email lists and continues to work on meeting farmers and adding to the contacts (Stage 1);
- The eight identified sub catchment ‘hubs’ have evolved into five sub catchment hubs; this has come about through the process of working with the community and the groups who have essentially ‘joined’ themselves together where there are ‘natural’ community links (Stage 1);
- WRC has agreed to fund the water quality monitoring in both Whangape and Upper Pūniu for 12 months (Stage 2);³⁰
- Eleven water quality monitoring sites have been identified and the co-ordinator³¹ has completed one round of testing³² (for water quality and invertebrates) as well as an overall high level catchment scale assessment (Stage 2);
- The co-ordinator has facilitated about 12 different events in the sub catchment including: five sub catchment workshops (one in each hub), risks and mitigations workshops, two water quality monitoring workshops; and had hui with at least two of the groups about funding (Stage 3);
- The co-ordinator has identified funding options and provided this to the groups, and is assisting some of the groups with funding applications (Stage 3);
- A number of farmers have completed their FEPS and others have attended FEP workshops and are working on completing their FEPs (Stage 4).

Overall, as the above sections outline, the Whangape initiative has been ‘developing’ at least since 2016 with WRC and Beef + Lamb extension work and farmers getting together, forming groups, writing submissions and FEPs and gaining funding for actions. In mid- 2018, a sub catchment co-ordinator was employed part time to further extend the work with an ‘8 stage’ approach, of which key aspects of Stages 1- 4 have been occurring up to 31 March 2019 including workshops, hui and water quality monitoring as well as overall co-ordinating and building relationships. The initiative is characterised by having between five and eight farmer-led groups or ‘hubs’ some of which have been in place for some time, and others that are just starting to form.

3.3 STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As part of evaluating the process, a series of interviews were undertaken with farmer participants, the co-ordinator, Beef + Lamb, MNNIFC and WRC staff, advisors and/or representatives involved with the

²⁹ Excerpts from The Beef and Lamb New Zealand MNNIFC Sub catchment Extension Approach.

³⁰ Note that one of the activities in Stage 2 was to seek funding for the water quality monitoring. WRC agreed to fund this for 12 months.

³¹ Although not a ‘requirement’ of the role specifically, the co-ordinator is a qualified freshwater ecologist and as such is able to undertake the water quality monitoring and assessments.

³² The intention is to sample four times per annum for water quality, two times per annum for invertebrates, over a 12 month period, and to do an overall assessment of habitat health for each site (e.g. shade, erosion, substrate, habitats, flow, fenced off etc.).

sub catchment. The following presents findings from the interviews in relation to the research questions and the objectives.

3.3.1 WHY ARE PEOPLE INVOLVED?

One of the key questions asked of those who were involved with the sub catchment group/s as well as those who were working with farmers in the sub catchment was, “Why are people involved?” The following sections cover: (i) reasons for getting involved; (ii) advantages of being involved; and (iii) risks of not being involved.

3.3.1.1 REASONS FOR GETTING INVOLVED

Interviewees reported that there were a number of reasons why farmers had got involved with the initiative. Key themes that emerged as reasons for getting involved included: (i) Plan Change 1 being notified; (ii) wanting to take control and (iii) a sense of ownership.

PLAN CHANGE 1

As noted earlier, Plan Change 1 was one of the main catalysts for farmers to meet together, to go to workshops and meetings to get information and for sub catchment groups to start forming. Interviewees noted that for some people Plan Change 1 was a ‘negative’ motivator; that is they were angry, concerned or upset about what was being proposed and/or opposed to the proposed plan, so they went to meetings and workshops to find out more, and to voice their concerns, and some wrote submissions, individually and/or jointly, on the proposed plan. For example:

I got involved with the Healthy Rivers thing and went to a bunch of Beef + Lamb funded events to find out more about that. I ended up involved with it from that perspective.

[We] put individual submissions and a group submission to the regional council.

TAKING CONTROL

In terms of what people wanted from the initiative, a key theme to come through was that for a number of the farmers there was often a shift in perspective once they had started to get involved. Interviewees noted that farmers might have initially wanted to ‘fight’ the proposed plan, but had shifted their views as a result of getting involved in the groups and workshops. Some of the reasons that were given for this shift were an increase in knowledge and understanding of the issues (i.e. water quality), a recognition that there was a problem, that this was nationally driven (i.e. not just WRC-driven) and that it was not going to go away (i.e. regulations were coming), leading to wanting to ‘take control’, ‘be ahead of the game’ and in some cases ‘buy in and ownership.’

[We] wrote a submission [about PC1] and took it to regional council and were opposed to what they were doing – but [we] have come around to [understanding what the issues are and decided we are] not going to beat them, [so we] have to join them. The more we can do to help ourselves the better. It is nationally driven and [we] can see the need for that.

Initially [the groups are] being set up to satisfy the central government’s directive to regional council. If we can get people to understand and cope and deal with that [the new requirements and directives that are happening] and where it goes from there is secondary really.

We want to get some understanding as farmers – understand what the issues are and let’s get ahead of the game and do some stuff. That was a motivator.

As the following quote illustrates, a need to ‘take control’ was a key theme and is one of the underlying intentions of the extension approach; that is to be farmer-led and farmer-driven to enable farmers to be the drivers of the change in their catchments and on their farms.

You can't just bury your heads about this – if we can take control and approach it from a sub catchment view then we can [be ahead of the game].

OWNERSHIP AND BUY-IN

Getting to a stage of ‘buy in’ or ownership was another theme that emerged. A couple of interviewees likened the process to a ‘journey’; that is farmers might start off concerned about what is being asked of them or what they think is being asked of them and/or be ‘anti regional council’ or feeling like they are being blamed and so you have to start from there, work through the concerns and relate this to their farm:

We need to take the people with us. ... They have to be ‘led’ - in laymen terms – [to] where they can relate to their farm and enterprise – there is a journey or a process to get them [there].

Got to get inside the average Jo Farmer's head – and understand where they are coming from.

I think that everybody is on a different learning plane. I know myself – if I go back six or seven years. You feel offended first of all. Feel like you're being blamed.

The following quote provides an example of a ‘journey process’ as experienced by one group, where getting together on farms to discuss water quality and issues and working out solutions, was part of the catalyst for a shift into a sense of ownership, of wanting to make a difference and be part of the solution.

Regulations were coming and so there were a lot of people confused and scared about what it meant. That was the original reason [why the group got together] but that has been overtaken now by the ownership that farmers have about water quality, environment and soil conservation. Now it's not about regulation, it's now part of us. Belongs to us.

How did that happen, that it became ‘part of you?’

Because we physically met together on farms and started to talk about the water and the issues. Farmers were then seeing what an issue was and making suggestions [about solutions]. Then people knew they had value to add – then they stepped forward. When we physically met together on farms to discuss these sorts of things [is when the process of connecting and ownership began to happen].

3.3.1.2 ADVANTAGES OF BEING INVOLVED

Interviewees were asked to comment on the advantages of being involved in a sub catchment group. Themes that emerged included: (i) a sense of community; (ii) feeling empowered; (iii) access to support; and (iv) being able to tell good stories.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Interviewees commented on how the process of being involved in the sub catchment groups was providing a sense of community, of working together, and being ‘all in this together’:

The FEP workshops – I found them really good. The level of support from [facilitator, other farmers] and Beef and+ Lamb has been really good. They have been excellent. It's good to have the [FEP]

template and the understanding, and also can see those who got to it [and started work] and you can see what they're doing. It keeps you motivated as well – with others there. A sense of 'we're all in this together'. [A sense of] community.

FEELING EMPOWERED

Interviewees gave examples of how being involved in the initiative had led to feelings of being empowered and more in control through learning about the issues, understanding waterway health and starting to see what they could do, on farm.

[The co-ordinator] - she has come out and organised a couple of water quality testing days – where we've gone out on farm and [she has shown us] 'this is how you use the kits' and 'this is what you're looking for' – which is cool. This empowered people – because some of this we can do ourselves.

As noted earlier some interviewees were had become involved in a sub catchment group, so they could be 'ahead of the game' by having FEPs completed, and actions started before the rules become mandatory and again this enabled more control over what was happening:

... get your FEP done up to a stage where when they open the gates to be signed off then you are ready to go and they can be submitted and signed off. I'm saying to these guys: you put the time in now – you can do so much of this stuff yourself instead of paying a consultant yourself. Farmers hate paying for stuff that they feel they can do themselves – but they also hate paperwork. It's hard for some people to deal with.

[It's about] getting something in place before it becomes mandatory.

ACCESS TO SUPPORT

In addition to the 'paperwork' getting done, another advantage was the access to workshops, expert advice, assistance, and funding:

Yes you have to do this but if you do it now then you can access some funding.³³

The way [farmer leader] talks [to farmers] is: 'You need to come [to a meeting]. You can do stuff and it's free money – you'd be an idiot not to come.'

We are also looking at accessing some funding for [a] project. [The co-ordinator] has done a bit of work, looking at that side and come back to us with all these funding options.

There was a rep from Regional Council there as well. [He took] several of the workshops and he's really good.

HAVING GOOD STORIES

Interviewees also noted that an advantage of getting involved was to be able to tell some 'good stories'. There was concern expressed that the 'public' viewed farmers in a negative light and this was upsetting, and that an outcome of the initiative could be the possibility to highlight the good work that farmers are doing for the rivers. Stage 7 of the extension approach is 'show and tell' and this is an opportunity to

³³ Note that some of the available funding (e.g. Waikato River Authority (WRA) funding) is only for actions that are not required for compliance. What this means is that farmers can apply for funding from WRA for example, to undertake works (e.g. poplar poles, fencing, planting) which are 'extra' to any regulatory requirements. Once Plan Change 1 becomes operational, some of these actions will be required for compliance which will make them ineligible for some funding sources, therefore farmers who wait may find themselves having to fund more of the work from their own businesses than they would have had to if they had started the works prior and applied for funding.

share what has been happening³⁴ to increase buy in from the wider community, however, this could have the added advantage for farmers of being positive 'PR' for the sector.

The idea of farmers 'ruining the environment' – it is upsetting. But this kind of thing [the sub catchment initiative and work being carried out] is 'good PR' – so they [media] can give a clearer picture [to the public]. I live on our farm - I don't want to look out on a desolate wasteland. There is some 'good stories'. There are areas on our farm where we have fenced off and planted native bush – and [we are] really proud of it.

3.3.1.3 RISKS OF NOT GETTING INVOLVED

Interviewees were also asked about what they thought were the risks of *not* getting involved. Key themes that emerged were (i) financial and (ii) being caught out.

FINANCIAL

An identified key risk of not being involved was financial. As the following quote acknowledges, regulations are coming and there is a risk of being penalised for non-compliance and/or being forced to make changes and put mitigations in place at personal cost with a shorter timeframe. By acting now and being involved with the sub catchment planning initiative, there is more time to undertake the actions, with added advantage of access to advice, resources, and funding.

I think the risks of not getting involved – there is going to be something that comes in for non-compliance (like not having an FEP or having big risk areas on farm) and I don't know how it will be enforced – but it will come down to an audit. I know with the dairy companies they won't pick up your milk if you're non compliant, or there are penalties. I don't know what The Works [i.e. meat processing factories] might do. For me it's a financial risk.

BEING CAUGHT OUT

Another identified risk of not being involved was 'being caught out' when regulations come in and having to complete tasks (e.g. FEPs, mitigations) with a shorter timeframe and less resources. Being involved in the sub catchment group, completing FEPs and starting to undertake some mitigation works, even though there was still some uncertainty about the final requirements (e.g. NRP), was enabling them to be 'forearmed'. It was giving them more time to consider and plan ahead for their business, more time to complete FEPs, start on mitigations and farm system changes and have more resources to assist them.

... I do wonder about the NRP – in terms of capping your productivity – but if you don't know [your NRP] then you will get caught out at the end – forewarned is forearmed – if you didn't get involved, then you will come to a point where you are forced to do it, with small timeline and by yourself. If you get involved now then you have support and resources and other people to help you.

3.3.2 WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT?

As noted earlier the Whangape initiative is characterised by having some farmer-led groups which have been in place for some time, and others that are just starting to form. So there are some farmers who have been actively involved in getting together, setting up groups, writing submissions, writing their

³⁴ Note that one of the examples of sub catchment planning and which this extension approach is modelled on to some extent, is the work of the Pomahaka Water Care group who have a website, newsletter and a video about the work that they have done. This is an example of how the 'positive stories' can be shared to increase buy in.

FEPs, attending workshops, making changes, planning and undertaking actions³⁵ and seeking funding, since Plan Change 1 was notified in 2016 while others are just starting to become involved since the co-ordinator was appointed.

All those who were interviewed were engaged in the initiative in some way and as such there were no non-engagers interviewed as part of the evaluation. However those who were interviewed, whether they were farmers, the co-ordinator, or staff from Beef + lamb or WRC had all been working to engage other farmers in the process, and as such had some insights into why some people did not get involved.

3.3.2.1 WHY PEOPLE DO NOT GET INVOLVED

There were a number of key themes that emerged as to why people did not engage. The key themes that emerged as to why people in the Whangape had or did not engage were: (i) 'someone else will do it for me' (i.e. letting others do the work); (ii) still fighting/ arguing about the changes; (iii) uncertainty about the rules, waiting to find out what will be required first; (iv) in denial, do not think there is a problem; (v) cannot be bothered; and (vii) being too busy.

Basically there is two reasons. One is those who think 'somebody else is going to do this for me.' Then the other reason is that there are still people who are hung up on the political side of it, with what's going – arguing the finer points of the RMA – rather than doing on farm practice to improve water quality.

I think some people are just – a lot of it is the uncertainty of what is going to be required – so people are saying, 'you are trying to do too much when you don't know what the rules will be.'

Some people can't be bothered – and they will be the people who will not have their t's crossed and i's dotted [when the rules come].

Some people – it genuinely is time – we have one guy who is a contractor and is run off his feet at the moment.

Other themes that were identified were by those who worked across the two catchments and as such were relevant to both the Whangape and the Upper Pūniu as potential reasons for non-engagement. These themes were: (i) feeling threatened and attacked; (ii) uncertainty about the rules, waiting to find out what will be required first; (iii) in denial, do not think there is a problem; (iv) too busy; (v) prefer to work alone; (vi) do not see the benefit / opportunity; (vii) misinformation; and (viii) have already been proactive and undertaken a lot of work themselves.

We have some who have stormed out of the meeting "I'm not doing this!"

Some people are laggards that have their head in the sand.

Farmers would all have their own reasons: some may be uncertain about the rules so don't want to engage until they are clear about what is required. They don't want to duplicate [do something which is not needed] or don't want to have to 'redo' things in the future so there is that level of uncertainty. Some 'don't play so well with others.' Some may have done a whole lot of stuff themselves anyway [so don't need to be involved in this]. Some may want to do their own thing, or

³⁵ Note that 'actions' in this instance, encompasses a range of possible mitigations from physical works such as fencing waterways, building bunds, creating wetlands, planting poplar poles as well as on farm 'system' changes such as stock rotation, fertiliser application, cropping practices, as some examples.

some maybe don't think there is a problem and for those ones they will get 'picked up' by the rules and compliance.

Some haven't or won't attend the meetings. Some won't see any value in turning up. There will always be people who don't participate. There is therefore gaps in information and communication in those communities. [Why?] Because they don't see a direct a benefit to themselves. They might feel they are already doing a good job so don't need to be in another programme. They may be waiting to see what comes out of the hearings – why invest in this voluntary process when they might have to invest in something else? That is a risk to [being involved] – if it comes out that sub catchment planning is 'nice and fluffy' but you still have to meet the outcomes and whether they are in a sub catchment group is not 'necessary'. [Some are] overwhelmed and don't have time. Feeling threatened and attacked [by PC1], who are struggling – don't have time and energy to engage in the process.

It's a hard one that [why people do not engage]. We talked about that [at a meeting] the other day. A lot are in their own little world and don't want to engage in this stuff. The majority of them – they are not the ones that are looking to improve and grow their business [just farming how they always have] – they don't realise there's an opportunity there.

There has been a lot of misinformation – for example, some farmers who planted a waterway [a few years ago] and then [they get told now] 'you planted things too close. Farmers pick that up and that annoys them. That's all part of the reason why there is some push back.

As one interviewee noted, for some of those who are not choosing to engage, the time will come when they will be 'forced' to make changes in order to continue their business either from peer pressure, market pressure and /or regulatory pressure.

The pressure is coming from the marketplace – and they aren't going to like that. That will change. It's coming quicker than they think. You have that pressure and the regional council pressure. There has to be 'the stick' to sweep those guys up. If the peer pressure doesn't get them then [the 'stick' will]

3.3.2.2 WHAT ENABLES ENGAGEMENT

Previous sections have covered some of the reasons why people became involved in sub catchment groups in the Whangape and as noted, Plan Change 1 was a catalyst for many farmers and as a result there are some groups who emerged and have been active since 2016, whilst others have become involved more recently in getting together as part of a group. Interviewees were asked to comment on what helps people to become involved, to engage in these types of initiatives. Key themes that emerged were (i) farmer leaders; (ii) connecting back to the farm; and (iii) listening to farmers.

FARMER LEADERS

It was clear from the interviews that there were usually one or two key people (i.e. farmer leaders) who helped with getting a group started, either recently or back in 2016/2017. The effectiveness of 'farmers talking to farmers' was highlighted by one interviewee who noted that people went to a workshop because they respected the person who had asked them to go.

They respected [the farmer who spoke to them] a bit. [S/he] said they'd learn a bit about PC 1 and how it affects them and that's why they turned up initially [to the workshop].

Another interviewee commented tongue in cheek, on how getting farmer neighbours to get involved was often a combination of ‘bribery and fear mongering’.

