

Waikato



REGIONAL COUNCIL

Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato

Strategy and Policy Committee

18 June 2026

[waikatoregion.govt.nz](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz)

Submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill and National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS)

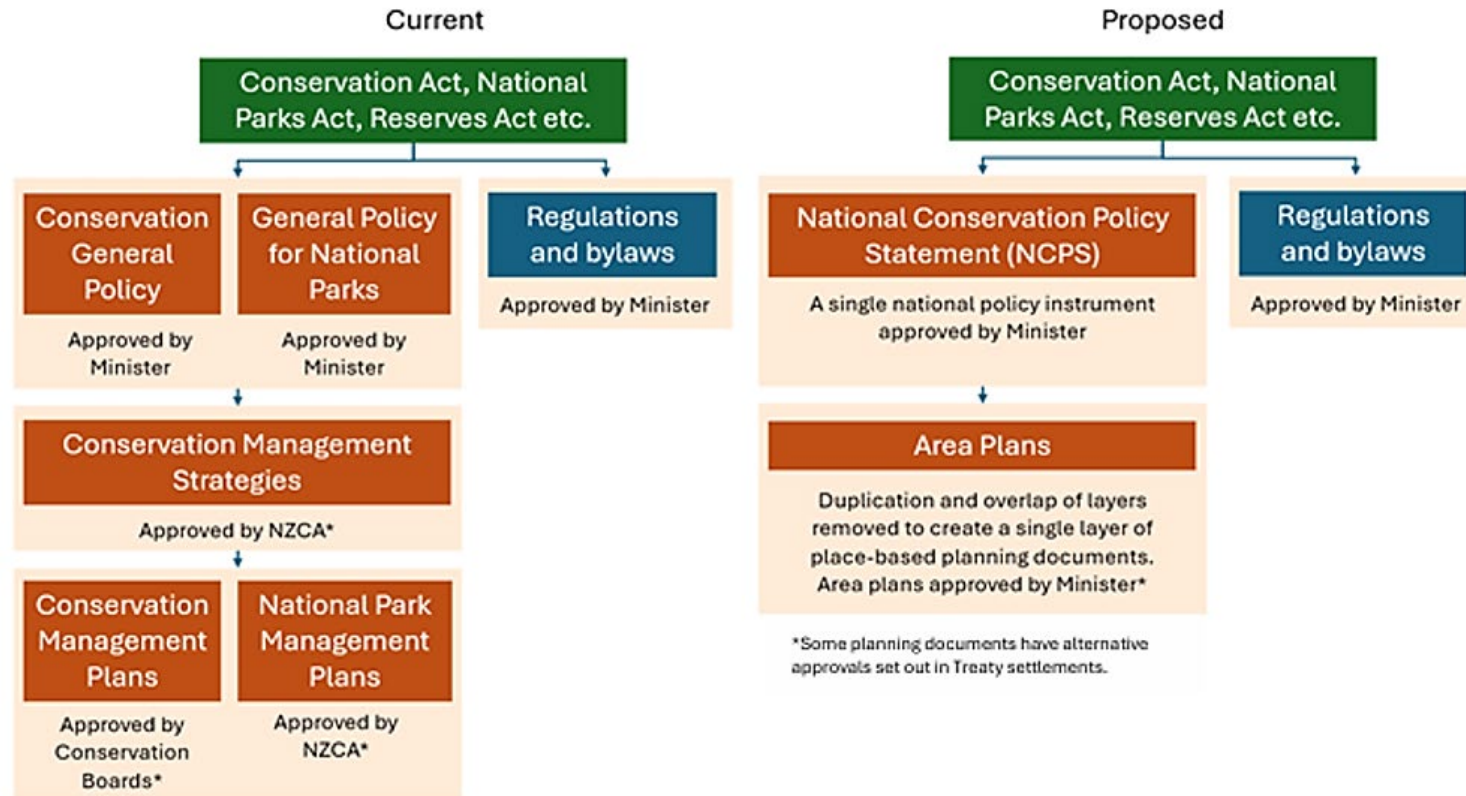
Presenter: Judy van Rossem

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Conservation Amendment Bill

Overall Position:

Support a more modern conservation framework, but stronger safeguards are needed to protect environmental outcomes and ensure effective implementation



Proposed Content for the National Conservation Policy Statement

Streamlined area planning supported, with expert input and stronger alignment with RMA, spatial planning, and climate/hazard management

Visitor zones must prioritise conservation over development

Expand exemptions and pre-approved pathways to include council statutory activities

Strengthen safeguards for exempt/pre-approved activities, including protection of sensitive areas

Better alignment with national policy instruments (e.g. NPS-FM)

Ensure land reclassification considers biodiversity, river health, and natural hazard protection



Submission on the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Amendment Bill

Presenter: Naomi Crawford

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Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO)



Faster Biosecurity Response Pathways

Supports rapid emergency approval pathways for biological and chemical tools during biosecurity adverse events.



Unified "Environmental Medium" Definition

Aligns national and regional frameworks by defining environmental medium as air, water, soil, and surfaces.



Formalized Transhipment Approvals

Backs new requirements for high-risk materials moving through Waikato's critical freight corridors.



Maintaining Regional Enforcement Autonomy

Seeks to exclude regional councils from EPA "step-in" powers to avoid regulatory duplication.



Safeguarding Stricter Local Standards

National standards for pollutants must not override more stringent regional rules protecting vulnerable aquifers.



Mandatory 5-Day Notification Window

Requests the EPA notify affected regional councils within five working days of all relevant applications.

Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO)

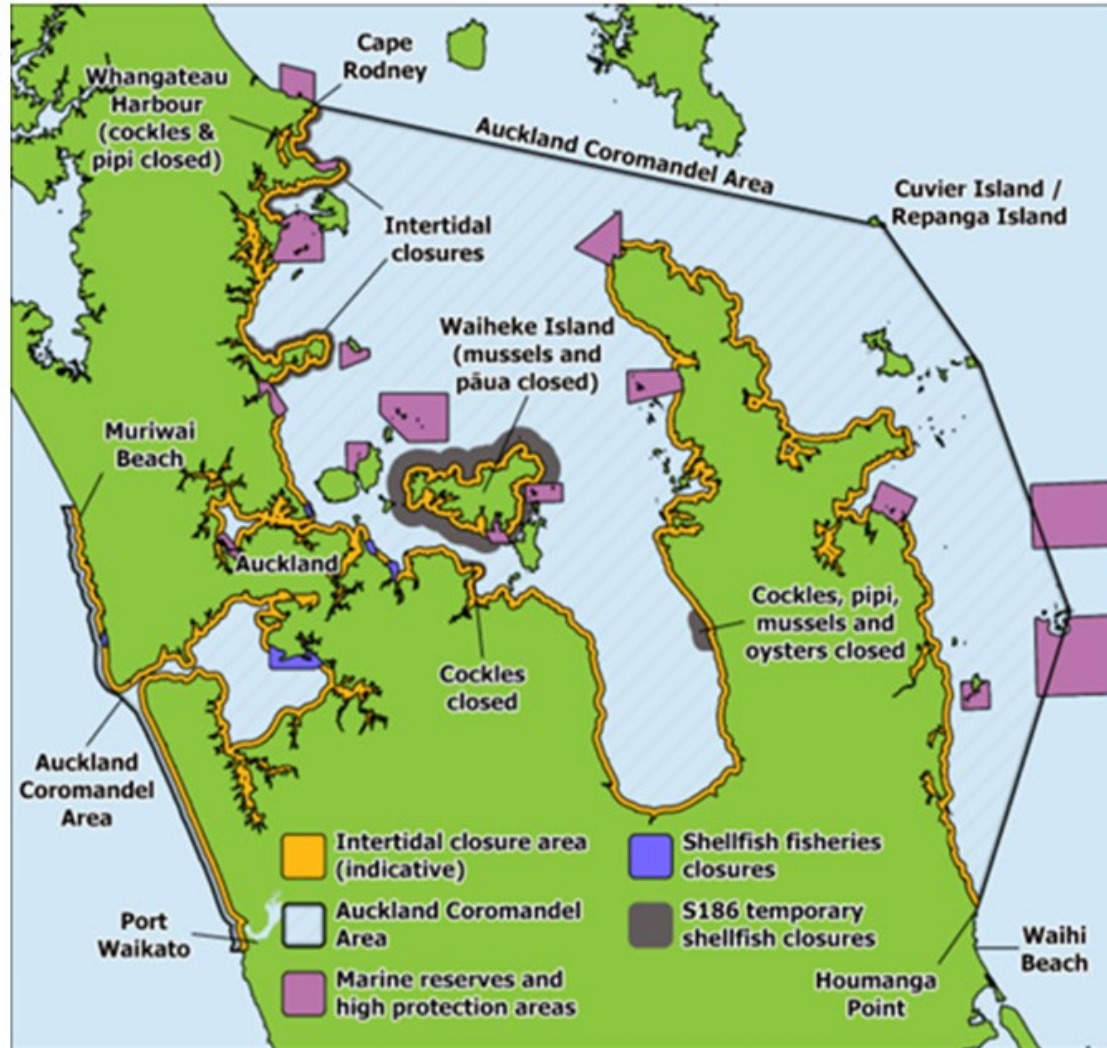
- Have lodged a 'holding' submission
- Support for:
 - Rapid emergency pathways
 - Clearer direction on Persistent Organic Pollutants
 - Formalisation of transshipment approvals, and explicit notification obligations
 - Updated definition of 'environmental medium'
 - Excluding regional council from EPAs 'step-in' enforcement powers