Quite lot of bullying and nagging! Sometimes there’s lunch or baking. The way [farmer leader] talks [to farmers] is: ‘You need to come – you can do stuff and it’s free money – you’d be an idiot not to come.’ It’s a struggle because people are always busy – but we are [all] busy and that doesn’t mean that this will go away. It’s a combination of bribery and fear mongering. ‘You can ignore this as much as you want but the deadlines are coming up.’

What the above quotes highlight is the importance of farmer leaders in fostering engagement amongst other farmers and recognise that ‘farmers trust other farmers’; a feature that has been identified in a range of research.³⁶

CONNECTING BACK TO THE FARM

Other interviewees spoke about needing to understand where the farmers are coming from and relating the issues back to their farm and their business:

I think you have to understand where [farmers] are coming from. They switched on the other day [at a workshop] quite quickly as to [what this was about]. They might have come [to the workshop] quite anti to regional council, but understood after a short time what was required. They have to be led - in laymen terms – [to] where they can relate to their farm and enterprise. There is a journey or a process to get them to where [we] want them to be. They need to be gently led. You have got to go ‘ABCD’. ... Once they’re on board that’s great. Got to get inside the average Jo Farmer’s head – and understand where they are coming from. It’s all new to them – to hill country guys – they have stock drinking water from streams and they throw their hands up in horror – ‘I have to fence all this off!’

Another stakeholder interviewee summed up the impact of making the connections by being on farm and identifying the issues:

[The co-ordinator] is empowering farmers – she’s a freshwater ecologist – when farmers understand the health (of invertebrates, fish). It’s very powerful. Talk to them about ‘modelling and numbers’ –they don’t give a rat’s arse about that – get into their own rohe – get them to take pride in their streams - then they will take responsibility. That’s how [the co-ordinator] is enlightening them.

LISTENING TO FARMERS

The importance of listening to farmers and as a result of that enabling them to be connected to the issues and to have ownership was also emphasised:

I think [the farmers] are feeling a lack of connection. They have to be taken on a journey – if they feel that they are understood and connected – they’ll travel the journey. Wouldn’t hurt to lay out where you want to end up. Don’t know if you can broadly say: ‘This is where we want to get to. If

³⁶ For example Alison Bailey noted in her 2018 article in *The Journal*: “Trust is thus an important factor in innovation adoption and plays an important role in determining whether information or advice is acted upon. Information and advice provision is thus most effective when delivered by trusted individuals. It is generally recognised that the most trusted individuals are other farmers, scientists and vets. The least trusted are regional councils. This has implications for the dissemination of information and advice about policy implementation.” Bailey, Alison, (2018) Enhancing the role of farmer advisory networks – the Agricultural Knowledge and Information System (AKIS) then and now. *The Journal: The Official Publication of The New Zealand Institute of Primary Industry Management Incorporated.*, 22(3) September, pp34-38.

you follow these [steps] you can comply, and there are benefits for the streams and land and farming.’ It is very important that they [farmers] feel part of the process.

Ask them – what they would like – then work from there – then you have them on your side. They’ll have ownership then.

The Farmers need to own it. Then we’ll get some runs on the board.

If farmers realise that it would be farmers driving it with the support of the ‘experts’ [they would get involved]. [Farmers] don’t want to be told by regional council, ‘this is your rule.’

Overall, as one interviewee summed up, in terms of farmer involvement, there is a need to be flexible and ‘take the people with us’ in order to achieve the desired results:

It’s a work in progress and it’s new so we have to be flexible and take the people with us so they can see the benefits then they’ll attend and be involved and be prepared to do the work that is required.

3.3.3 WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR ROLE?

As described in section 2.2 the Whangape initiative has a co-ordinator seed-funded by the MNNIFC. Interviewees were asked to comment on the value of having a co-ordinator. Key themes that emerged were (i) support for the co-ordinator and (ii) future options.

3.3.3.1 SUPPORT FOR THE CO-ORDINATOR

Overall there was unanimous support for the current co-ordinator and support for the role of co-ordinator as part of the initiative. Key themes that emerged were (i) ‘freeing up’ farmer time; (ii) role of farmer leaders; (iii) impact of the co-ordinator; and (iv) co-ordinator skillset.

FREEING UP FARMER TIME

The co-ordinator was valued because they were able to take on tasks that farmers did not have time to do such as, seeking out information, organising workshops, getting farmers engaged and helping with funding applications. Interviewees stated that having a co-ordinator had ‘kept momentum going’ and ‘taken the organising off farmer’s shoulders.’

It’s important because no one farmer has the time to do what [the co-ordinator] is doing.

I think they [the co-ordinator and other workshop facilitators] are vital. They are independent. That’s their job description. The average farmer hasn’t got the time. Life carries on, farmers are busy with the day to day of working and running their business. It just doesn’t happen. Unless you have someone really keen. I said to them years ago I would love to run with this but I haven’t got the energy.

She is talking to people and she goes off [and gets information]. We are also looking at accessing some funding for a project – she has done a bit of work – looking at that side – came back with all these funding options. We have formed a little group to pool our resources and do some group funding stuff. It [being a group] gives you a better chance. She is good at getting information and following up and keeping us on track. That’s been really good.

She’s been good – in her role - having that dedicated time to go away and do these things – because everybody else is busy with their jobs.

It's driven by us farmers on the ground because Beef + Lamb have been very supportive. We have had some momentum but none of us has the ability or time to keep that going. So Beef + Lamb said [they could support us to get a co-ordinator]. It has turned out to be brilliant. It has kept momentum going. It's a pilot programme so we are inventing it as we go along.

If you have [a co-ordinator] employed, they are proactive in getting things off the ground and making sure they continue to run.

ROLE OF FARMER LEADERS

There was still a role for the farmer leaders such as 'cajoling' their neighbours to 'get involved' but they did not have to also do the organising of the workshop, for example.

[Having a co-ordinator is brilliant because] it's taken the organising off the farmers' shoulders. Our role [as farmers] now is to cajole and get our neighbours involved, then we turn up to a workshop or field day] and have real value, we don't have to invent it. [The co-ordinator] has organised it and has a good plan [of what to be doing]. They [farmers] turn up and they get value from the day.

IMPACT OF THE CO-ORDINATOR

In terms of the overall impact and/or effectiveness of the current co-ordinator, an interviewee commented that in their view the activities of the co-ordinator and the other initiative inputs (e.g. FEP workshops) were enabling the farmers in the sub catchment to complete actions, such as FEPs at a higher rate than they would have without that input.

We'll still have people in our group who are scrambling to meet the deadlines but won't have as many as we would have without [the co-ordinator and FEP workshop facilitators].

Other interviewees from across both sub catchments made the point that the current co-ordinator had the necessary skills to work well with the community and the farmers, and was, in their view, doing a really good job.

It's working really well. [The co-ordinator] has been brilliant. She has really good engagement across the sub catchments.

I've seen her with the farmers – she just listens – she won't put her own thing forward too much. It's a good way to go about it.

[The co-ordinator] has been doing a fantastic job. Better than regional council.

CO-ORDINATOR SKILLSET

Interviewees were asked to comment on the skillset needed in a co-ordinator. Key themes that emerged were that co-ordinators needed: (i) administrative and organisational skills; (ii) interpersonal communication skills, (iii) the ability to work with farmers and understand the rural environment; (iv) to be knowledgeable about environmental issues; and (v) to be independent.

... the person would have links to farming, be living in the rural area, be a community person. The main skills would be good administration skills, to be able to fill out applications for funding, be able to get on with farmers, probably be rural and have some knowledge of environmental issues.

It's nice to have somebody from outside our community to run it and to – people get upset about the issue – she kind of deals quite well with that side of it as well.

Although not a requirement of the role, the co-ordinator being a qualified and experienced freshwater ecologist, was viewed as an added advantage as it meant that she could undertake the water quality monitoring, and as well provide learning opportunities for land owners via hands-on workshops and field days about waterway health.

We needed somebody to co-ordinate the mini groups [the sub catchment ‘hubs’] and that is what she [the co-ordinator] has been doing. She has organised some water quality workshops – to get to know people and get them up to speed on what will affect them. That has been good because she has a freshwater water ecology background so she understands that stuff.

[Farmers need to] understand the connections between land and freshwater. [The co-ordinator having] an ecology background is beneficial.

3.3.3.2 FUTURE OPTIONS

The current co-ordinator role is seed funded for six months and there are between five and eight ‘hubs’ or groups in the Whangape, all at different stages. One group has set up as an incorporated society, another is planning to apply for some funding this year (2019) but is not a formal entity and the remaining groups are at earlier stages of development. Interviewees were asked about the need for a co-ordinator in the longer term and as well, their thoughts about options for the long term of the initiative. Key themes that emerged included: (i) need for a co-ordinator; and (ii) future structures.

NEED FOR A CO-ORDINATOR

Interviewees who were working across both the Whangape and the Upper Pūniu considered that there was a need for an ongoing ‘co-ordinator’ role in the medium term, to enable the sub catchment planning and work to continue and to ensure that the groups continued.

Yes [a co-ordination role is needed]. It may not need to be involved or as in-depth – in the future – but there has to be somebody there to see that people don’t lose their way.

At the sub catchment level we need co-ordinators with good admin skills, involved in farming rural – who can keep pushing things along.

I can see the role growing. They [co-ordinators] are vital. We need them to make it work. She is great at filling out the forms for funding. Her umbrella role will need to grow – with people below her – catchment co-ordinators.

In terms of the co-ordination role long term, there was also support from some interviewees from within the Whangape for an ongoing ‘co-ordinator’ role.

Somebody like [the co-ordinator]. We would need somebody like her for awhile – even once you have the FEPs done and ‘healthy rivers’ [PC1] is in place – there is still going to be a need for sub catchment ‘monitoring’³⁷ and I don’t think that anyone would take that on voluntarily. Even if it was [the co-ordinator] but scaled back. Like if we needed, say ‘four meetings a year’ to catch up. It is nice to have [someone with] the time and knowledge. Having someone in that role long term. If her role has had a huge impact then it may be something worthwhile continuing.

³⁷ Note that ‘monitoring’ in this context was about ‘co-ordinating’; i.e. making sure groups were on track and making progress with projects, FEPs and other activities.

Other interviewees considered that an ongoing co-ordinator role would be an item for discussion for the groups and it could be decided to find a way to retain a co-ordinator, or not.

One of the sub catchment groups have an Incorporated Society. We haven't done that with our group yet – just trying to work out if that is the way we go. The challenge will be ... Some people who can see the value of [co-ordinator] will say 'we should find a way to fund her'. But there will be a lot who say 'we've ticked that box, we're good'. We might need to sit down ...[and discuss it].

FUTURE STRUCTURES

Interviewees from the Whangape made some suggestions as to how sub catchment planning could be structured into the future. There was no 'one' model that emerged. Examples included setting up incorporated societies and/or having a subscription-based approach to assist with funding for the administrative and/or co-ordination work either at the sub catchment and/or 'hub' level.

[Our group structure at the moment it is] informal, small scale, but over time I could see that it would grow. At the moment we are comfortable because we have [the co-ordinator] helping and guiding us – so that gives us confidence that we can do this. If we tried to make it formal we'd probably stumble. [The co-ordinator] took us through that – whether we needed to have a formal structure [for a funding application]. We don't [need a formal structure] because we were applying for funding below the \$25k [cut off] amount.

Some interviewees commented that some of the local 'hubs' have their own 'leaders' and for others, leaders would emerge and these leaders may pick up the co-ordination work to some extent, although not necessarily across all the groups (like the co-ordinator does).

I think within a meeting or two we might have talk about 'who's the leading light' to head up a bit of a leadership role – have that a few in the ones out the back – someone to put their hand up – be the leader and the co-ordinator [of the 'hub' group]. That will emerge after a meeting or two.

There was also an understanding that regardless of the structure, there would continue to be administrative work related to the sub catchment group/s. Whilst some of this might be taken on by the farmer leaders in the 'hubs' this was not likely to be a long term option unless it became a paid role. A subscription-based structure was raised as one possible solution to this.

We would need to have some kind of group and some subscription [for our 'hub' group], because somewhere down the track [farmer leaders] would say: 'We're not doing this for free anymore!'

3.3.4 WHAT CHANGES ARE THEY MAKING AS A RESULT OF THE INITIATIVE?

In terms of what changes have been made as a result of the initiative as noted in the description section, the initiative has only been operating (with a co-ordinator) since mid to late 2018 and some 'hubs' are only just starting to get organised. The hubs that have been operating for a longer period of time (e.g. since late 2016) are further ahead in certain activities such as completing FEPs, formalising structures, prioritising actions and seeking funding. Other changes that have occurred as a result of the sub catchment planning initiative include: (i) increased knowledge and understanding; (ii) a shift in thinking; and (iii) actions on farm.

3.3.4.1 INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Interviewees commented on having an increased level of knowledge, awareness and understanding of Plan Change 1 and the work of the WRC.

... I have come around to [understanding]... it [Plan Change] is nationally driven and I can see the need for that

Vital links in the chain. For example, [WRC staff] is a link between the farmer and the regional council; [s/he] can be the go between; these guys are doing their best and we need to work with them.

3.3.4.2 A SHIFT IN THINKING

Another theme that emerged in terms of the impact of the initiative was the 'shift in thinking' that came with being involved. The following interviewee noted that Plan Change 1 was similar to when health and safety legislation changes were first mooted; an initial panic followed by a different way of looking at the farming operation and in the case of the current situation, a shift towards including environmental and sustainable thinking into the farm system which, for future sustainability, was more beneficial than just having an FEP.

It's been going on for so long. It's like when the Health and Safety legislation came in – and everyone panicked – and then you stopped and looked at health and safety on farm. [Plan Change 1 and the sub catchment initiative is] making you think about it – and [now you're] starting to incorporate that environmental / sustainable thinking into what you're doing – which will be more beneficial than an FEP. People need to take step back and look at their farms. I know people who have been doing fencing off – and can step back and be proud of what they've done. When you look at everything that has to be done – it's a mountain – but we can say we have started on it.

Other interviewees also commented and gave examples of how they had observed changes in attitudes in themselves as well as those in their groups.

I can see that we are heading to a really good place with water quality. I notice the change in attitudes – farmers are thinking about things – there is a sense of 'competition' and cohesion - with the neighbours and cohesiveness of the farmers in the area.

The above interviewee continued on to provide an example of how the changes in thinking that they observed might operate in practice:

A farmer might be 'doing something' on farm and thinking: 'I'd better make sure that the stream doesn't get affected. Wouldn't want the neighbour to see that muck come down past their place, then they'll be on to me [with] 'What's going on?'

3.3.4.3 ON FARM ACTIONS

Although the initiative is at the early stages, farmer interviewees could provide examples of on farm actions that they or others in the sub catchment had undertaken, as well as plans for further and/or future changes. These actions included working on FEPs, changes to farm systems and practices such as cropping and stocking rotations as well as physical works such as planting, crossings, water reticulation and fencing.

85-90% of farmers [in our group] have started their environment plan [FEP]. [Doing this] takes the worry off them – about the big compliance thing – if they start it [the FEP process] then they look at their farm in a different perspective.

I've got some thoughts of what we are going to need to do but it's a matter of budgeting – have to fence one or two main creeks. Already have a lot of culverts and crossings and things. Crossings are

already in place. Have to do a bit of extension of water to the higher country. Will work at it over the next year or so.

Some of the groups [in the sub catchment] are doing that – started doing some fencing and planting.

Have started some actions. We, for the last seven or eight years we have been fencing off waterways. We got a subsidy from regional council – so we jumped on that – so that has been quite good. We get subsidies for native plants to do the riparian planting – so we have been doing that anyway. Haven't done anything differently as a result of the workshops – need to deal with some of the 'risk areas' – have been on the radar for the guys for awhile – need to protect some of the hills.

3.3.5 WHAT WORKS AND WHAT HELPS?

As the previous sections have highlighted having a co-ordinator has been key component of the initiative which has enabled it to progress, engaged more farmers, got more groups started and enabled more access to funding opportunities. Analysis of the interview findings identified some of the key factors that enabled the initiative to 'work' as well as what might help.

3.3.5.1 WHAT WORKS

In terms of what works, the following themes emerged:

- Being farmer-led and farmer-driven – i.e. a 'ground-up approach' ensuring that farmers are involved in and driving the process;
- Learning from other groups – to enable sharing information and experiences across the 'hubs';
- Having farmer leaders – to engage with other farmers and encourage involvement;
- Having a skilled co-ordinator – to help with organising, running workshops, accessing information and engaging farmers;
- Setting up water quality testing sites – to provide baseline information for planning and prioritising and to assist with 'buy-in';
- Making connections for farmers – between waterway health and on farm practices;
- Allowing time for the change to occur – to get farmer buy in and to enable farmers to make the on farm changes;
- Having events and activities - to up-skill, provide information, enable farmers to see the 'link' to the environment;
- Support from regional council, Beef + lamb, experts and advisors;
- Funding;
- Access to tools, resources, templates;
- Having a structure; and
- Having FEPs and ensuring that the actions being done / proposed will achieve environmental outcomes.

Interviewees from across the Whangape and Upper Pūniu sub catchments made the following comments:

The key to it is, each time you have a discussion, you need to ask them [farmers] 'what do you want next?' if you go with their suggestions then that is empowering for them.

The main thing – when you're working with the farming community it is good to involve them in the process in a hands-on practical, 'how does this apply on my farm?' because they can help you and

provide you with information. The ecologists, bureaucrats etc don't have all the answers about how to solve this – they need the farmers / landowners to have input. Involve them in a practical way. Keep it real. Don't underestimate the value they can provide.

Really conscious that with the sub catchment approach we have to get the right leaders – people who are interested and can run the groups well and effectively.

It needs a structure and KPIs. Need to ensure that they [farmers] are supported in a way that means they achieve environmental outcomes; farmers need to be enabled and empowered and [it needs to be recognised that they are] on their own journey as well. Need a skilled facilitator who understands these connections³⁸ and someone who understands social behaviour.