Submission on the review of measures for shore-based harvesting in the Auckland Coromandel area

Presenter: Naomi Crawford

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Review of measures for shore-based harvesting in the Auckland Coromandel area



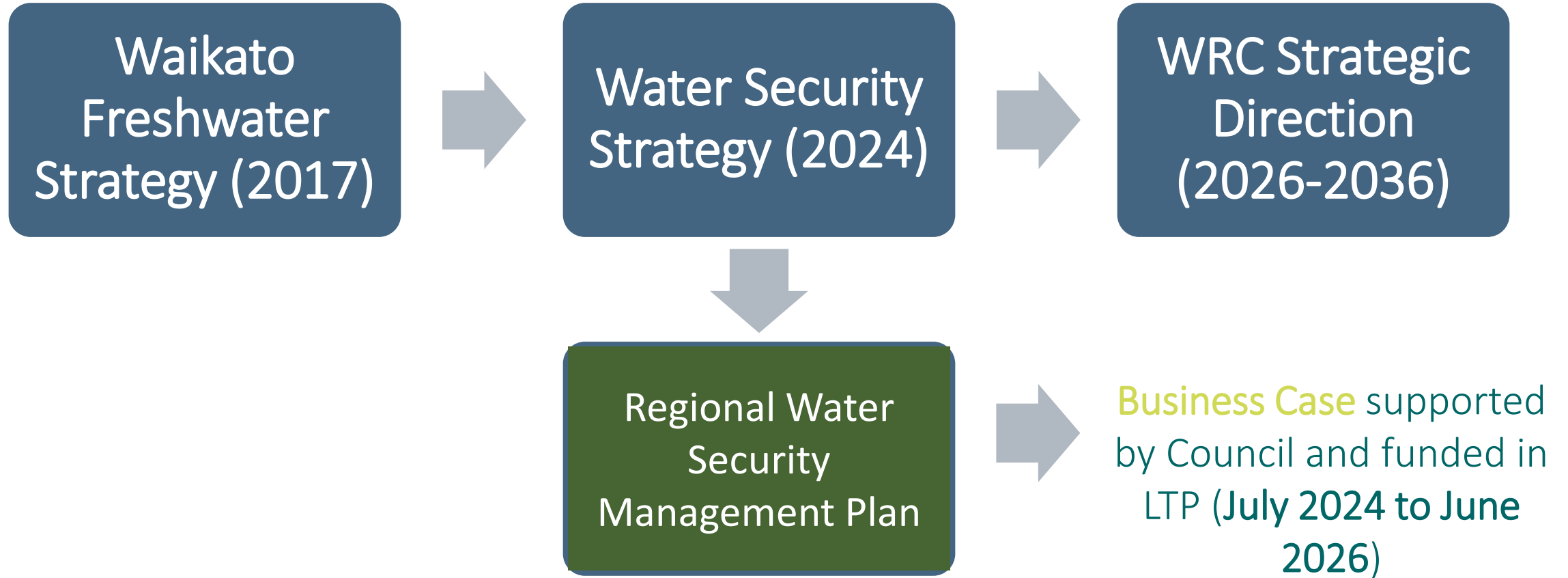
- The draft submission supports **Option 4** (partial intertidal closure + reduced daily limits) as the best balance between improving shellfish sustainability and maintaining recreational and customary access