The key thing is to have a driver – and that's where [the co-ordinator] is really good – someone who can communicate really well [with famers], understand water quality and can present back to them [farmers]. It's little steps with farmers. Have to put it in a way that farmers understand. Keep it simple and be adaptable.

...Go out on farm with the local farmers – and talk to them about CSAs³⁹ and whole farm systems - then they start to get it.

Don't just focus on water quality – overall waterway health – the 'four nutrients' is lacking – it only looks at a small part of the process. If we just focus on water quality we won't address the problem. Habitat health condition complexity is a massive issue that is underpinning the presence or absence of certain plants in the environment – [and is] easy to measure for people. ... People get lost when talking about water quality – it seems insurmountable and is not clear to them about how they can impact it. Identifying appropriate indicators for their waterways, like habitat health, presence (or absence) of 'critters', planting and soil erosion, and develop them with the community and [these are] things they can relate to – are things they can see and measure.

[Have a] tailorised plan [FEP] for them [farmers] – and they have to own it and do it – it's part of their business plan.

This is a long journey and we need to give farmers time.

I think – all the stuff is going on and the pressure is coming – we can share resources across regions and ideas – we shouldn't go away and work in our silos. We stumbled across [the co-ordinator] and it is working really well.

Interviewees from the Whangape made the following comments:

... as a group we can identify where it would be most effective [to do something that would have the best impact on water quality] and can go to the landowner and say 'how about we do that?' [and because the landowner is on the group then they know what we're talking about and they agree.– So it's more effective because we can go to where it might make the most difference [rather than just] doing something like planting at the gully head [where it may not be as effective].

³⁸ Connections in this instance was about connections of the famers to the land to the farm, to how they work, as well as the connection between landuse and water quality.

³⁹ Critical Source Areas.

We're underway. How do you feed that interest? The patterns of the [more established] groups have been useful and I think if our local [group] can follow that initiative – keep in touch with those groups – where they are going. Share information and experiences.

[Farmers] can share resources, discuss, share information and experience. ...When farmers are looking for information they trust other farmers [first] ... the bottom of the list is regional councils That is part of it [sub catchment groups] getting them to talk because they trust each other. The landscape and the challenges are huge. A farmer knows his own farm better than anyone else.

... you get a big organisation like regional council and they make a blanket assumption out of their findings. They measure the water at the Waikato River [in one place] - but the readings in our area are quite good. The regional council have to have a broader spectrum of analysis – if they can target those areas causing the issues and not lump [all farmers] in as 'bad boys'. ... the sub catchment thing breaks it down, can target problem areas ... [Farmers] want a more truthful, honest assessment of the whole thing and you can do that by targeting your smaller areas and isolating your issues.

I enjoyed [a workshop where we] went on to a farm and looked at an issue and talked about how you would deal with that]. It got people thinking. Myself included.

I'm quite strong on the regional council needing to front up with support – which they are doing in our catchment.

The Beef + Lamb [FEP] template has been supported by regional council – makes it [completing an FEP] manageable. I thought it was a good template.

Experts and advice is useful. Beef + Lamb do a lot of days where you can go along – a day on poplar planting – they do a lot of workshops which are good – so you can 'rock on up' if it interests you – and after having gone to some of these others workshops I would be more likely to go – because know people [i.e. other farmers] a little bit more now.

Vital links in the chain – e.g. [WRC staff member] is a link between the farmer and the regional council. He can be the go between - these guys [WRC staff] are doing their best and we need to work with them.

RMPP⁴⁰ have had action groups going – then you get funding for experts to come and tell you. There is all this – a lot of cool stuff – people getting together and talking about it – then you see the power of these small groups and what you can achieve.

One interviewee in response to the question, “What advice would you give for those in other areas who want to set up sub catchment groups?” provided an outline of a process, as follows, which includes a progression of initially getting farmers together to introduce them to the ‘issues’ for their area followed up by workshops around FEPs and/or risks and mitigations with the intent of gaining ‘buy in’ and enabling farmers to see the link between their farm practice and the environment.

⁴⁰ RMPP - Red Meat Profit Partnership - was a trial project which brought together six competing meat processors, two banks, Beef + Lamb New Zealand and the Ministry for Primary Industries, with the aim of boosting sheep and beef farmer productivity and profitability. Under the pilot farm programme, RMPP trialled ways to get information and advice to sheep and beef farmers, concluding that what works best are small, well-structured action groups, as opposed to large field days, leading to the launch of the RMPP Action Network. Funding of \$4000 per farm business was available which is pooled for the group to bring in expert advice and pay for facilitators. *The farm action group that 'crunches into life'*, May 30 2018, www.stuff.co.nz; www.actionnetwork.co.nz

Firstly get people together – with a cup of tea and a scone – get them together and give them local stuff that they can get their teeth into. [The co-ordinator] did a really good job of that – in the [recent] workshop. [The co-ordinator said] ‘this is what is happening in your area ...’⁴¹ They moved on from that [to a focus on what’s going on with PC1 [quite] quickly. ... then they go through a FEP or risk and mitigations exercise – a formal thing – so they can see how their farm impacts [the environment].

The advice / information they [farmers] need is the link between their farm practice and outcomes in water quality.

3.3.5.2 WHAT ELSE WOULD HELP

Interviewees were asked to comment on what else would help the initiative to be successful. Some interviewees mentioned continuing to have the components mentioned above such as farmer leaders, a co-ordinator, access to support, information, templates, resources, funding and advice . In addition, interviewees stated that the following would help:

- WRC providing accurate information – for example, about targets.
- Solutions that work.
- Education and information opportunities - i.e. workshops about the issues and solutions.
- Consistent messages / information.
- Resourcing for mitigations.

Interviewees from across the Whangape and Upper Pūniu sub catchments made the following comments:

[Farmers] want solutions.

[We need] water testing workshops –that we can pick up with any region. Soil quality workshops. FEPs. That’s the sort of things we need from regional council and Beef + Lamb – to pick those up. Regional council have great resources – we need to work with them – get someone to come and talk to us (for example, about poplar poles).

We don’t want farmers to spend money on the wrong thing.

One challenge is how to structure themselves [as a sub catchment group] and the risk is that you have lots of admin burden and that takes away time and resources that people have to do the work. Need a structure but it is not about being a bureaucratic monster which puts them off so they don’t get involved or don’t see the value.

Need consistent messages – getting different messages [from different people] WRC, industry, advisors] and the inconsistency is confusing – then they [farmers] don’t know what they are doing.

We also need research – reflecting best evidence [with practical on farm solutions that work].

Resourcing is also needed – the rules in the regional plan require significant resourcing.

Interviewees from the Whangape made the following comments:

⁴¹ Note that the interviewee was referring to the local waterway health data that the co-ordinator had collected and was able to present to a meeting.

[WRC needs] to provide for us information like, 'where are we at?', and 'where is our target?' They haven't answered that question and that is massively unfair. The regional council has to front up.

3.3.5.3 OVERALL

Overall, sub catchment planning was viewed as a key component for achieving environmental targets in terms of waterway health, and as the following quote highlights, it can be a catalyst for long term culture change:

There are a lot of pitfalls here – we can get people who are super engaged and set them up to fail – but at the end of the day in achieving water quality outcomes and landscapes – this [sub catchment planning] is one of the only ways I can see it being accomplished. Empowering people to see what the issues are and appreciate the water and what is in there; make the connect between how and what they do on the land and how it impacts – then you get a culture change. The outcomes are then more sustainable enduring and intergenerational. It is going to take all of us getting behind and it will require resources.

Long term change is a challenge and a recurring theme across both sub catchments was to ensure that the farmers were invested and involved in the process; that it was farmer-led and farmer-driven.

The challenge is to build trust in the system. The only interest in policy is as a tool. Need to get good outcomes and those that will continue on past [the co-ordinator] being involved. The ones who are working in the environment - they will be living with the decisions in the long term and have the ability to decide what is practically a good approach. If we give them the right information then they will be the best ones to make those decisions.

3.4 WHANGAPE SUMMARY

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

The Whangape sub catchment is in the north western part of the catchment and is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 1 area. The main receiving environment in the Whangape is Lake Whangape.

The initiative in the Whangape is a farmer-led, extension approach, with a co-ordinator who has been seed funded by the MNNIFC. It has been developing at least since 2016 with WRC and Beef + Lamb extension work and farmers getting together, forming groups, writing submissions and FEPs and gaining funding for actions. In mid- 2018, a sub catchment co-ordinator was employed part time to further extend the work. Currently there are between five and eight farmer-led groups or 'hubs' some of which have been in place for some time, and others that are just starting to form. As at 31 March 2019 the initiative has included workshops, hui, setting up water quality monitoring sites, overall co-ordinating and relationship-building.

The reasons why farmers got involved in the initiative included:

- Plan Change 1 being notified – initial catalyst for some concerned farmers to form groups.
- Wanting to take control – recognition of the issues and wanting to have control over responses.
- A sense of ownership – owning the problem, wanting to be part of the solution.

The following were reported as factors that enabled engagement:

- Farmer leaders – key people who are respected and encouraged others to get involved.
- Connecting back to the farm - relating the issues back to their farm and their business.
- Listening to farmers – listening to what farmers' needs and concerns are and working with them.

STRENGTHS

Interviewees reported the following advantages of being involved in a sub catchment group:

- A sense of community – working together, being ‘all in this together.’
- Feeling empowered – learning about waterway health and what they could do, on farm.
- Access to support – workshops, help with FEPs, access to expert advice and funding.
- Having good stories – to showcase the good work that farmers are doing.

The risks of *not* getting involved were reported as:

- Financial – penalties for non-compliance, having to pay for mitigations, missing out on funding.
- Being ‘caught out’ - having to complete tasks with a shorter timeframe and less resources once the plan change is finalised.

The co-ordinator is a strength of the initiative. Key findings were:

- Unanimous support for the current co-ordinator and the co-ordinator role.
- The co-ordinator role was valued because it ‘freed up’ farmer time by taking on administrative and organising tasks and enabled farmers to complete actions, such as FEPs, at a higher rate than they would have without the input.
- The skills needed by a co-ordinator were identified as: (i) administrative and organisational skills; (ii) interpersonal communication skills; (iii) the ability to work with farmers and understand the rural environment; (iv) knowledge of environmental issues; and (v) being independent.
- The current co-ordinator being a qualified and experienced freshwater ecologist was an added advantage as she could undertake the water quality monitoring, and provide learning opportunities for land owners via workshops and field days.

Enabling on farm change was a strength. Reported changes included the following:

- Increased knowledge and understanding - of Plan Change 1 and the work of the WRC.
- A shift in thinking - including environmental and sustainable thinking into the farm system.
- On farm actions – completed and planned actions included: (i) working on FEPs; (ii) changes to farm systems and practices such as cropping and stocking rotations; and (iii) physical works such as planting, crossings, water reticulation and fencing.

LEARNINGS

In terms of what works in sub catchment planning, the following themes emerged:

- Being farmer-led and farmer-driven.
- Learning from other groups to enable sharing information and experiences across the ‘hubs.’
- Having farmer leaders to engage with other farmers and encourage involvement.
- Having a skilled co-ordinator.
- Setting up water quality testing sites to provide baseline information and to assist with ‘buy-in.’
- Making connections for farmers between waterway health and on farm practices.
- Allowing time for the change to occur to get farmer buy in and to make on farm changes.
- Having events and activities to up-skill and provide information.
- Support from regional council, Beef + Lamb, experts and advisors.
- Funding.
- Access to tools, resources, templates.
- Having a structure.
- Having FEPs and ensuring that the actions will achieve environmental outcomes.

In terms of what else would help the initiative to be successful the following was reported:

- WRC providing accurate information – for example, about targets.
- Having solutions that work.
- Providing education and information opportunities such as workshops .
- Having consistent messages and information from all parties including industry, WRC, farm advisors and others working in the sector.
- Providing resourcing for mitigations.

In terms of future structures, no 'one' model emerged, however suggestions included incorporated societies, subscription-based approaches and ensuring there was an ongoing co-ordinator role.

CHALLENGES

Reasons why people do not engage in sub catchment initiatives were reported as:

- 'Someone else will do it for me' - letting others do the work.
- Still fighting/ arguing about the changes.
- Uncertainty about the rules - waiting to find out what will be required first.
- In denial - do not think there is a problem.
- Cannot be bothered.
- Being too busy.
- Feeling threatened and attacked.
- Preferring to work alone.
- Not seeing the benefit / opportunity.
- Misinformation about what is involved.
- Have already been proactive and undertaken a lot of work themselves.

Overall, long term change is a challenge and a recurring theme to ensure success was to make sure that the farmers were invested and involved in the process; that it is farmer-led and farmer-driven.

4.0 UPPER PŪNIU: FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following presents the information gathered from interviews with farmer participants and those involved with the Upper Pūniu initiative in some capacity, as well as reviews of the plans and documents about the initiative. Information presented is related to the two evaluation objectives and research questions and includes: (i) Description of the Initiative; and (ii) Strengths, Challenges and Learning Opportunities.

Notes about the data:

- i. There are some overlaps between the Whangape and the Upper Pūniu sub catchment findings as the same co-ordinator works across both and as well, some stakeholder interviewees are involved with both catchments. Therefore, some findings, particularly those related to ‘what works’ that were reported in Chapter 3.0 are repeated in this chapter. Where relevant and practical⁴², in the following sections, clarification is made as to whether the interviewee is local (from the Upper Pūniu) or working across both the sub catchments.
- ii. Interview quotes are in *italics* and/or when quoted in a paragraph are in double quotation marks “ ”. Excerpts from documents are indented and non-italic and/or when quoted in a paragraph are in single quotation marks ‘ ’ and are referenced in a footnote.
- iii. Every effort has been made to preserve the confidentiality of interviewees including, where needed, changing some of the minor details in quotes which could identify an individual.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE UPPER PŪNIU INITIATIVE

4.2.1 WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UPPER PŪNIU?

The Upper Pūniu sub catchment is located in the south western part of the catchment (see Figure 2, page 8) and is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 3 area.

The key water feature of the Upper Pūniu sub catchment is the Pūniu River. The Pūniu River is a 57 kilometre long tributary of the Waipā River, and is one of the longest secondary tributaries in New Zealand. It flows north from within the Pureora Forest, veering northwest to pass south of the towns of Kihikihi and Te Awamutu before meeting the Waipā River three kilometres south of Pirongia.⁴³

The sub catchment was described by one interviewee as one where “all the water is flowing South to North into the Pūniu River.” The Pūniu River is “the receiving environment which then leads into the Waipā River.”

According to the WRC, the Pūniu river is currently ‘not swimmable’ with unsatisfactory levels of E. coli and clarity.⁴⁴ Pūniu River Care Incorporated⁴⁵ (PRC) provide the following description of the river on their website, which highlights the story of a decline in water quality over time:

⁴² Note that every effort has been made to protect the identity of those who were interviewed. This means that in some situations it is not possible to clarify whether an interviewee is local or works across the two sub catchments, as to do so would identify that person.

⁴³ Sources: WRC www.wrc.govt.nz; Wikipedia www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pūniu_River; Pūniu Rivercare Incorporated <https://Pūniuinc.org>; NZ Topographical Maps, www.topomap.co.nz/NZTopoMap/nz54733/Pūniu-River/

⁴⁴ <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/environment/natural-resources/water/rivers/our-other-rivers/water-quality-monitoring-map/Pūniu-river-at-bartons-corner-rd/>

⁴⁵ Pūniu River Care Inc. (PRC) is an incorporated society and New Zealand registered charity. The kaupapa (purpose) of the society is to enable local hapū to be involved in improving the water quality and replenishing taonga within the Pūniu River Catchment. The Society was formed in 2015 and undertakes a range of projects aimed at restoration of the river. Pūniuinc.org

Pūniu River was once a rich source of freshwater kai and provided many picnic and swimming spots for the local people. Currently the river is not classified as being of a swimmable standard, the tuna stocks have depleted in some areas, the banks of the rivers are eroding and over 10,000 tonnes of sediment discharges into the Waipā River from the Pūniu River every year.

There are current works within the sub catchment to restore the river including the work of PRC as well as individual farmers working to fence off waterways and create wetlands, as some examples.

4.2.2 HOW DID THE INITIATIVE DEVELOP?

The Upper Pūniu initiative is characterised by having a co-ordinator who has been seed funded by the MNNIFC. Prior to the appointment of the co-ordinator there were active Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP⁴⁶) groups in the sub catchment who had started to look at environmental matters and as well, there had been some groups forming, as a result of Plan Change 1 being notified. Further work and connections were also being made with PRC, and with WRC and Beef + Lamb who were undertaking extension work in the sub catchment.

As reported in Chapter 3 discussions around support options were taking place with Beef + Lamb about the Whangape and this was also occurring in the Upper Pūniu. There was an identified need for a sub catchment ‘co-ordinator’ role in the Upper Pūniu to, as one interviewee put it, “get the catchment going.” The MNNIFC agreed to seed fund a part time⁴⁷ co-ordinator position to ‘support the emergence and formation of sub-catchment groups’⁴⁸ in the Whangape and the Upper Pūniu catchments.

A recruitment process was undertaken and a co-ordinator was appointed in mid 2018 for an initial period of six months and to work in both Whangape and Upper Pūniu sub catchments.

By late 2018, the co-ordinator had started to identify farmer leaders, met with some of the farmers and attended an event organised by Beef + Lamb and run by Ag Research. A farmer group, which had formed after the notification of Plan Change 1, was keen to get funding for a research-based initiative to gather evidence on the water quality issues for their sub catchment and the Ag Research meeting was focused on a possible WRA application.

Beef + Lamb set up an event. An AgResearch event. They [AgResearch] were putting in a WRA funding application.

At the meeting it became clear that people were interested in the sub catchment planning initiative but wanted to know more about the issues for their sub catchment, before getting involved, and as such, it was decided to wait for the outcome of the WRA application before initiating more activities in the catchment.

... It was clear that people were interested [in the sub catchment planning initiative] but they wanted more information about what was happening in their catchment. They didn't want to do something that would have to be repeated. So that put a hiatus on progress - until the outcome of the funding round came out.

4.2.3 WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

The initiative in the Upper Pūniu is a farmer-led, extension approach, with a co-ordinator who has been seed funded by the MNNIFC. It is the same approach as was described in the previous chapter about the

⁴⁶ See footnote on page 27 for more detail on RMPP.

⁴⁷ 24 hours per week across both catchments.

⁴⁸ Beef + Lamb NZ Farmer Led Catchment and Environment Leadership Initiatives. Available online <https://beeflambnz.com/catchments>

Whangape and the same co-ordinator has been contracted for both sub catchments. As detailed earlier, the purpose of the approach, as described in the *MNNIFC Sub catchment Extension Approach* document⁴⁹ is:

To provide a platform to empower landowners to work together to set and improve eco system health limits in different sub catchments. The community will set interim targets, timeframes and work together to form a workable and practical approach which can be implemented by all stake holders by applying good management practices. These will be identified and set by individual environment plans that will be adopted to improve water quality issues in local tributaries and rivers.

The approach includes: ‘assessing and understanding the current water quality and sources of contaminant discharge at various scales’ in the area in order to ‘prioritise mitigations’; using FEPs to enable landowners to implement mitigations, creating, as a community, agreed eco system health limits, and enabling sharing of knowledge and resources and collective, collaborative approaches to mitigations as appropriate. Effectiveness is assessed by ‘monitoring changes on farm and tracking changes in water quality and eco system health targets over time’ and following through the implementation of environment plans set by the individual businesses.⁵⁰

There are eight stages to the approach and these are as follows:

- Stage 1: Identifying sub catchments and leaders
- Stage 2: Set up water quality monitoring
- Stage 3: Developing a community plan
- Stage 4: Complete an environment plan
- Stage 5: Develop a community sub catchment story
- Stage 6: Complete OVERSEER modeling
- Stage 7: Show and tell
- Stage 8: Reassess community plan⁵¹

In terms of what has been happening in the Upper Pūniu initiative between mid-2018 and 31st March 2019:

- The co-ordinator has made contact with farmer leaders from the sub catchment (Stage 1);
- The co-ordinator has built up contact email lists and continues to work on meeting farmers and adding to the contacts (Stage 1);
- The co-ordinator has met with key farmer leaders and other stakeholders (e.g. PRC, WRC) in the sub catchment (Stage 1);
- In March 2019 the co-ordinator attended a risks and mitigations workshop facilitated by WRC and FEP workshop run by Beef + Lamb, and facilitated an initial sub catchment workshop with farmers from the catchment (Stages 1 & 3);
- WRC has agreed to fund the water quality monitoring in the Upper Pūniu for 12 months (Stage 2)⁵²;
- Eleven water quality monitoring sites have been identified and in May 2019, the co-ordinator⁵³ will undertake the first round of testing⁵⁴ (for water quality and invertebrates) as well as an overall high level catchment scale assessment (Stage 2);

⁴⁹ The Beef and Lamb New Zealand MNNIFC Sub catchment Extension Approach is a working document which outlines the purpose, approach and stages of the project.

⁵⁰ Excerpts from The Beef and Lamb New Zealand MNNIFC Sub catchment Extension Approach.

⁵¹ Excerpts from The Beef and Lamb New Zealand MNNIFC Sub catchment Extension Approach.

⁵² Note that one of the activities in Stage 2 was to seek funding for the water quality monitoring. WRC agreed to fund this for 12 months.

⁵³ As explained in Chapter 3.0, the co-ordinator is a qualified freshwater ecologist and as such is able to undertake the water quality monitoring and assessments.

- The co-ordinator has identified funding options and provided this to the groups (Stage 3).

Overall, as the above sections outline, the Upper Pūniu initiative is at an early stage of development with aspects of Stages 1 to 3 being undertaken, including initial meetings with farmer leaders and a number of workshops being run in March. There are some established farmer groups in the catchment, such as RMPP, although the current initiative is extending beyond those groups. The intention at this stage, with the Upper Pūniu, is to have one sub catchment group. However, this may alter as the project progresses.

4.3 STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As part of evaluating the process, a series of interviews were undertaken with farmer participants, the co-ordinator, Beef + Lamb, MNNIFC and WRC staff, advisors and/or representatives involved with the sub catchment. The following presents findings from the interviews in relation to the research questions and the objectives.

4.3.1 WHY ARE PEOPLE INVOLVED?

One of the key questions asked of those who were involved with the sub catchment group/s as well as those who were working with farmers in the sub catchment was, “Why are people involved?” The following sections cover: (i) reasons for getting involved; (ii) advantages of being involved; and (iii) risks of not being involved.

4.3.1.1 REASONS FOR GETTING INVOLVED

Interviewees reported that there were a number of reasons why farmers had got involved with the initiative. Key themes that emerged as reasons for getting involved included: (i) Plan Change 1 being notified; (ii) promoting a catchment approach (iii) awareness of environmental issues; and (iv) financial incentives.

PLAN CHANGE 1

Plan Change 1 was one catalyst for some of the farmers to start meeting together. Interviewees commented that some dry stock farmers in the Upper Pūniu had become involved with ‘Farmers for Positive Change’ (F4PC⁵⁵) which was a group that formed in response to the notification of Plan Change 1. As a result of becoming involved with F4PC and also being more informed about the plan change, some of the farmers in the Upper Pūniu got together to discuss the issues. One outcome of this group was an application, with AgResearch, to the WRA for funding to research the water quality issues in the sub catchment. The ‘bid’ was unsuccessful and the group “fell away a bit after that.” Despite this, interviewees reported that some farmers from the group continued to look for opportunities for the sub catchment, including other funding and/or support opportunities (e.g. for planting of wetlands), and discussions with Beef + Lamb which resulted in the MNIFC-funded co-ordinator role being established.

I was involved with Farmers for Positive Change. We got together because of PC1. Then what happened was We were hoping to get a research-based project to see what we were ‘fighting

⁵⁴ The intention is to sample four times per annum for water quality, two times per annum for invertebrates, over a 12 month period, and to do an overall assessment of habitat health for each site (e.g. shade, erosion, substrate, habitats, flow, fenced off etc.).

⁵⁵ F4PC had a number of concerns in regards to Plan Change 1, as noted in the following Waikato Times article from 2016, “while the group supported Healthy Rivers’ vision, they opposed the proposed mechanisms to achieve its goals.” Some of what was opposed included NRPs, some of the rules around stock exclusions and fencing as being too stringent, and some of the timelines. FEPs and sub catchment approaches are supported by F4PC. Waikato farmers prepare to fight against council’s proposed plan change rules, 14 October 2016, Waikato Times. Available online <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/85191481/waikato-farmers-prepare-to-fight-against-councils-proposed-plan-change-rules>; <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Farmers-for-positive-change>

against' and suspected it would be sediment and E. coli. ...We had a few meetings here with a few locals here. AgResearch put in a proposal to the WRA but didn't get the funding. It [group] fell away a bit after that.

Through Beef and Lamb, we'd been talking about getting the catchments going – I said [to Beef + Lamb], 'we've all got our day jobs here.' I said, 'we really needed a co-ordinator.'

PROMOTING A CATCHMENT APPROACH

A view that a catchment approach was the best way forward was mentioned by one of the interviewees and was a reason for working to get the current initiative started. As the following quotes highlight, a catchment approach was seen both as a way to get farmer 'buy-in' as well as a potential option under Plan Change 1 for addressing compliance.

... a catchment by catchment approach was the only practical way of getting some forward traction and getting buy in from the farmers. You have to get buy in. ... It takes a long time for rules and regulations to filter through. If you can go catchment by catchment then you can get farmer buy-in quicker.

I saw it further down the track – making it part of PC1 – that you are part of a group and that's it. Under the present system – every time there is a breach – the regional council has to rely on someone locally 'potting the person' – it's not the best thing for the community. But if you have a catchment group – then regional council is in that. Involved - I see regional council as being involved in that - and then they know what's going on – it's all clear - a catchment group would be a far healthier way of getting compliance.

AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

An awareness of environmental issues, and in particular waterway health, was another catalyst for getting involved with the initiative. One interviewee noted that they had been "interested in the rivers and whatever" for some time and that some of this interest had come about via their involvement with an RMPP group. Another interviewee had also become interested via their RMPP group and, in particular, guest speakers from WRC who had spoken about the sub catchment, which led to FEP and CSA workshops, followed by the water quality workshop run by the co-ordinator.

I've been interested in the rivers and whatever [for some time]. We were involved in the RMPP and all the information that was coming through was that with the synthetic proteins we have to be environmentally sustainable, GE and Antibiotic free [to meet the market demands and compete with the synthetic proteins]. The bigger picture here – we could have a whole provenance [i.e. environmental, sustainable, GE free] built into the Upper Pūniu produce. From a marketing point of view – we've talked about it for years and this may be the time for our industry – we're going to have to be really careful with what we do.

Got involved because for the last few months there has been a few meetings. Started with the RMPP action group – one of our meetings was on environmental matters and that's when we met people from regional council. That's when it started and we learnt a bit more about the sub catchment and what was involved. Then we had a FEP workshop and they [WRC staff] were there and then we had a workshop about CSAs and identifying them. Then we had the workshop with [the co-ordinator].

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

As noted above some of those involved in the Upper Pūniu initiative had become interested in the initiative through their RMPP, which was about the environment but was also had a business and/or

financial aspect to it; that is the competition with synthetic protein and need to 'meet the future market' for environmentally sustainable proteins. In addition, one of the other financial incentives for the Upper Pūniu is that there is some significant WRA funding, being administered by WRC, which farmers in the sub catchment are able to access and this is also a reason why farmers have become involved.

[There is the] funding through the WRC – having some funding – that priority funding has turned up now.

4.3.1.2 ADVANTAGES OF BEING INVOLVED

Interviewees were asked to comment on the advantages of being involved in the initiative. Themes that emerged included: (i) learning new things; and (ii) access to funding.

LEARNING NEW THINGS

One of the advantages of being involved in the initiative was the opportunity to 'learn new things'. As one interviewee noted, although the initiative has only been operating for a short period of time, they had learned a lot about Plan Change 1 and what was being proposed as well as what Beef + Lamb were promoting.

I've learnt a huge amount with the whole process. There's Hearings going at the moment with PC 1 and the Beef + Lamb proposal is to have sub catchment approach rather than a blanket rules approach. I've learnt a lot about – more detail about what is going on at the moment and why Beef + Lamb are approaching it this way. Learnt more on the technical details.

ACCESS TO FUNDING

The ability to access WRA funding⁵⁶ was seen as an advantage of being involved with the initiative. One interviewee was keen to access the funding for planting a wetland, in order to be able to show other farmers what could be achieved. Another interviewee had also made contact with the WRC advisor and was looking to access funding for planting.

I also worked with [PRC]. I have fenced off two wetlands and was hoping that Pūniu River Care would plant them – hoped we'd get that done so we could show people. But they couldn't get the funding [for that]. I was hoping that carrot would come through [PRC] and they could get funding from WRA.

[WRC Advisor] came out here last week to look at our place. So we'll try and access some of that. Our best option was to take up the planting but not the fencing option.

4.3.1.3 RISKS OF NOT GETTING INVOLVED

Interviewees were also asked about what they thought were the risks of not getting involved. The main theme that emerged was financial.

FINANCIAL

An identified key risk of not being involved was financial. As noted by the following interviewee they were aware that the WRA funding was for works that were not required for compliance. They noted that a risk, once Plan Change 1 became operational, was that they may not be able to access the funding

⁵⁶ Note that farmers do not have to be involved with the Upper Pūniu initiative in order to access the WRA funding, however, by being involved they have learned about the funding and been able to be proactive at accessing it.

for some of the work. Therefore, they saw that being involved and undertaking some work now was an advantage and 'waiting for the rules' was a risk.

You never know how people see this [the funding]. Whether they are aware that it is over and above PC1.

4.3.2 WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT?

All those who were interviewed were engaged in the initiative in some way and as such there were no non-engagers interviewed as part of the evaluation. However those who were interviewed, whether they were farmers, the co-ordinator, or staff from Beef + Lamb or WRC had all been working to engage other farmers in the process, and as such had some insights into why some people did not get involved.

4.3.2.1 WHY PEOPLE DO NOT GET INVOLVED

There were a number of key themes that emerged as to why people did not engage. These were: (i) the type of farming, specifically that there were a number of corporate or lease farms with absent owners where managers do not see this as 'their problem'⁵⁷; (ii) communication, not knowing about the meetings; and (iii) a minority who would not engage and would 'do nothing.'

A change in farm ownership. In the last ten years, there has been a lot of corporate farms so the owners don't live on the farm and managers [might see that this is] 'not their problem' so they are not interested. There are quite a few lease farms – so the owners are not on farm –and the people running the farms, it's not their concern.

Some people wouldn't have known – didn't get the emails or correspondence. There are a lot of dairy farms – and I don't know how many are contract or share milking – and the owner doesn't live on the farm.

Some people are quite old school and they just don't care very much – maybe going to be selling up.

You can never get to that last person - that 5% who would do nothing. Better to empower the majority.

Other themes that were identified were by those who worked across the two catchments and as such were relevant to both the Upper Pūniu and the Whangape. These themes were: (i) feeling threatened and attacked; (ii) uncertainty about the rules, waiting to find out what will be required first; (iii) in denial, do not think there is a problem; (iv) too busy; (v) prefer to work alone; (vi) do not see the benefit / opportunity; (vii) misinformation (viii) have already been proactive and undertaken a lot of work themselves⁵⁸.

We have some who have stormed out of the meeting "I'm not doing this!"

Some people are laggards that have their head in the sand.

Farmers would all have their own reasons: some may be uncertain about the rules so don't want to engage until they are clear about what is required. They don't want to duplicate [do something which is not needed] or don't want to have to 'redo' things in the future so there is that level of uncertainty. Some 'don't play so well with others.' Some may have done a whole lot of stuff

⁵⁷ Note that this issue was not raised in the Whangape, specifically, however this is not to say that it may not also be an issue there; it just did not emerge in the interviews with farmers from the area.

⁵⁸ Note that these themes were reported in Chapter 3.0 but have been repeated here as being relevant to the Upper Pūniu as well

themselves anyway [so don't need to be involved in this]. Some may want to do their own thing, or some maybe don't think there is a problem and for those ones they will get 'picked up' by the rules and compliance.

It's a hard one that [why people do not engage]. We talked about that [at a meeting] the other day. A lot are in their own little world and don't want to engage in this stuff. The majority of them – they are not the ones that are looking to improve and grow their business [just farming how they always have] – they don't realise there's an opportunity there.

There has been a lot of misinformation – for example, some farmers who planted a waterway [a few years ago] and then [they get told now] 'you planted things too close. Farmers pick that up and that annoys them. That's all part of the reason why there is some push back.

Some haven't or won't attend the meetings. Some won't see any value in turning up. There will always be people who don't participate. There is therefore gaps in information and communication in those communities. [Why?] Because they don't see a direct a benefit to themselves. They might feel they are already doing a good job so don't need to be in another programme. They may be waiting to see what comes out of the hearings – why invest in this voluntary process when they might have to invest in something else? That is a risk to [being involved] – if it comes out that sub catchment planning is 'nice and fluffy' but you still have to meet the outcomes and whether they are in a sub catchment group is not 'necessary'. [Some are] overwhelmed and don't have time. Feeling threatened and attacked [by PC1], who are struggling – don't have time and energy to engage in the process.

As one interviewee noted, for some of those who are not choosing to engage, the time will come when they will be 'forced' to make changes in order to continue their business either from peer pressure, market pressure and /or regulatory pressure.

The pressure is coming from the marketplace – and they aren't going to like that. That will change – its coming quicker than they think. You have that pressure and the regional council pressure. There has to be 'the stick' to sweep those guys up. If the peer pressure doesn't get them then [the 'stick' will]

4.3.2.2 WHAT ENABLES ENGAGEMENT

Previous sections have covered some of the reasons why people became involved in sub catchment groups in the Upper Pūniu and as noted, Plan Change 1 was a catalyst for many farmers as well as financial incentives and environmental awareness. One of the characteristics of the Upper Pūniu initiative is that it has only been operating for a short time, compared to the Whangape catchment which has been operating longer and has some established groups, and as such a discussion on 'engagement' is somewhat theoretical as farmers are just beginning to get involved. However, interviewees from the catchment were asked to comment on what assists engagement and what would help others to 'get involved'. Key themes to emerge were (i) the need to 'get some runs on the board'; (ii) farmer leaders to encourage others to come along and (iii) water quality monitoring

RUNS ON THE BOARD

One interviewee was keen to get some 'runs on the board' or, to put it another way, some tangible, visible outcomes that other farmers could see and which could encourage them to want to get involved.

The thing is – getting some runs on the board – I talked to [WRC advisors] – I’m hoping got get these wetlands planted this year and kick that off – hoping to perhaps get a couple of wetlands done and then [you have] something you can show people. I know [another farmer] is doing some work. ... [We need to get] get some tangible runs on the board. ... We need to make a start. I’m excited that we’re well under way really.

FARMER LEADERS

The role of farmer leaders in encouraging other farmers is well-documented and is part of Stage 1 of the Beef + Lamb extension approach for the current initiatives. i.e.: *Stage 1: Identifying sub catchments and leaders* states:

“...once the sub catchment has been chosen, a leader in the area should be identified to contact people in the sub catchment to bring them together to form a community meeting.”

It was clear from interviews that there were some key farmer leaders in the Upper Pūniu who had been actively working in various ways to get initiatives going in their sub catchment. Interviewees noted the importance of having farmer leaders to help drive the initiative and to get others involved:

Then, once in a blue moon, having a meeting and getting people along. It might be that they [farmer leaders] have to drive it.