Waikato Water Security Action Plan

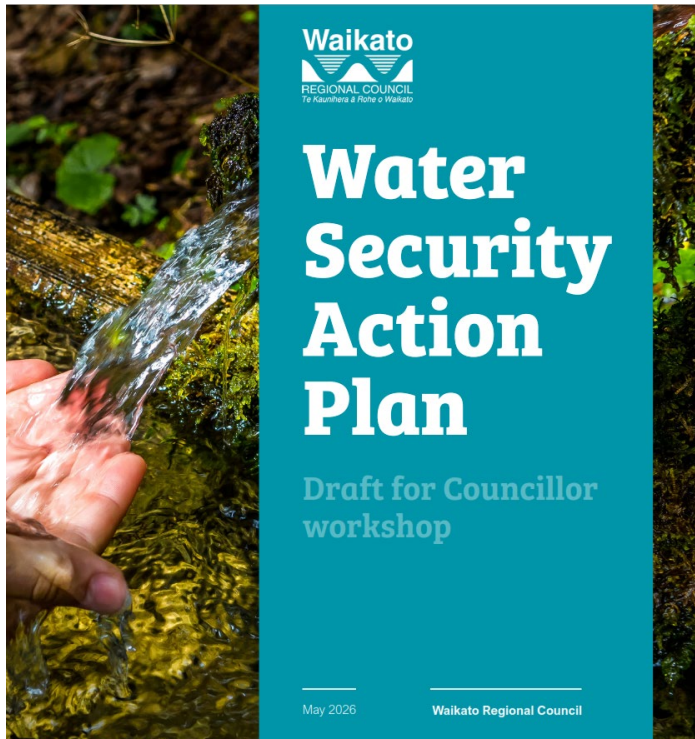
Presenter: Thomas Wilding

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Background – how we got here...



The Water Security Action Plan



What it is...

- Region wide
- Programme of actions
- Adaptive planning pathway response to the regions' water security challenges

What it is not...

- A review of allocation policy
- Site selection for storage etc.
- Modelling

Key Outcomes



Deliver action with clear owners, timelines, and measurable outcomes



Build on what already works and scale proven initiatives



Lift operational efficiency and demand management



Prioritise by risk and use adaptive pathways with clear decision triggers



Integrate catchment-wide outcomes with strong governance and partnerships

Key messages

Water security is already a live risk, not a future issue

The region needs to move from reactive to planned, staged decision-making (**DAPP**)

The immediate priority is improving efficiency and demand management (**Operational Actions**)

Major infrastructure is likely (**Strategic Options**) but only when clearly justified

Priority catchments (**Piako and Waikato**) require urgent, co-ordinated action

Delivery depends on partnerships, not just WRC action

22 Operational actions

BAU business as usual – work that is already programmed and budgeted for

BAU+ expanded business as usual – would require additional funding

New new work not programmed or currently funded

Delivery	Operational Action	What Catchment/s?	Current Status	Description
Critical Enablers	Metering and leakage reduction	All	BAU	Maintain metering in Cambridge and Te Awamutu; work with providers to scope and prioritise metering expansion across remaining schemes and large industrial users.
		All	New	Design and implement a cross sector metering and leakage programme: standardise data capture, embed continuous leakage monitoring with trigger thresholds, and require improvement actions when losses exceed limits.
	Monitoring / regulating groundwater extraction (compliance telemetry and logging)	All	BAU	Operate the groundwater level network; require meters/telemetry for takes; audit data quality and follow up on anomalies.
		All	BAU	Apply consent conditions and sustainable yield limits; assess local and cumulative effects and enforce compliance.
		Priority	BAU+	Clarify sustainable yield policy to account for cumulative stream depletion; prepare plan change materials and technical guidance.
	Ecological response modelling	Priority	BAU	Set allocation limits informed by ecological response; use conservative defaults in low pressure catchments and detailed models for high value/pressure systems per Method 3.3.4.9.
		Priority	New	Develop reach/species specific flow–ecology models and resilience metrics; calibrate with historic and simulated flows to inform limits and consent conditions.