Understanding who your leaders are – they key people in the community who can get you in touch with the wider community.

WATER QUALITY MONITORING

As noted earlier there was significant interest in the Upper Pūniu in getting water quality monitoring underway and this was the subject of a funding bid to the WRA in 2018. The current initiative has now set up 11 sites for monitoring and the first assessment will be taking place in May 2019. Interviewees were keen to get the monitoring underway, and have some baseline data, from which they could monitor their progress over time; this was seen as another way to get some tangible evidence and engage farmers in the process.

We need the monitoring. I was hoping for a real time monitor at the Bailey bridge. But if we can start the best practice going with environment plans and see something tangible happening.

I was pretty keen on the AgResearch thing – it was expensive – but what scares me – if we had that research sitting there – we would have [a baseline] and would know what we’d done. This way, we are in the dark a bit. If you can show people that there is a tangible difference in the river [then this is motivating].

Interviewees working in both sub catchments were asked to comment on what helps people to become involved, to engage in these types of initiatives. Key themes that emerged were: (i) connecting back to the farm; and (ii) listening to farmers.

CONNECTING BACK TO THE FARM

Going on farm and discussing waterway health and connecting the issues back to the farm was viewed as a key enabler for gaining understanding and engagement amongst farmers.

[The co-ordinator] is empowering farmers – she’s a freshwater ecologist – when farmers understand the health (of invertebrates, fish). It’s very powerful. Talk to them about ‘modelling and numbers’ –they don’t give a rat’s arse about that – get into their own rohe – get them to take pride

in their streams - then they will take responsibility. That's how [the co-ordinator] is enlightening them.

LISTENING TO FARMERS

The importance of listening to farmers and as a result of that enabling them to be connected to the issues and to have ownership was also emphasised:

Listen. Don't go into it with pre-conceived ideas. Don't assume what the issues are based on the data (e.g. water quality) that you have. If you come at it with any kind of ego then people will shut off and won't open up. Understand what people are feeling and why. The job of the co-ordinator is to understand how people are making their decisions, [find out] what's underpinning that and that will help you understand how to get people involved.

4.3.3 WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR ROLE?

As described in section 2.2 the Upper Pūniu initiative has a co-ordinator seed-funded by the MNNIFC. Interviewees were asked to comment on the value of having a co-ordinator. Key themes that emerged were (i) support for the co-ordinator and (ii) future options.

4.3.3.1 SUPPORT FOR THE CO-ORDINATOR

Overall there was unanimous support for the current co-ordinator and support for the role of co-ordinator as part of the initiative. Key themes that emerged were (i) 'freeing up' farmer time; (ii) being independent; and (iv) co-ordinator skillset.

FREING UP FARMER TIME

The co-ordinator was valued because they were able to take on tasks that farmers did not have time to do. As described earlier farmers in the Upper Pūniu had been working on initiatives after Plan Change 1 was notified, and there was a view, expressed by some who had been in that 'organising' role, that a co-ordinator was needed as farmers did not have the time.

We've been talking about getting the catchments going – I said [to Beef +Lamb] we've all got our day jobs here. I said we really needed a co-ordinator and that's when [the co-ordinator] was contracted.

Basically, [having a co-ordinator] is very necessary, because I have a day job so I cannot spend the time to do it – if you want it done professionally.

The Upper Pūniu project is in its early stages and the early start-up phase of initiatives like this one, can be one of the most time-consuming phases, therefore having a co-ordinator who was paid to do this work was an advantage.

It's a long process and might need quite a lot of time to get it started – then once it starts moving it will feed off itself.

One of the toughest things [for the co-ordinator] is all the relationships you have to manage. You need to sprint at the beginning but then you need to maintain it.

BEING INDEPENDENT

The independent nature of the co-ordinator was also valued. One of the key roles of the co-ordinator is to make contact with farmers and get the initiative going. Talking to farmers, listening and working through the negative views that some people have to get to a place where they are willing to be

involved, can be frustrating and also difficult for someone local to have to deal with. Therefore having someone from 'outside' can be an advantage.

There's a lot of positive and negative [views] and people are different and you give it to me [as a local farmer] and you get frustrated [with the negative views].

IMPACT OF THE CO-ORDINATOR

In terms of the overall impact and/or effectiveness of the current co-ordinator, it is too early in the initiative to be looking at major impacts however interviewees were positive in their feedback of the work the co-ordinator was doing so far.

[The co-ordinator] is very good – couldn't expect any more. She's doing a great job. [She] has the knowledge and the drive. We need someone to co-ordinate.

So I've been feeding her emails and she's doing a great job. She's picked up the ball and run with it. Doing a really good job.

Interviewees who were involved across the two sub catchments stated that in their view, the co-ordinator was getting good engagement from farmers in both the Whangape and Upper Pūniu.

It's working really well. [The co-ordinator] has been brilliant. She has really good engagement across the sub catchments.

I've seen her with the farmers – she just listens – she won't put her own thing forward too much. It's a good way to go about it.

CO-ORDINATOR SKILLSET

Interviewees who were involved across the two sub catchments commented on the skillset needed in a co-ordinator. Key themes that emerged were that co-ordinators needed: (i) administrative and organisational skills; (ii) interpersonal communication skills, (iii) the ability to work with farmers and understand the rural environment; (iv) knowledge of environmental issues; and (v) to be independent.

... the person would have links to farming, be living in the rural area, be a community person. The main skills would be good administration skills, to be able to fill out applications for funding, be able to get on with farmers, probably be rural and have some knowledge of environmental issues.

[The co-ordinator] is the catalyst for change – independent, neutral, put up by farmers – we put her there.

Although not a requirement of the role, the co-ordinator being a qualified and experienced freshwater ecologist, was viewed as an added advantage as it meant that she could undertake the water quality monitoring, and as well provide learning opportunities for land owners via hands-on workshops and field days about waterway health.

The key thing is to have a driver – and that's where [the co-ordinator] is really good – someone who can communicate really well [with farmers], understand water quality and can present back to them [farmers]. It's little steps with farmers. Have to put it in a way that farmers understand. Keep it simple and be adaptable.

[Farmers need to] understand the connections between land and freshwater. [The co-ordinator having] an ecology background is beneficial.

4.3.3.2 FUTURE OPTIONS

The current co-ordinator role is seed funded for six months. Interviewees from across the two sub catchments considered that there was a need for an ongoing 'co-ordinator' role in the medium to long term and/or a formal structure to enable the sub catchment planning and work to continue and to ensure that the groups continued.

Yes [a co-ordination role is needed]. It may not need to be involved or as in-depth – in the future – but there has to be somebody there to see that people don't lose their way.

At the sub catchment level we need co-ordinators with good admin skills, involved in farming, rural – who can keep pushing things along.

I can see the role growing. They [co-ordinators] are vital. We need them to make it work. She is great at filling out the forms for funding. Her umbrella role will need to grow – with people below her – catchment co-ordinators.

Clone a few [co-ordinator]s! Thinking about what structure ... this has to have longevity and legs – putting a structure around some of the sub catchment hubs or big sub catchments – so you can leverage finance so you can employ someone like [the co-ordinator]. In the Upper Pūniu - they need someone to glue it together. Then they need to formalise that into some form of structure. It might be an Incorporated Society or it might be regional council, industry and government – has to have someone looking after the sub catchments. Longevity – needs to be monitored, [farmer] leaders won't be there forever.

Structure? There might have to be an over arching body then have some hubs.

Interviewees from the Upper Pūniu catchment also supported the continuation of the co-ordinator role.

In the long run – you'd want somebody [to co-ordinate].

4.3.4 WHAT CHANGES ARE THEY MAKING AS A RESULT OF THE INITIATIVE?

In terms of what changes have been made as a result of the initiative as noted in the description section, the initiative has only been operating (with a co-ordinator) since mid to late 2018 and in the Upper Pūniu the co-ordinator has been to a few meetings, attended three workshops and facilitated one workshop. It is still too early to see a lot of actions and / or changes, as a result of the initiative. However, there were some indications from interviewees that the initiative had (i) increased knowledge and (ii) provided a catalyst for action.

4.3.4.1 INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

One interviewee commented on having an increased level of knowledge, awareness and understanding of Plan Change 1 as a result of being involved with the initiative.

I've learnt a huge amount with the whole process. There's Hearings going at the moment with PC 1 and the Beef + Lamb proposal is to have a sub catchment approach rather than a blanket rules approach. I've learnt a lot about – more detail about what is going on at the moment and why Beef + Lamb are approaching it this way. Learnt more on the technical details.

4.3.4.2 ON FARM ACTIONS

Although the initiative is at the early stages, farmer interviewees could provide examples of on farm actions that they were planning as a result of going to workshops and learning about what they could do

and/or needed to do. These actions included working on FEPs, and plans for accessing funding for physical works such as planting.

Probably about half way through [our FEP] but it's a huge farm and a big project. There is elements of it – like the NRP – I will be leaving until a bit later just in case that changes.

Funding. [The WRC advisor] came out here last week to look at our place. So we'll try and access some of that.

I'm hoping got get these wetlands planted this year and kick that off – hoping to perhaps get a couple of wetlands done

4.3.5 WHAT WORKS AND WHAT HELPS?

As the previous sections have highlighted having a co-ordinator has been key component of the initiative which has enabled it to progress. Analysis of the interview findings identified some of the key factors that enabled the initiative to 'work' as well as what else might help.

4.3.5.1 WHAT WORKS

In terms of what works, the following themes emerged:

- Being farmer-led and farmer-driven – i.e. a 'ground-up approach' ensuring that farmers are involved in and driving the process;
- Learning from other groups – to enable sharing information and experiences across sub catchments / groups;
- Having farmer leaders – to engage with other farmers and encourage involvement;
- Having a skilled co-ordinator – to help with organising, running workshops, accessing information and engaging farmers;
- Setting up water quality testing sites – to provide baseline information for planning and prioritising and to assist with 'buy-in';
- Making connections for farmers – between waterway health and on farm practices;
- Allowing time for the change to occur – to get farmer buy in and to enable farmers to make the on farm changes;
- Having events and activities - to up-skill, provide information, and enable farmers to see the 'link' to the environment;
- Support from regional council, Beef + Lamb, experts and advisors;
- Funding;
- Access to tools, resources, templates;
- Having a structure; and
- Having FEPs and ensuring that the actions being done / proposed will achieve environmental outcomes.

Interviewees from across the Upper Pūniu and Whangape sub catchments made the following comments:

The key to it is, each time you have a discussion, you need to ask them [farmers] 'what do you want next?' If you go with their suggestions then that is empowering for them.

The main thing – when you're working with farming community it is good to involve them in the process in a hands-on practical, 'how does this apply on my farm?' because they can help you and provide you with information. The ecologists, bureaucrats etc don't have all the answers about how

to solve this – they need the farmers / landowners to have input. Involve them in a practical way. Keep it real. Don't underestimate the value they can provide.

Really conscious that with the sub catchment approach we have to get the right leaders – people who are interested and can run the groups well and effectively.

It needs a structure and KPIs. Need to ensure that they [farmers] are supported in a way that means they achieve environmental outcomes; farmers need to be enabled and empowered and [it needs to be recognised that they are] on their own journey as well. Need a skilled facilitator who understands these connections⁵⁹ and someone who understands social behaviour.

The key thing is to have a driver – and that's where [the co-ordinator] is really good – someone who can communicate really well [with famers], understand water quality and can present back to them [farmers]. It's little steps with farmers. Have to put it in a way that farmers understand. Keep it simple and be adaptable.

Go out on farm with the local farmers – and talk to them about CSAs and whole farm systems - then they start to get it.

Don't just focus on water quality – overall waterway health – the 'four nutrients' is lacking – it only looks at a small part of the process . if we just focus on water quality we won't address the problem. Habitat health condition complexity is a massive issue that is underpinning the presence or absence of certain plants in the environment – [and is] easy to measure for people. ... People get lost when talking about water quality – it seems insurmountable and is not clear to them about how they can impact it. Identifying appropriate indicators for their waterways, like habitat health, presence (or absence) of 'critters', planting and soil erosion, and develop them with the community and [these are] things they can relate to – are things they can see and measure.

[Have a] tailorised plan [FEP] for them [farmers] – and they have to own it and do it – it's part of their business plan.

This is a long journey and need to give farmers time.

I think – all the stuff is going on and the pressure is coming – we can share resources across regions and ideas – we shouldn't go away and work in our silos. We stumbled across [the co-ordinator and it is working really well.

Interviewees from the Upper Pūniu made the following comments:

Funding through the WRC – having some funding – that priority funding has turned up now.

In the long run – you'd want somebody [to co-ordinate].

[Would] want one person from WRC co-ordinating [involved with the sub catchment]– a place for one person to be there who knows that district and the rivers and stuff.

⁵⁹ 'Connections' in this instance was about connections of the famers to the land to the farm, to how they work, as well as the connection between landuse and water quality.

4.3.5.2 WHAT ELSE WOULD HELP

Interviewees were asked to comment on what else would help the initiative to be successful. Some interviewees mentioned continuing to have the components mentioned above such as farmer leaders, a co-ordinator, access to support, information, templates, resources, funding and advice. In addition, interviewees stated that the following would help:

- WRC providing accurate information – for example, about targets.
- Solutions that work.
- Education and information opportunities - i.e. workshops about the issues and solutions.
- Consistent messages / information.
- Resourcing for mitigations.
- Getting some project works completed.
- Communication tools / methods– ways to spread the messages about the initiative.

Interviewees from across the Upper Pūniu and Whangape sub catchments made the following comments:

Farmers want solutions.

[We need] water testing workshops –that we can pick up with any region. Soil quality workshops. FEPs. That’s the sort of things we need from regional council and Beef + Lamb – pick those up. Regional council have great resources – we need to work with them – get someone to come and talk to us (e.g. about poplar poles).

We don’t want farmers to spend money on the wrong thing.

One challenge is how to structure themselves [as a sub catchment group] and the risk is that you have lots of admin burden and that takes away time and resources that people have to do the work. Need a structure but it is not about being a bureaucratic monster which puts them off so they don’t get involved or don’t see the value.

Need consistent messages – getting different messages [from different people] WRC, industry, advisors] and the inconsistency is confusing – then they [farmers] don’t know what they are doing.

We also need research – reflecting best evidence [with practical on farm solutions that work].

Resourcing is also needed – the rules in the regional plan require significant resourcing.

Interviewees from the Upper Pūniu made the following comments:

There would have been so many people who knew nothing about it [the workshops]. A bit more advertising and involvement would be good. Maybe the corporate and lease farms need a different approach – a firmer hand – because they are in farming for a different reason than on a family farm. Someone on a family farm – they want to do the right thing – have more of a vision. On a corporate farm – they want to make money for their shareholders so will only do the bare minimum.

More information on what the sub catchment approach is and why it’s out there – whether it’s door knocking or mail drop?

As noted by one interviewee, there was a view that at the current stage of the initiative the key elements were in place such as a co-ordinator, funding, and support from Beef + Lamb, WRC and PRC

and that the key need was to get some projects started to showcase the work and get more engagement from other farmers.

To be honest, we have plenty at the moment. I don't think we need any more. We've got WRC support ... We have a co-ordinator, Beef + Lamb, funding from regional council, Pūniu River Care group. I don't think we need any more people and have any more meetings. We need to get some runs on the board now.

4.3.5.3 OVERALL

Overall, sub catchment planning was viewed as a key component for achieving environmental targets in terms of waterway health across both sub catchments and, as the following quote highlights, it can be a catalyst for long term culture change:

There are a lot of pitfalls here – we can get people who are super engaged and set them up to fail – but at the end of the day in achieving water quality outcomes and landscapes – this [sub catchment planning] is one of the only ways I can see it being accomplished. Empowering people to see what the issues are and appreciate the water and what is in there; make the connect between how and what they do on the land and how it impacts – then you get a culture change. The outcomes are then more sustainable enduring and intergenerational. It is going to take all of us getting behind and it will require resources.

Long term change is a challenge and a recurring theme across both sub catchments was to ensure that the farmers were invested and involved in the process; that it was farmer-led and farmer-driven.

The challenge is to build trust in the system. The only interest in policy is as a tool. Need to get good outcomes and those that will continue on past [the co-ordinator] being involved. The ones who are working in the environment - they will be living with the decisions in the long term and have the ability to decide what is practically a good approach. If we give them the right information then they will be the best ones to make those decisions.

4.4 UPPER PŪNIU SUMMARY

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

The Upper Pūniu sub catchment is located in the south western part of the catchment and is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 3 area. The receiving environment is the Pūniu River which is a tributary of the Waipā River.

The initiative in the Upper Pūniu is a farmer-led, extension approach, with a co-ordinator who has been seed funded by the MNNIFC. Prior to the appointment of the co-ordinator there were active RMPP groups in the sub catchment, groups forming as a result of Plan Change 1 being notified, and connections being made with PRC, WRC and Beef + Lamb. A need for a co-ordinator was identified to “get the catchment going” and in mid- 2018, a sub catchment co-ordinator was employed part time. As at 31 March 2019 the initiative was in its early stages and had included identifying farmer leaders, facilitating a workshop, identifying water quality monitoring sites, and overall relationship-building. The intention at this stage, with the Upper Pūniu, is to have one sub catchment group. However, this may alter as the project progresses.

The reasons why farmers have got involved in the initiative include:

- Plan Change 1 being notified – initial catalyst for some farmers who connected with F4PC..

- View that a catchment approach is the best way to get farmer 'buy-in' and address compliance.
- Having an awareness of environmental issues.
- Financial – market drivers and WRA funding opportunities.

The following were reported as factors that enabled engagement:

- 'Runs on the board' - tangible, visible outcomes that other farmers can see.
- Farmer leaders – to help drive the initiative and to get others involved.
- Water quality monitoring - to get some tangible evidence and engage farmers in the process.
- Connecting back to the farm - relating the issues back to their farm and their business.
- Listening to farmers – listening to what farmers' needs and concerns are and working with them.

STRENGTHS

Interviewees reported the following advantages of being involved in a sub catchment group:

- Learning new things - about Plan Change 1, Beef + Lamb extension work.
- Access to WRA funding.

The risks of *not* getting involved were reported as:

- Financial – missing out on WRA funding.

The co-ordinator is a strength of the initiative. Key findings were:

- Unanimous support for the current co-ordinator and the co-ordinator role.
- The co-ordinator role was valued because it was independent and 'freed up' farmer time
- The skills needed by a co-ordinator were identified as: (i) administrative and organisational skills; (ii) interpersonal communication skills; (iii) the ability to work with farmers and understand the rural environment; (iv) knowledge environmental issues; and (v) being independent.
- The current co-ordinator being a qualified and experienced freshwater ecologist was an added advantage as she could undertake the water quality monitoring, and provide learning opportunities for land owners via workshops and field days.

Enabling on farm change was a strength. Reported changes included the following:

- Increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of Plan Change 1.
- On farm actions – actions being planned included: (i) working on FEPs; and (ii) accessing funding for physical works.

LEARNINGS

In terms of what works in sub catchment planning, the following themes emerged:

- Being farmer-led and farmer-driven.
- Learning from other groups to enable sharing information and experiences across the 'hubs.'
- Having farmer leaders to engage with other farmers and encourage involvement.
- Having a skilled co-ordinator.
- Setting up water quality testing sites to provide baseline information and to assist with 'buy-in.'
- Making connections for farmers between waterway health and on farm practices.
- Allowing time for the change to occur to get farmer buy in and to make on farm changes.
- Having events and activities to up-skill and provide information.
- Support from regional council, Beef + lamb, experts and advisors.
- Funding.
- Access to tools, resources and templates.
- Having a structure.

- Having FEPs and ensuring that the actions will achieve environmental outcomes.

In terms of what else would help the initiative to be successful the following was reported:

- WRC providing accurate information – for example, about targets
- Having solutions that work.
- Providing education and information opportunities such as workshops.
- Having consistent messages and information from all parties including industry, WRC, farm advisors and others working in the sector.
- Providing resourcing for mitigations.
- Getting some project works completed.
- Having communication tools and methods to spread the messages about the initiative.

In terms of future structures, interviewees reported the need to continue the co-ordinator role in the first instance with potential for a formal structure at a later stage to ensure continuation.

CHALLENGES

Reasons why people do not engage in sub catchment initiatives were reported as:

- Farm types - corporate or lease farms where managers do not see this as 'their problem'
- Communication - not knowing about the meetings.
- Not choosing to engage – those who will 'do nothing.'
- Feeling threatened and attacked.
- In denial - do not think there is a problem.
- Being too busy.
- Preferring to work alone.
- Not seeing the benefit / opportunity.
- Misinformation about what is involved.
- Have already been proactive and undertaken a lot of work themselves.

Overall, long term change is a challenge and a recurring theme to ensure success was to make sure that the farmers were invested and involved in the process; that is that it is farmer-led and farmer-driven.

5.0 WHIRINAKI: FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The following presents the information gathered from interviews with farmer participants and those involved with the Whirinaki initiative in some capacity as well as reviews of the plans and documents about the initiative. Information presented is related to the two evaluation objectives and research questions and includes: (i) Description of the Initiative; and (ii) Strengths, Challenges and Learning Opportunities

Notes about the data:

- i. Interview quotes are in *italics* and/or when quoted in a paragraph are in double quotation marks “ ”. Excerpts from documents are indented and non-italic and/or when quoted in a paragraph are in single quotation marks ‘ ’ and are referenced in a footnote.
- ii. Every effort has been made to preserve the confidentiality of interviewees including, where needed, changing some of the minor details in quotes which could identify an individual.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

5.2.1 WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WHIRINAKI?

The Whirinaki sub catchment is located north east of Lake Taupō (see Figure 2, page 8) and is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 3 area. However, in terms of catchment management programmes, the Whirinaki is one of four priority areas in the Upper Waikato Zone Plan.⁶⁰

The Whirinaki Stream has numerous small inflowing tributaries which eventually connect to Lake Ohakuri, one of the Waikato River’s network of hydroelectric lakes and dams. A report to the Upper Waikato Catchment Committee⁶¹ (UWCC) about the Whirinaki initiative provides the following description of the Whirinaki sub catchment:

The Whirinaki Valley Catchment lies within the Waikite Valley and Ngakuru rural districts and is bounded by the Paeroa Ranges and State Highway 30. The area sits within the Waikato River Catchment. In 1961 the creation of Ohakuri Dam flooded a 12km stretch of the Whirinaki Stream which is now more commonly known as the Whirinaki Arm. The total catchment size sits at 23,000ha.

The land use in the catchment is predominantly dairy farming and dairy support. There are approximately 60 dairy farms in the catchment from 100 properties (>10ha).

The land use capability in the catchment is classified as predominantly Class 6 and 7 land. Class 6 and 7 soils are identified as best suited to extensive pastoral land uses with soil conservation measures in place such as forestry, retirement, or indigenous vegetation. With 60% of the land in the catchment supporting dairy production it is evident that the soils are being utilised beyond their capacity.

Some of the land use issues in the catchment include;

- Winter grazing on fragile soils;
- Land use not matching land use capability;

⁶⁰ The WRC divides the region into eight catchment zones and each zone has a ‘Zone Plan’ which “guides the activities of Waikato Regional Councils Integrated Catchment Management Directorate from Taupō to Karapiro.” WRC, *Upper Waikato Zone Plan*. (2014), WRC. p3. <http://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/hazard-and-catchment-management/zone-management-plans>

⁶¹ Each of the eight WRC catchment zones has a catchment committee. The committee members are Waikato regional councillors, key agency and community representatives, and property owners. The committees meet three to four times per year. At the meetings members consider issues related to flood protection and catchment works, biosecurity and biodiversity strategies and programmes in the zone. Recommendations from the catchment committees are reported back through the council’s Integrated Catchment Management Committee. <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/about-us/our-council/community-committee-appointees/zone-catchment-committees>

- Land conversion from forest to pasture between 2008-2012;
- Sediment loss from pastoral activities;
- Poor riparian management.

The Whirinaki Arm is highly valued for a variety of reasons and the area is popular for recreation such as kayaking, boating, para-gliding from the Paeroa Range, fishing and swimming over the summer months. However over time algal blooms and ‘silting up’ of the Arm have led to health warnings making the area unsuitable for contact recreation at times.⁶²

WRC data indicates that the levels of total Nitrogen and total Phosphorus in the Whirinaki sub catchment are in the ‘unsatisfactory’ category.⁶³

5.2.2 HOW DID THE INITIATIVE DEVELOP?

The Whirinaki initiative is characterised by having WRA funding and a ‘working group’ comprised of iwi representation via Te Arawa River Iwi Trust (TARIT), WRC staff and local landowners and has been in operation for approximately 18 months, starting in 2017.⁶⁴

Prior to the establishment of the working group, WRC staff had been working on determining priority areas in the Upper Waikato catchment and as part of this process had “crunched the numbers and seen what ‘issues’ we had, and [determined that] the Whirinaki was a priority area.” The following interviewee explains the issues that were identified:

The reasons it was a priority in Taupō was – we were concerned about accelerated erosion and sediment build up in the Whirinaki. Seeing the sediment build up was a cause for concern. So we did some land use capability [LUC] mapping in that area and that indicated that 60-70% of the land was classed as 6 or 7. The higher the class – 8 is the highest - the less suitable it is for intensive farming. And 75% [of the land in the sub catchment] is in dairy farming – so we have a mismatch between land use and LUC.

Following on from the ‘number crunching’ process, the staff prepared papers for the UWCC and in August 2017 WRC and TARIT put in a joint application to the WRA for funding to undertake a two year ‘soil conservation and river management’ initiative in the Whirinaki. The application to the WRA was successful.

At around the time the WRC was engaging with the UWCC and applying for funding, some of the landowners in the area became aware of the papers that had been tabled with the UWCC and were concerned about what was being planned for the area. Specifically, the farmers were concerned about the ‘LUC not matching land use’ and worried that there were plans to “rule out livestock and plant trees.” A series of meetings occurred between WRC staff and local landowners to discuss the issues, and after a period of time a working group was formed and one of the WRC staff became the project manager.

5.2.3 WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

The initiative in the Whirinaki is primarily a soil conservation project, funded via a WRA grant and in-kind and cash contributions from WRC and landowners. In terms of what the initiative is focused on, the application for the WRA funding explains that:

⁶² Excerpt from paper provided to the Upper Waikato Catchment Committee, 24 March 2017, *Proposed Whirinaki Valley Restoration Project*. WRC Doc #24032017, p.1

⁶³ <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/Environment/Natural-resources/Water/Rivers/Our-other-rivers/Water-quality-monitoring-map/Whirinaki-Stream-at-Corbett-Rd/>

⁶⁴ Note that a funding application went to WRA in August 2017

The focal point for the project will be undertaking soil conservation works on privately owned land in the catchment, this will include activities such as poplar pole planting, creation of wetlands for sediment and nutrient retention, the creation of sediment detention bunds, land retirement, and riparian management. The proposed works are envisaged to be complementary to land management activities on farm, and will assist in retaining precious top soil on properties - a benefit for pasture development and the environment.⁶⁵

In regards to outcomes, a report to the UWCC identifies the following as desired outcomes for the initiative:

The desired outcomes include but are not limited to:

- Controlling erosion and sediment loss from Class 6 and 7 land;
- Construction of wetlands and erosion control structures to reduce and assimilate sediment discharges;
- Recognition and enhancement of cultural sites;
- Building capacity and knowledge for local hapū to actively engage in the project long term;
- Local ownership and input into the solutions package;
- A healthy and vegetated riparian network.⁶⁶

As noted above, the initiative is focused on soil conservation works on privately owned land. To this end the WRA application notes: 'it is important to stress that the proposed project is entirely voluntary. Its success relies on the goodwill and buy-in from landowners in the catchment.' In addition, whilst the works may be complementary to Plan Change 1, this 'is not the driving force behind the desired outcomes and vision that The Partners wish to achieve.'⁶⁷

The initiative aimed to undertake a total of twenty projects (ten soil conservation and ten river management) within the sub catchment, over a period of two years.⁶⁸ There is also an intention of the initiative that the 'projects' be 'flagship projects'; that is that they become 'examples' to showcase to the community and other landowners, the work that can be undertaken to improve water quality and mitigate soil erosion.

Achieving the outcomes and intentions required the project manager to engage with the local community, get landowners on board, identify project sites and get the works underway. The first six months of the initiative were characterised by setting up systems and processes, and establishing a working group.

The next step [after the funding was approved] was setting up the project team. The technical [team] around what that structure looked like. Once we had the funding we needed to put in our reporting – the representatives of the two partners – for WRC and TARIT - and [work out] who was responsible to manage it. Reporting for the project team (internal) and then technical [reporting to WRA] and then later came the steering group.

The working group is comprised of local farmer landowners, WRC staff and TARIT and its role is to assist with identifying potential project sites and making decisions on which sites to undertake a project. The 'typical' process as described by a number of interviewees, is that a potential project is identified, an assessment of the project is carried out, including the cost and benefit, and this is taken to the working group who make a decision on whether to go ahead with it or not. Once approved, the WRC staff work with the land owner to get the project completed.

⁶⁵ Excerpt from WRA application, p. 2. WRA funding application, WRA 17-010, August 2017.

⁶⁶ Excerpt from paper provided to the Upper Waikato Catchment Committee, 24 March 2017, *Proposed Whirinaki Valley Restoration Project*. WRC Doc #24032017, p.1

⁶⁷ Excerpts from WRA application, p. 2. WRA funding application, WRA 17-010, August 2017.

⁶⁸ WRA funding application, WRA 17-010, August 2017.

... take the projects to the working group – blank out names – get input and feedback. Then we let the farmer know if their project has been approved. Then [regional council staff] work to get it off the ground – get the plants, help with technical, contractors. Everything [is taken] to the working group – even [projects] we don't think are worth doing. So [the working group is] fully engaged and involved with what we're doing.

[WRC staff] go and assess the project and do a summary plan – take that to the working group with some photos. Get their feedback / their support – they are looking to [WRC] as the technical advisors to see if it's a good project.

The funding structure is that the WRA funds 50% of the project, the WRC 25% and the landowner 25%. The land owner's contribution can be 'in-kind' (for example, labour).

The way the funding works – Joe Bloggs' project was going to cost \$10k. He would get \$5k from WRA, \$2.5k from regional council and Joe Bloggs contributes the \$2.5k. So the farmer contributes 25%; this can be 'in kind'.

Initially, the WRC had a project manager who was part of the working group and undertook a range of different tasks, such as, liaising between the working group and WRC, reporting, correspondence and co-ordinating project tasks for example. After approximately one year, that staff member was seconded to another role within WRC. Another project manager has not been appointed but instead, the project manager's tasks have been split between different WRC staff.⁶⁹

In terms of what has happened in the Whirinaki initiative from mid-2017 to 31st March 2019:

- A working group was established in 2018, and meets regularly to discuss and approve potential projects;
- Five projects have been completed,⁷⁰ with another two more getting started;
- An eighth project to undertake work at a bridge crossing is being planned;
- An extension to the initial two year timeframe was requested and has been approved.

Overall, as the above sections outline, the Whirinaki initiative began in 2017, has WRA funding, a working group comprised of landowners, iwi and WRC, aims to complete twenty 'flagship' projects aimed at soil conservation and river management, of which five have been completed, two are starting and one is being planned.

5.3 STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As part of evaluating the process, a series of interviews were undertaken with farmer participants, WRC and TARIT staff, advisors and/or representatives involved with the sub catchment initiative. The following presents findings from the interviews in relation to the research questions and the objectives.

5.3.1 WHY ARE PEOPLE INVOLVED?

One of the key questions asked of those who were involved with initiative was, "Why are people involved?" The following sections cover: (i) reasons for getting involved; (ii) advantages of being involved; and (iii) risks of not being involved.

⁶⁹ Note that two of the WRC staff who are involved with the initiative have always had some involvement with it – one having oversight and the other working on assessing potential projects. One of them now liaises with the working group and the other assesses projects and works with land owners. A third staff member undertakes the administrative work (reporting, correspondence etc.).

⁷⁰ Note that 'completed' in this case means that the project has been assessed and approved and works have been undertaken, however the nature of some of the projects is such that they may take 3-5 years to establish and be considered to be 'finished.'

5.3.1.1 REASONS FOR GETTING INVOLVED

In terms of involvement with the initiative the previous sections have highlighted how WRC identified the Whirinaki as a priority area for the Upper Waikato catchment and as a result of this, worked with TARIT as part of the co-management approach, to access WRA funding to proceed with some projects in the sub catchment.

The primary reason for WRC being involved was concern “about accelerated erosion and sediment build up in the Whirinaki.” TARIT was approached by WRC to be a partner in the project as part of the co-management arrangement and worked with WRC on applying to the WRA.

We just got on with it. Identified the issue and went out and got the funding.

The involvement of the farmers occurred after the funding had been received and they are involved in one of two ways: (i) as members of the working group overseeing the initiative and (ii) as landowners who have a project on their property as part of the initiative. It is important to note at this stage that when the working group was set up the farmers involved stipulated that one of the guidelines was that a farmer could not be on the working group and have a project on their farm.

One of the rules the farmers made was ‘anyone on the working group can’t have any works done.’ They didn’t want the community to see ‘that’s why he’s getting the work done because he’s on the group’.

Interviewees reported that there were a number of reasons why farmers had got involved with the initiative. Key themes that emerged as reasons for getting involved included: (i) UWCC report; (ii) community engagement work; (iii) environmental; and (iv) financial incentives.

UWCC REPORT

As was mentioned earlier one of the catalysts for farmers getting involved in the Whirinaki initiative was a paper that had been tabled at a UWCC meeting which discussed the sediment and erosion issues within the Whirinaki sub catchment. This document was sighted by some farmers who were concerned about what they believed the report was suggesting, and who made a point of contacting the WRC to find out what was being planned for the area. WRC staff met with farmers in the sub catchment to discuss the UWCC report and to correct some of the misunderstandings that had occurred. Some of those farmers subsequently became involved as part of the working group or as farmers with a project site.

About two years ago – when a handful [of farmers] were sent a paper from the Upper Waikato Catchment Committee – that had wording that said ‘if you’re this type of land contour you’ll be ruled out of livestock and planted in trees.’

[Farmers] sort of got wind of a report that went to the Upper Waikato Catchment Committee – and it was about land use classification in the area and how a large area [of it] wasn’t suited to intensive farming, which got farmers’ backs up. So farmers had a meeting and had [WRC staff] speak.

[WRC staff] explained they weren’t on the regulatory side of WRC – they wanted to work with the farmers. Some of the farmers were quite upset – when that is in the wind – it can affect farm values, you know.

As it turned out that paper wasn't meant to be for public viewing – and some people – passed a bit of information around and shouldn't have. Once the smoke cleared- got the group up and running after a couple of community meetings.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORK

Following the successful WRA funding application, the project manager began working to engage the community via kitchen meetings and community meetings in the community, with the result of setting up a working group and beginning to identify potential project sites.

... the community engagement. It took six months to get people on board with it. [There were] lots of kitchen table meetings – with five or six farmers around the table and a couple of larger community meetings. Then we formed the Whirinaki Working Group.

The project manager was the young one sent into the fire to get this group up and running after that initial phone calling and things about 'what is going on here?' She was the instigator of the group at the end of the day

ENVIRONMENTAL

One of the reasons for being involved was to address the environmental issues that had been identified. As noted earlier, there were obvious sediment issues, identified and prioritised by WRC and this is a reason why WRC are involved. However, interviewees commented that farmers are also involved because they recognise that there are environmental issues that need addressing and they want to have input into the solutions for their community. The obvious visual of the sediment build up in the Whirinaki Arm was a focal point that community members could 'see' and made it easier to believe that there are water quality issues.