Six strategic options

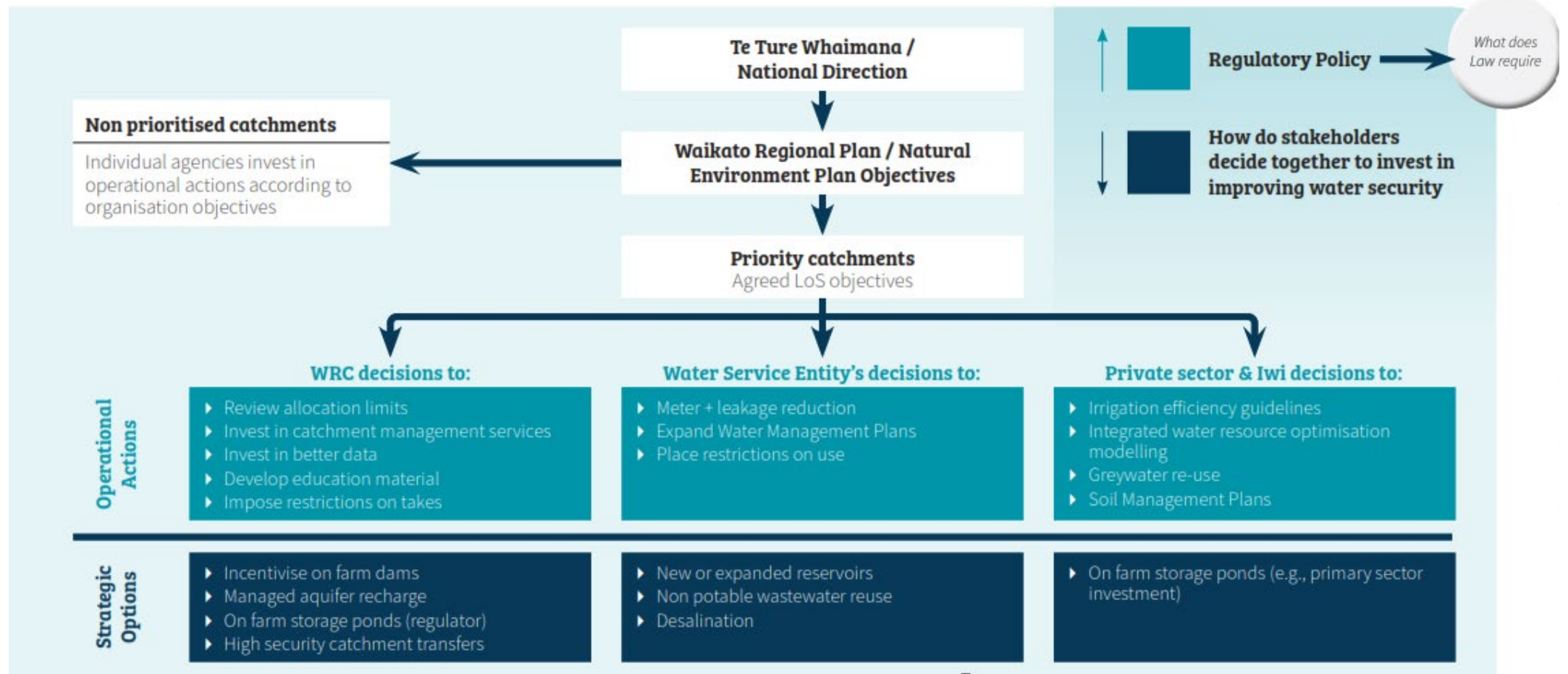


How long does it take to deliver these options?

Strategic Option	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03	Year 04	Year 05	Year 06	Year 07	Year 08	Year 09	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Year 14	Year 15	Year 16
Managed Aquifer Recharge	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Construct new reservoirs or expand existing	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Treat wastewater for non-potable uses	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Encourage On-Farm Storage Ponds	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Desalination	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Small Desalination	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
High Security Catchment Transfers	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█

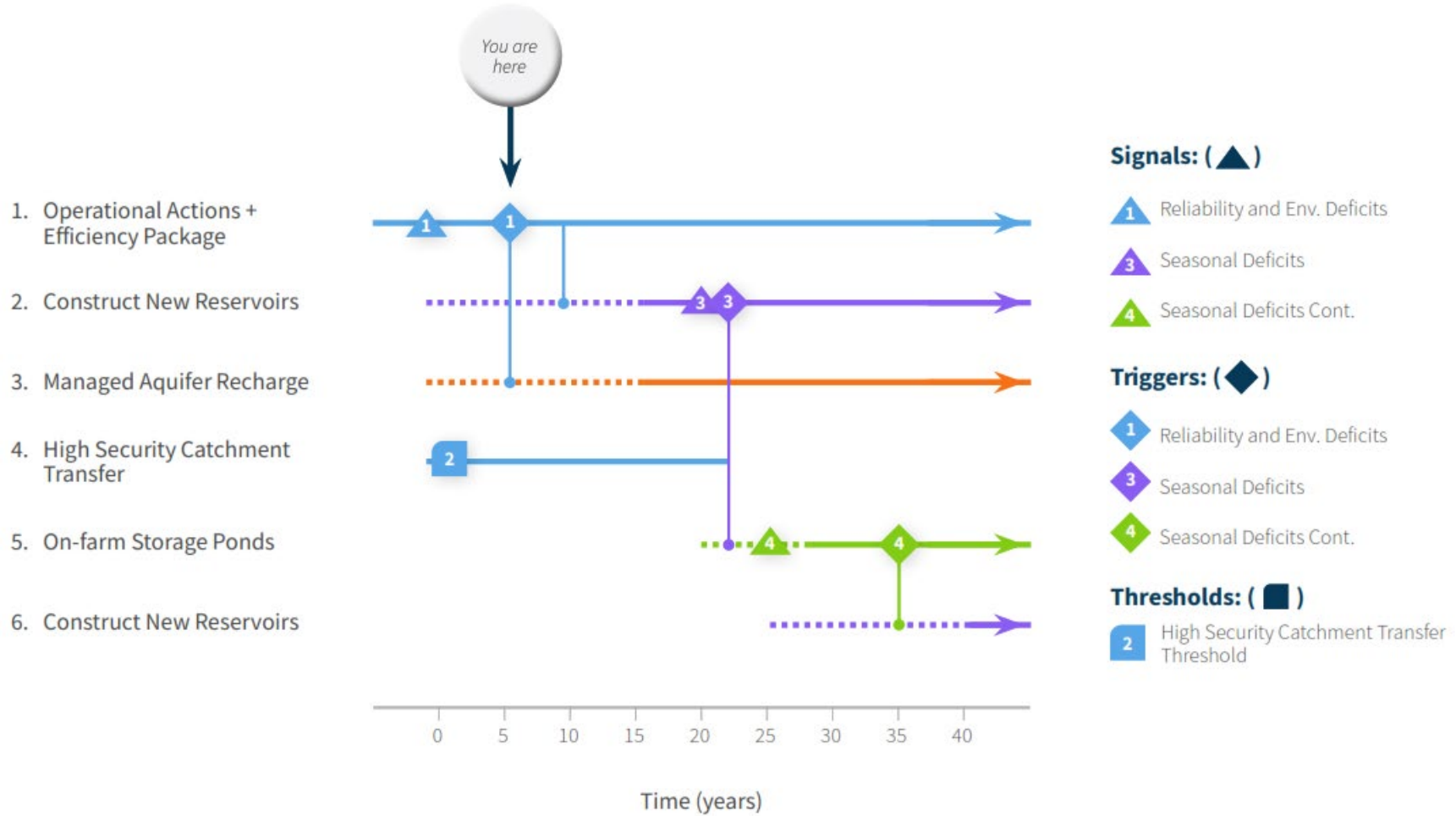
Near Term: Scoping, Feasibility, Early Engagement, Design Requirements, Yield Assessment
Medium Term: Design, Pilot Studies, Decision Gate Scale Up
Long Term: Construction, Scaling, Integration into Operations