Regional council put a paper to the catchment committee and it talked about class 6 and 7 land and it sounded like [WRC] were going to forestate the catchment and that upset [the farmers]. Fired them up – stirred up a hornet's nest - brought their intention [to the issues] and [there was] that intuitive feeling - they had problems and someone else would come up with a solution and so [they] better get in.

The strength of it is that everyone in the community can take a focal point. The Whirinaki Arm is a focal point for the landowners to see the sediment that is going on. That is a plus for doing the project in that area. .. they can 'see' the problem.

Farmers – some were originally concerned about [WRC] foresting the whole catchment and they have stayed on. They are still there because they see value and as well 'keeping an eye' [on what is being done]. They see that there is something that needs to be done.

We wanted to work with them [WRC] rather than against them [WRC].

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

The WRA funding is also a reason for becoming involved with the Whirinaki initiative, primarily for the farmers who have potential project sites. As the following quotes indicate, farmers in the community would hear of the initiative and approach the working group with a possible project on their farm. The incentive being the ability to be able to access up to 75% of the project costs via the initiative. Although

the project sits outside Plan Change 1, some farmers are looking at being involved and, getting work done, which may become required under Plan Change 1.⁷¹

We are still getting people coming to us – I've heard about this – I think I have an issue [on my farm].

What happens with the dollars – we have these 'pilot' projects – so we get them established and then show other farmers the results. we have to be careful – they are getting a 75% subsidy – and that's on fencing etc. Some farmers are trying to be smart and getting stuff done that they would have to get done under PC1.

Due to the guidelines established by the working group there were farmers who were initially involved, but decided not to be part of the working group as they had potential projects, and some of these have since had projects completed on their farms.

If you want to be on it [working group] and you have something on farm to put funds on then you can't be on it – doesn't do good for buy in from the community. ... So a couple of people left and a couple of others came on which was fine.

[Group] made it clear that they couldn't have a flagship on their property if they were on the committee. Have to be careful that they are there for the community (not themselves). One dropped off straight away, and now he does have a flagship project on his property – but that's okay.

5.3.1.2 ADVANTAGES OF BEING INVOLVED

Interviewees were asked to comment on the advantages of being involved in the initiative. Themes that emerged included: (i) learning from each other; and (ii) preparation for Plan Change 1.

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

Interviewees commented on the fact that they had learned from each other. The 'non-farmers' who are part of the initiative found the input from the farmers to be valuable as it challenged them to clarify their thinking. The farmers who were involved also commented on the advantage of having the technical 'input' for the solutions to ensure that the work was done appropriately.

[The farmers are] a great bunch of people. They will challenge our thinking. They are not 'technical' experts – they ask why they are doing things, which helps us to crystallise / clarify our thinking.

We've done some field visits and talked about erosion, and talked about quite complex issues in relation to [soil conservation, sediment].

[We] have to be led by council, technical advisors, experts as well. We can't have farmers just being the ones to do it – otherwise we'd just rip in with tractors and chainsaws!

PREPARATION FOR PLAN CHANGE 1

Although the current initiative is 'outside of Plan Change 1' interviewees commented that there were two advantages of the initiative in regards to Plan Change 1. These were: (i) some of the project actions are ones that landowners may be required to do under Plan Change 1 and as such those farmers who had undertaken some works would be a bit further ahead; and (ii) the initiative has increased

⁷¹ Note that the WRA funding cannot be put towards work that is required. As PC1 is not yet finalised, there is an opportunity at this stage to utilise the funding for works that may become compulsory. Once PC1 is finalised some works will not be eligible for the WRA funding.

knowledge and understanding of nutrient loss amongst farmers about nutrient loss and impacts on water quality.

... when they have to do environment plans they will have more knowledge and understanding and be partway on that journey.

The projects will contribute in some cases to reducing over land flow of nutrients.

5.3.1.3 RISKS OF NOT GETTING INVOLVED

Interviewees were also asked about what they thought were the risks of not getting involved. The main theme that emerged was that of a 'missed opportunity'.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

One of the risks of not being involved was that of a missed opportunity; that is that the sub catchment has obvious sediment issues, there is funding available to make some changes and to not take it up would make them 'the community that had the opportunity' but did not do it.

I think a lot of it is – I get a sense that they don't want to be seen to be doing nothing. There are visible issues there. There's an obvious problem and they don't want to be the community that had the opportunity ten years ago and they just buried their head in the sand.

5.3.2 WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT?

All those who were interviewed were engaged in the initiative in some way and as such there were no non-engagers interviewed as part of the evaluation. However those who were interviewed, had all been working to engage other farmers in the process, and as such had some insights into why some people did not get involved.

5.3.2.1 WHY PEOPLE DO NOT GET INVOLVED

There were a number of key themes that emerged as to why people did not engage. These were: (i) lack of awareness; (ii) waiting to see; and (iii) financial constraints.

LACK OF AWARENESS

Lack of awareness was raised as a barrier to engagement; that is people not knowing about the initiative due to it not having a highly visible presence in the community and/or because the nature of the work was such that results would not be obvious for a number of years.

We have to get community involvement and that starts with awareness. [We have a community] newsletter [we] put out and we put something in there – but you can't force people to read it.

It's a long term project – can't measure it for five or ten years. That's – it's hard to motivate the farmers. If you could see a result after two years it would great.

WAITING TO SEE

One interviewee commented that expecting one hundred percent engagement was unrealistic and that some people might be aware of the initiative, but will 'sit back' and wait to see what it offers before becoming involved. Another interviewee noted that farmers were 'complacent' and would 'wait' to see what happens both with the initiative and with any regulatory changes such as Plan Change 1.

Have to expect that with every programme you will not get one hundred percent engagement. There are 60 dairy farms and I don't know everybody. There are always people who sit back, watch, are hesitant at the start.

My gut feeling is that it has gone off the boil a bit – so farmers are great at saying ‘let’s just wait and see what happens.’ Farmers are pretty complacent – not willing to get involved. ...Let’s just wait. [For example] a contractor yesterday said that we need to build a lined pond, but [that’s] a lot of money, so [I’m] not going to do it until I have to.

Many are out there saying ‘why would I bother with this when PC1 is going to tell me what to do anyway?’ When I use the words about this, ‘the only reason we have funding is to go over and above PC1’, people say ‘why would we go better?’ I say, ‘because you can achieve 70% funding.’ They say, ‘no I’d rather wait.’

Some people still have their head in the sand about PC1 - just quite happy to be told what to do on the day rather than before.

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Although the funding can be an incentive, one interviewee noted that for some farmers, having to even part-fund an action was a barrier to being involved. Others might be focused on paying for more pressing compliance issues (i.e. upgrading their effluent system) rather than a project under this initiative.

Financial constraints. Some people have seen this as 70% getting funded – so that’s a way to get something done when they don’t have the funds. Others won’t go near it because they don’t have funds for the other 30%.

Farmers at the moment – might be focused on their effluent system.

5.3.2.2 WHAT ENABLES ENGAGEMENT

Previous sections have covered some of the reasons why people became involved in the initiative. Interviewees from the sub catchment were asked to comment on what assists engagement and what would help others to ‘get involved’. Key themes to emerge were: (i) peer pressure; (ii) community owned; (iii) raising the profile; and (iii) Plan Change 1.

PEER PRESSURE

One interviewee commented that ‘peer pressure’ from neighbours was a motivator for getting farmers to engage with the project, although this took time. Others noted that being in the group provided some ‘peer pressure’ to engage in the project and/or to undertake some actions on their own properties.

... that neighbourhood and peer pressure is powerful. They do come on board eventually – but need to see things for themselves and see what happens.

Peer pressure is quite a strong thing – there is a bit of [pressure from in the group] to do some things.

COMMUNITY-OWNED

Related to peer pressure is having a working group that has community involvement as way to empower the community to engage in and ‘own’ the initiative and to ‘sell’ it to other farmers and the community.

The reasons for setting up a working group were two-fold – always believe to get true empowerment you need to give [people] the empowerment and opportunity and what [we were] hearing from the community leaders was, ‘this is our project and we want to be fully involved in this.’ There was a high level of engagement and appetite to own the project. The group are the biggest assets when it comes to ‘selling’ the project.

Some really have a passion for their community and what we are trying to achieve.

RAISE THE PROFILE

One of the barriers noted in the previous section was that of a lack of awareness of the initiative and interviewees commented on needing to raise the profile of the initiative, to encourage community awareness and involvement.

The main thing recognition with the community – we have to get the community involved and get some passion about it. We’re pushing shit uphill. We’ve got four pilot sites approved – three completed. One that is not completed- it will be visible from the road..

The working group has been active in determining ways to make the initiative more visible including: (i) having projects at ‘visible’ sites; (ii) talking with other partners about signage and other support; (iii) erecting signage to promote the initiative and/or pilot sites; and (iv) having community field days. The extent to which these ideas can happen is mixed with some already agreed to (e.g. visible projects), some being ideas at this stage (e.g. involving partners) and some having some barriers to overcome (e.g. signage and wording).

So we have the Whirinaki Bridge – had a meeting there before Christmas. [Group said] ‘Why don’t we do some work there and make it look better and get the community involved?’

We are looking at a site – it’s a highly visible site – at the one way bridge – looking at doing some restoration painting and signage there. To [the community] it’s important to hear about it and see visible, tangible things to do with the project.

[At the bridge] maybe remove some willows, planting, do the other sides – make it a place that we can ‘look’ at. We need it for advertising for the community. If we have signage – [that says] ‘this is what we’re doing.’ Maybe get the kids involved from the schools, maybe Mercury Energy.

We had a discussion at the end of last year about ‘flagship’ projects, and one project this year will be one of the bridges which is a major sediment catchment. It’s a pig sty – willows and overgrown. One farmer at the meeting wondered if we made this bridge a project – do some planting and cut the willows. There’s a lot of traffic crossing the bridge everyday – if they see the bridge every day We pushed back [to the advisors] and said, ‘we can’t push sediment unless we have people on board.’ Perception is 9/10ths. So we’ll put some signage up down there and get it cleaned up – get the school kids to come down, do some plantings and get them involved.... we thought we should put some money into where we get ‘bang for our buck’ visually.

A bit of a community initiative. What the steering group wanted. A project on the bridge. It has some sediment control but [is more about] getting rid of some of the weeds and showing the community what it ‘should’ look like. Raising the profile with something tangible. If it does that, then that’s great – then maybe people will bring us projects.

Also have another farm – just started contact with the farmer. [WRC] reckons there are three of four projects from that farm that are visible. We could put a sign to say – ‘this is part of the Whirinaki project ...’ but [the latest information from WRC] says we can’t put up signs [because] otherwise people could put up signs to say ‘WRC is not doing a good job’.

Our catchment is one of 50 catchments that Fonterra is willing to help with. I've talked to our area manager – they've got no money – but they will help in other ways – communication, planting, advertising (on their Facebook page).

There is money set aside for a field day to get the community to some of these sites – but they need to be established first – it would be easier if you could get a result [sooner].

PLAN CHANGE 1

Although the Whirinaki initiative is not about Plan Change 1, some interviewees commented that Plan Change 1 can be a trigger for being engaged in the initiative; that is it may be a reason for some to engage, in order to access funding to complete some works before they become compulsory and therefore ineligible for extra funding.

The threat of PC1 is a trigger. This project sits outside PC1. We are not doing it to make people 'healthy rivers' compliant. We are doing it because it's a sediment issue. Once PC1 comes into effect then it will be harder to get funding – people are aware of this so want to do something about it.

5.3.3 WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR ROLE?

As described in section 5.2 the Whirinaki initiative has a working group comprised of farmers, WRC, and TARIT. There is no 'co-ordinator' role as such, however WRC is the 'lead agency'⁷² for the initiative and administers the WRA funding and there is a project manager role which was originally filled by the WRC staff member who worked with TARIT on the WRA proposal. The project manager was seconded to another role after one year, and in the past seven months the project manager tasks have been divided between three other staff.

Interviewees commented on the value of having a project manager. Overall there was unanimous support for the previous project manager and support for the role of project manager as part of the initiative. Key skills and qualities that were identified as being part of the project manager's skillset and valuable for the initiative were: (i) technical knowledge; (ii) scoping and planning skills; (iii) able to work well with others; (iv) approachable; (v) reliable; (vi) enthusiastic and passionate about the initiative; and (vii) able to keep people informed and the project 'on track'.

[The project manager] has been gone since before Christmas - six or seven months (since September). [Her role was] taking the lead. She was excellent. She had the technical nous as well. She worked closely with [other staff at WRC] in soil erosion and she was an excellent project manager too. She was great. It was sad to see her go. [Great at] facilitating the meetings, drafting the project scope and plan – had that ticking over.

[She had the] ability to work – in the team environment. She was approachable and so she got on well with everybody. There was a mix of us – internal, technical and scoping group. She was reliable – knowing how the project was tracking, was across everything – the project management side and the technical. She would update the team regularly.

Keeping the group enthusiastic is quite hard. [We have] already got members who don't turn up, and getting the rest of the community involved.... Some of those things – had the project co-ordinator to keep us on track – that person has to be enthusiastic as well.

⁷² Note that the initiative is a joint one between TARIT and WRC, however due to the nature of the projects and for practical purposes (i.e. of reporting, administering funds, identifying projects), it was decided that WRC would be the lead agency for this initiative.

Interviewees did comment that the project manager leaving had impacted on the initiative. There was a view that there was less cohesiveness, with a structure that was less clear, and the group felt the lack of having one person who stayed on top of where things were at.

Doesn't seem to be the cohesiveness ... that we had when [the project manager] was onboard. [She was] pivotal and unique – having someone passionate, technical and [with project management skills]. She stayed on top [of the project].

They haven't appointed an official project manager ... it's not that clear a structure [as it was].

We've lost a bit of impetus at the moment – part of it is not having that single co-ordinator.

5.3.4 WHAT CHANGES ARE THEY MAKING AS A RESULT OF THE INITIATIVE?

In terms of what changes have been made as a result of the initiative as noted in the description section, the initiative has completed five projects and three more are due to start, as of March 2019. These projects include various on-farm sediment loss mitigations such as:

Retirement of active erosion gullies, native plants introduced with the dual purpose of soil stability and biodiversity. We try to incorporate it all. It could be retiring a hillside to trees / exotics. Can be bunds, drop systems. [There are] quite a few things that we can do.

As well as the above there is 'the bridge project' which is not an on-farm project and will include some sediment control, weed clearance and planting.

In addition to the projects that have occurred, there were a number of other impacts of the initiative that were highlighted by interviewees. These include (i) improved relationship with WRC; and (ii) on farm actions (outside of projects).

5.3.4.1 IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP WITH WRC

A key impact of the initiative was the improved relationship with WRC and a greater understanding of the work of WRC which had resulted from the initiative. As the following quotes indicate, the 'negative' perception of WRC, held by the farming community was a challenge for staff in the initial stages of the initiative. Farmer interviewees commented on being surprised to learn that WRC had staff to support and advise landowners, and that their perceptions of WRC had shifted, in a positive direction as a result of being part of the initiative.

[The biggest challenge] was the perception about regional council and what we do. Some initial meetings were pretty hostile and challenging. [Some of] those who challenged the most are now [the] biggest assets. They say that they had no idea that there were non-statutory people who work with landowners. Their only contact with regional council was usually the compliance officer coming up the drive to inspect the effluent.

The most heartening thing has been the community that have got involved with it and that [farmers] turned from challenging to [being] the biggest assets for this project.

[The WRC Staff] explained that they weren't on the regulatory side of WRC. They wanted to work with the farmers. ... The people we are working with are not the regulatory arm. They are very passionate about their side of regional council. But is hard to sell to farmers, because most of their contact – unless they have invited them [WRC] on – their only contact is the regulatory arm. I didn't realise there was a difference.

I think the ones [farmers] we've done projects for – their level of understanding has lifted immensely about the regional council and what [the initiative] is trying to achieve. If we said 'we want to have a field day led by regional council', then 90% would say 'yes'. [With] the WRC staff ... I think the way they have brought themselves to table has been really appropriate.

As was described earlier the project manager was valued, however the other WRC staff involved were also valued. Interviewees commented positively on the commitment of the WRC staff to the initiative and the projects.

Originally we thought we would get an independent co-ordinator because we thought we needed someone between the farmers and the regional council – but the fact that the people we were working with are not regulatory arm. They are very passionate about their side of regional council.

5.3.4.2 ON FARM ACTIONS

Interviewees provided examples of how they had, as a result of being involved with the initiative, changed some of their on farm management practices and initiated some other mitigations such as fencing, retiring and planting.

Just through being involved I am changing some of my management practices on farm. I have become more aware. ... We have a run off next to the Whirinaki Arm. We used to plant a winter crop and winter the herd on it intensively. And on some of the other country – and some is quite hilly – large cows can cause damage on that country. So we've stopped that [both the wintering off on the run off and the hill country]. We have retired a bit of land at home – we would have done it anyway – but moved it ahead [because of being involved in this initiative]. We only have one wet area – and we have planted half and fenced off another piece and will plant that this winter. Just small things on the farm. ... Peer pressure is quite a strong thing – bit of [pressure from in the group] to do some things.

5.3.5 WHAT WORKS AND WHAT HELPS?

As the previous sections have highlighted having a project manager was a key component of the initiative which has enabled it to progress. Analysis of the interview findings identified some of the key factors that enabled the initiative to 'work' as well as what else might help.