Decision making framework



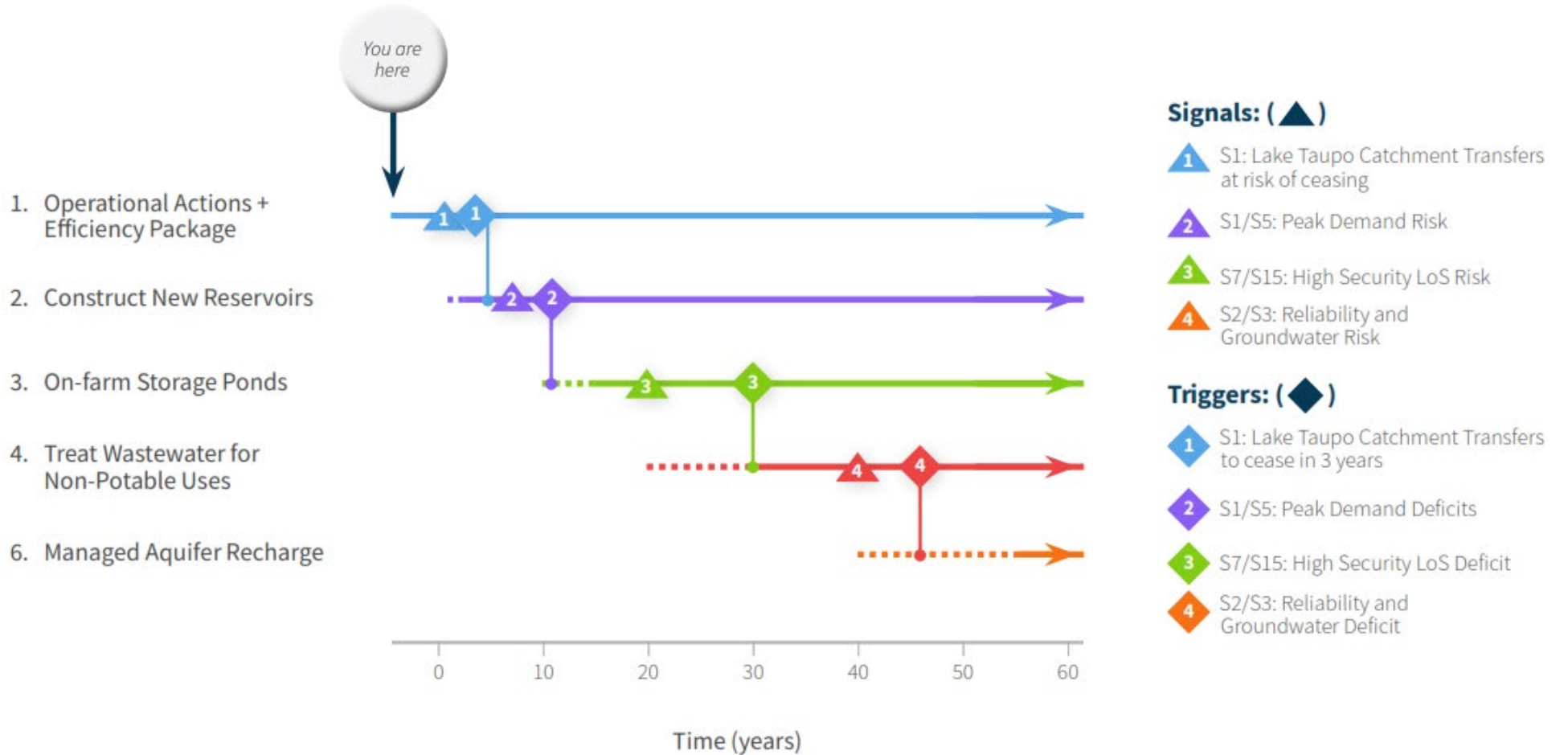
Dynamic Adaptive Planning Pathway

Recommended for Piako catchment



Dynamic Adaptive Planning Pathway

Recommended for Waikato catchment



Super El Nino

- El Niño likely to strengthen over coming months, raising concern for drought risk
- Opportunity to communicate drought learnings, including:
 - Recap of past droughts to help people prepare for the next drought
 - Water security actions for long-term drought mitigation
- Assemble a Piako Water Security Group for
 - near-term actions for El Niño
 - then Water Security Action Plan tasks