5.3.5.1 WHAT WORKS

In terms of what works, the following themes emerged:

- Being community-led and community-driven – i.e. involving the community in the decision-making;
- Having farmers involved with the working group - to provide local knowledge, engage their neighbours;
- Having a skilled project manager – to drive the project and keep the momentum going;
- Being focused on the goals – to ensure that the work happens;
- Having 'passionate' people involved – to keep up the momentum;
- Having a visual 'focal point' so people can 'see' there is a problem – i.e. sediment build up in the Whirinaki Arm;
- Funding – to get projects completed;
- Access to expert technical advice both internal and external – to assess sites and solutions;
- Having iwi at the table;
- Having WRC, community and iwi 'united and working together' – to develop relationships, trust and a co-ordinated approach.

The most heartening thing has been the community that have got involved with it and that [farmers] turned from challenging to [being] the biggest assets for this project.

Personally that was the way I wanted to operate [with a working group] and also part of my thinking on this was that there has been trust lost between regional council and farmers. [Farmers] don't have the license to operate without regional councils and [WRC] don't have a job without [farmers]. It needs to be flipped around with a community group leading.

We've given the group a lot involvement in the decision making in the project. So we've set it up – when we have possible sites – we let them be involved in the decision making around that – putting the project to them and getting their thoughts and 'sign off' from a local perspective.

When you are aware of hotspots or issues – you may not know the farmer – having that back up [from farmer leaders] that they can take that and work with the land owner on your behalf.

The main advantage is that they [farmer leaders] are selling the story for their community.

That worked quite well. [What has worked?] The awareness that has come from having a working group [with farmers involved in it]. We're starting to achieve that buy-in from the community – for other landowners to see that they have their own sitting there.

... had the project co-ordinator to keep us on track – that person has to be enthusiastic as well.

It's getting the right people on the project. Have to have some real dynamos. Need a couple that are really passionate.

The Whirinaki Arm is a focal point for the landowners to see the sediment that is going on. That is a plus for doing the project in that area. .. they can 'see' the problem.

Have to be led by council [technical advisors / experts] as well – can't have farmers just being the ones to do it – otherwise we'd just rip in with tractors and chainsaws!

With the river management projects – we needed some technical insight. So we had a fairly good idea of maybe where the issues are and what needed doing, but we got funding to engage Tonkin and Taylor to complete a report for us. They came in – to identify sources of sediment and where choke holds are and came up with different options. [WRC] River Management Officers found it useful, but it was also good to have independent people come in – rather than regional council [doing it] - for community perception reasons.

Also had funding for iwi to identify sites of cultural significance and opportunities to enhance or remediate those sites. Each time a proposed project comes forward, iwi are able to put a cultural lens on it as well; 'if you changed this a bit then would make it good for access. Mahinga kai.⁷³ It's great to have them at the table.

The relationships with the farmers through the [working group] meetings has [worked well]. People have become more understanding of [the iwi] association to the catchment.

[We were] looking at the project in terms of the community – largely it was around – how do we get to understand the community with which we need to engage? A way in which the community

⁷³ Mahinga kai is about the value of natural resources that sustain life, including the life of people. It is about food gathering but also about gathering of other natural resources, and about managing the natural resources to enable this to occur.

themselves would get involved – how could we engage land owners to be involved in the pilot project? [Partners] were happy to work closely [with the community] because [it was an] opportunity to work with farmers in the catchment and form relationships.

The project has gained momentum – there are still passionate people driving it – and the same steering group and the same farmers and that has held up. We haven't met as much as we did last year – but then again projects have been – we are at a different stage of the project now. The stage of the project is different.

Regional Council has the 'expertise' in their own building – don't want to pay consultants. WRC have river specialists and soil scientists – let's have that high level of trust – and hopefully, as long as there is a good level of trust, most people are fairly honest. I think we have a good level of trust between regional council and the farmers ... the ones on the working group. Some other farmers would say, 'if the regional council comes on my farm will they look at my shit pond?' So we have to push back at that – we have to get that trust level up so a number of things that the group is trying to achieve [can happen]. I don't think anything will work unless we have trust between the authorities and [the community].

We have to be focused. Can't go out onto tangents. Have to be united as a committee. Make sure we don't – especially publically – we can't say [for example] 'this is a waste of time' to other farmers.

5.3.5.2 WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

The Whirinaki initiative has been operating for nearly two years and interviewees were asked to reflect on what they might have done differently, with the benefit of hindsight. There were mixed responses from interviewees in regards to some of the aspects of the project including: (i) the structure and (ii) the community engagement process.

STRUCTURE

The structure of having a working group had mixed reviews from interviewees. The main concern with the working group structure was that it created another layer of bureaucracy.

There is a drive to have meetings and I don't think that's effective. If there's not a real purpose then we are wasting people's time – there's too much bureaucracy.

On the other side, the working group was valued for its ability to link the partners (WRC and TARIT) with community landowners.

The reasons for setting up the working group were two-fold – always believe to get true empowerment you need to give them the empowerment and opportunity and what we were hearing from the community leaders was 'this is our project and we want to be fully involved in this.' There was a high level of engagement and appetite to own the project. The group are the biggest assets when it comes to 'selling' the project – doing the job for [us].

[The reason] for the 'working group' structure ... was to be community led / catchment led. There are two main communities [in the sub catchment], and those communities are strong in themselves and they think they are separate. To make sure it works, we don't want a 'them and us.' So, suggested a working group. There was a need for WRC to make this more a community thing than an 'officialdom start up', with community people on board and [the community] knows there is no payment etc.

However, whilst there was not necessarily full agreement on the working group structure, per se, and no one proposed an alternative structure, all agreed that having a structure which enabled the community leaders to have input and for the initiative to be community-led was important for the initiative to be effective.

Advantages of having a working group? There's so many. That real local knowledge. They live and farm in the catchment. They understand. They know where the issues and hot spots are. Having them feeding in to the site selection process is really, really valuable.

The purpose [of the working group] was to get a gauge from farmers themselves who [were in the catchment] [We] led this project out as 'by farmers for farmers'. Having a community driven steering group as opposed to a technical steering group – then that community group feeds into the technical.

That worked quite well. [What has worked?] the awareness that has come from having a working group [with farmers involved in it]– we're starting to achieve that buy-in from the community – for other landowners to see that they have their own sitting there.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

As was described in section 5.1, the process of gaining community engagement was initially quite 'fraught' with farmers receiving a copy of a UWCC paper, and being concerned about what was being planned, followed by WRC gaining WRA funding and going to the community with a plan to achieve some projects. The reception from the community was somewhat 'mixed' initially.

Interviewees reflected on this process and whilst stating that 'in hindsight' maybe they should have got the community on board first, they were hampered by the 'once a year funding' round and made the decision to apply, rather than wait another year. The effect of this decision was that the project took longer to get started, although still within a shorter timeframe than if they had waited until the following year.

In hindsight? It would have been great to take the community on the journey right from the beginning. WRA funding only opens once a year and we'd only decided a few months before that, that the Whirinaki was a priority area. We had engaged with our committee – and put some papers to them – but time was of the essence and we needed to get some funding applications in. In a perfect world – you'd go out to the community first. It hasn't hindered the project – it just meant that we were six months behind in the engagement process – so we had to get a project extension [of one year].

We applied for the funding before we had gone out and engaged the community and in hindsight we might have done it the other way around. But we thought let's get some dollars. So decided to get a bit of money to get a few projects, get community engaged etc, and get some 'flagship' projects done.

We just got on with it. Identified the issue and went out and got the funding.

It could [actually] have worked in our favour – getting the money and then going to them with the ability to do something. Rather than going out with 'nothing' to offer.

5.3.5.3 WHAT ELSE WOULD HELP

Interviewees were asked to comment on what else would help the initiative to be successful. Some interviewees mentioned continuing to have the components mentioned above such as project manager, being community-led, access to support, information, funding and advice. Three other themes emerged which were: (i) raising the profile; (ii) consistent information and (iii) succession planning.

RAISING THE PROFILE

Interviewees commented on the need to 'raise the profile' and gain more community engagement. As was described in section 5.3, ideas for this included having more visible sites, signage, field days and ways to encourage community involvement. The 'bridge site project' was highlighted as a signature project to achieve some of this.

We are looking at a site – it's a highly visible site – at the one way bridge – looking at doing some restoration planting and signage there – for [the farmers and community] it's important to hear about [the project] and see visible, tangible things to do with the project.

Selected farmers have to be willing to let us have a field day [on their farm] once it's established. That is one of the criteria.

CONSISTENT INFORMATION

A number of interviewees raised concerns about inconsistent messages and information being provided to farmers, and there was a view that there needed to be more wider education and consistent messages across the sub catchment.

Too many players in the catchment that are doing things and not talking to the group. People are going into the catchment – and not talking to us. 'If I don't want to retire class 4 or 6 land I'm not going to see [the group] 'cos they'll tell me to retire it. So I'll talk to 'x' because they won't get me to do that.'

Industry groups are providing advice – but it's different levels of advice. Some are advising on good practice not BEST practice. Still needs to be that education out there.

The Healthy Rivers advisors are trying to do more – but maybe not getting to the little groups. Maybe [we need to] have some more 'woolshed meetings' out there.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession planning was a key theme to emerge with interviewees focused on how to keep the initiative operating, once the WRA funding period was completed. There was recognition of the need to keep the work going. Whilst no one specific process was put forward as to how succession might happen, interviewees commented on options for further funding, partnerships and the long term focus of the initiative.

We see this as a long term project - not just two years.

Once the two years of funding is up then the community would be in a better place to keep the project going forward.

How do we keep succession in these groups? I don't have the answer. I've thought about it – for a long, long time – there is no answer that is successful. This group is harder – I suppose enthusiasm, or doing something all the time is a key ... these groups have to have a 20 year lifespan (or 40 years) – to see what us 'old buggers' did. So how do we keep that going? if there is anything I am

concerned about, it's succession. It's not a one person thing – it's not a whole group thing – do we change it to, 'if you have a project you can be on the group?'

We're probably – this side of June – we'll be talking about a plan to apply for more funding. Where that is from? It could be more than one or two different sources. Nothing concrete about that. The group is on board to apply for more funding. Do we need to partner with others? Could be Beef + Lamb, Fonterra, Miraka, Lakes Council. We are not going to achieve this with just eight farmers and regional council in the room. Partnerships is about succession as well – community-led with partners involved – either money, or if they want to be around the table.

5.3.5.4 OVERALL

Overall, the Whirinaki initiative has been one which started with some degree of 'angst' within the catchment and has developed into one where there is a working group which includes farmers, WRC and iwi who are focused on achieving outcomes for the community. A key theme from the Whirinaki initiative was the need to ensure that farmers are actively involved and part of the decision-making and leading of the process. A 'spin off' from the initiative has been the development of more positive relationships between WRC and farmers in the community. There is a need to raise the profile of the work being done in order to garner more community engagement and keep the momentum going as well as to plan for succession.

Plan Change 1 has not been as much of a feature of the Whirinaki initiative, partly due to the funding-driven nature of the initiative and it being separate to the plan change process. However, once Plan Change 1 becomes finalised, there may be more interest in the initiative and/or another period of 'concern' within the catchment. The current working group and partners in that group may find themselves in the position of being asked to assist farmers to access funding, expertise and advice and this may be a way in which the initiative develops into the future.

5.4 WHIRINAKI SUMMARY

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

The Whirinaki sub catchment is located north east of Lake Taupō within the Waikite Valley and Ngakuru rural districts, is classified in Plan Change 1 as a Priority 3 area, and is one of four priority areas in the Upper Waikato Zone Plan. The area sits within the Waikato River Catchment. In 1961 the creation of Ohakuri Dam flooded a 12km stretch of the Whirinaki Stream which is now more commonly known as the Whirinaki Arm.

The Whirinaki initiative is primarily a soil conservation project characterised by having WRA funding and a 'working group' comprised of iwi representation, WRC staff and local landowners and has been in operation for approximately 18 months, starting in 2017. Prior to the establishment of the working group, WRC staff had determined that Whirinaki was a priority area and had tabled reports to the UWCC about this. In August 2017 WRC and TARIT successfully secured WRA funding to undertake a two year 'soil conservation and river management' initiative. Farmers became involved after the funding had been received as either working group members or as landowners who have a project on their property. The initiative has a project manager role, which was filled by a WRC staff member for the first 12 months, and is now divided between three WRC staff. As at 31 March 2019 the initiative had eight projects underway out of a planned twenty, five of which are completed.

The reasons why farmers have got involved in the initiative include:

- UWCC report - farmers met with WRC to discuss the report then became involved with the initiative.

- Community engagement work – project manager actively engaged landowners.
- Environmental – awareness of the issues and wanting to be involved in the solutions.
- Financial – WRA funding.

The following were reported as factors that do or could enable engagement:

- Peer pressure – motivator for getting other farmers to engage with the initiative.
- Community owned – community involvement created sense of ownership.
- Raising the profile - via visible project sites, signage, field days.
- Plan Change 1 - a catalyst to get involved and access funding, before works become compulsory.

STRENGTHS

Interviewees reported the following advantages of being involved in a sub catchment group:

- Learning from each other – WRC staff getting farmer input into decisions and farmers accessing staff technical knowledge.
- Preparation for Plan Change 1 – some actions completed, increased farmer knowledge of nutrient loss and water quality issues.

The main risk of *not* getting involved was reported as:

- Missed opportunity – not wanting to be the community that had the opportunity but did not do it.

The project manager role was a strength of the initiative. Key findings were:

- Unanimous support for the previous project manager and for the project manager role.
- The project manager role was valued because it kept people informed and the project 'on track.'
- The project manager leaving had impacted on the project - less cohesiveness, lack of clarity in the structure, not having one person who stayed 'on top' of things.
- The skills needed by a project manager were identified as: (i) technical knowledge; (ii) the ability to work well with others; (iii) approachability; (iv) reliability; (v) having enthusiasm for the project; and (vi) scoping and planning skills.

Enabling on farm change was a strength. Reported changes included the following:

- Improved relationship with WRC and a greater understanding of the work of WRC.
- On farm soil conservation projects - five completed, three due to start.
- On farm actions (outside of the initiative projects) – fencing, retiring, planting, changed management practices.

LEARNINGS

In terms of what works, the following themes emerged:

- Being community-led and community-driven.
- Having farmers involved with the working group - to provide local knowledge and engage others.
- Having a skilled project manager – to drive the project and keep the momentum going;
- Being focused on the goals – to ensure that the work happens.
- Having 'passionate' people involved – to keep up the momentum.
- Having a visual 'focal point' so people can 'see' the problem – i.e. sediment build-up in the Whirinaki Arm.
- Funding – to get projects completed.
- Access to expert technical advice both internal and external – to assess sites and solutions.
- Having iwi at the table.
- Having WRC, community and iwi 'united and working together' – to develop relationships, trust and a co-ordinated approach.

In terms of what else would help the initiative to be successful the following was reported:

- Raising the profile – more visible sites, signage, field days, completing ‘the bridge project.’
- Having consistent messages and information from all parties including industry, WRC, farm advisors and others working in the sector.
- Succession planning – keeping it going post the WRA funding and beyond.

In terms of other learnings:

- The working group model has pros and cons – it creates another layer of bureaucracy, but it links WRC and TARIT with landowners, enables input from community leaders, ensures it is community-led and as such is a key factor in it being effective.
- The community engagement process was initially ‘fraught’ - WRC and TARIT got WRA funding, then went to the community rather than approaching the community first. The effect was a ‘mixed’ reception from the community and the project taking longer to get started, although still within a shorter timeframe than if they had waited until the following year to apply for funding.

CHALLENGES

Reasons why people are not engaged in the initiative were reported as:

- Lack of awareness - not knowing about the initiative.
- Waiting to see what happens - both with the initiative and with Plan Change 1.
- Financial constraints – not being able to afford to part-fund an action and/or prioritising other compliance issues.

Overall, the Whirinaki initiative highlights the importance of ensuring that farmers are actively involved and part of the decision-making in sub catchment initiatives. Whilst Plan Change 1 has not been a significant feature of the Whirinaki initiative, once it becomes finalised, there may be more interest and the working group may find themselves being asked to assist farmers to access funding, expertise and advice and this may be a way in which the initiative develops into the future.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The following presents a brief summary of the findings of the process evaluation and concludes with some final comments.

6.2 KEY FINDINGS

The process evaluation focused on three sub catchment planning initiatives in the Waikato Region with the aim to identify strengths, challenges and learning opportunities from these initiatives. The initiatives were chosen as they were all at different stages of development, with different foci, components and approaches. Two, for example were farmer-led and had a co-ordinator funded by the MNNIFC whilst the other one was led out by WRC but with a working group of farmers, WRC and iwi. One initiative did not have any specific funding for projects whilst the other two had access to funding for certain activities. One area had a number of smaller farmer groups while the other two had one main group.

There were varied reasons why farmers became involved in the initiatives including 'negative triggers' such as Plan Change 1 being notified as well as other incentives such as wanting to have control over what was being planned, being environmentally aware or wanting to access available funding. Active community engagement work by co-ordinators, Beef + Lamb and WRC staff were also catalysts for involvement. The importance of farmer leaders, 'listening' to farmers and connecting back to the needs on farm were also stressed. Identified barriers to engagement ranged from not choosing to get involved, uncertainty about the rules, or being too busy through to not knowing about the initiatives or projects or seeing little benefit of being involved.

Although the initiatives were in the early stages of development they had resulted in increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of Plan Change 1 and the work of WRC, improved relationships with WRC, and a range of planned and completed on farm actions. In terms of what else would help the initiatives to be successful there was a need to raise the profile, to provide consistent and accurate messages and information, solutions that work and resourcing for mitigations and to plan for succession. There was no 'one' model that emerged as being the best approach. However there was support for being community-led and having a co-ordinator or project manager to keep the momentum going.

6.3 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Overall, long term change is a challenge and recurring themes to ensure success were to make sure that the farmers are invested and actively involved in the process; that is that it is farmer-led and farmer-driven and as well that there are consistent messages about Plan Change 1, waterway health and actions that work, from all parties including industry good, WRC, farm advisors and others working in the sector.