2027-37 Long Term Plan development

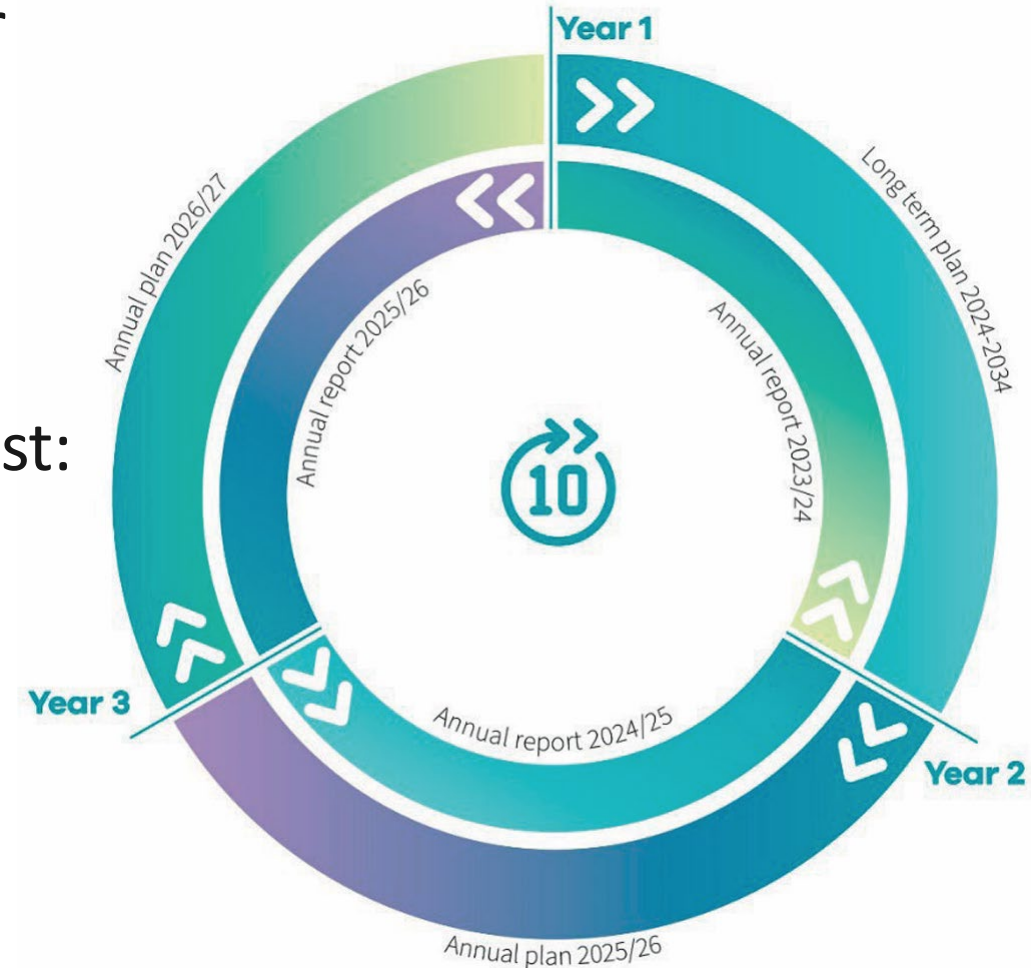
Presenter: Jane Apperley

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2027-2037 LTP

Planning and development

- Developed every three years with 10-year planning horizon
- Must be adopted by 30 June 2027, following community consultation
- In a high-change environment the LTP must:
 - Support future transition arrangements
 - Maintain clear assumptions
 - Consider, and plan to include, legislative change
 - Be flexible with adjustments made as required
 - Streamline processes where practical
 - Remain LGA and audit compliant



2027-2037 LTP

Direction

- Key vehicle to give effect to *Te Pae Tawhiti*, Council's Strategic Direction 2026 – 2036
- Delivery of outcomes in an effective, efficient and affordable manner
- Opportunity for comprehensive review of Council expenditure, supported by information provided to Committees on current expenditure, resourcing and outcomes
- Consultation in April 2027 will include future for Te Huia passenger rail beyond trial and additional matters that may be identified through LTP development (guided by Council direction, legislative requirements and Council's Significance and Engagement Policy)

2027-2037 LTP Governance

- Active ownership from councillors to ensure confidence in decisions
- Schedule of workshops throughout 2026 leading to consultation and decisions in 2027
- Strategy and Policy Committee will receive updates on development of the LTP
- All formal decisions will be made by full Council

Timeline	
June – December 2026	Workshops and plan development
Early 2027	Draft LTP budget approved
April 2027	Public consultation
May 2027	Hearings and final decisions
June 2027	Adoption of final LTP

Review of the Significance and Engagement Policy

Presenter: Jane Apperley

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Significance and Engagement Policy (SEP)

- LGA requires all councils to have a current SEP. Policy covers:
 - Council's approach to determining 'significance'
 - criteria or process for assessing matters and proposals
 - Council's response to community preferences about engagement
 - how Council will engage with communities.
- SEP is reviewed every three years and consulted on with the community Review has been undertaken, and 6 minor changes recommended
- Consultation will occur prior to LTP to enable the updated policy to be applied to LTP matters

Proposed changes

- Proposed change 1: Update Resource Management Act 1991 to ‘resource management legislation.’
- Proposed change 2: Remove the definition of ‘significant activity.’
- Proposed change 3: Add an additional paragraph as follows:

“Assessing the level of significance of a decision or proposal will be a matter of judgement. All the above criteria will be considered but depending on the circumstances, some criteria may carry greater relevance than others. The outcome of the assessment will be high, medium, or low significance.”

Proposed changes

- Proposed change 4: Amend bullet point 6 under 'Assessment of Significance' in the SEP, to reference levels of service instead of significant activities.
 - ~~Whether the proposal affects the level of service of a significant activity~~
 - *Whether the proposal impacts on the level of service provided by Council or the way in which the level of service is delivered.*
- Proposed change 5: Include the following new criterion:
 - *Whether there has been a prior commitment to consult with the community on a specific matter.*
- Proposed change 6: Make minor changes to the example tools listed in the engagement tools table.

Update on National Direction - natural hazards, infrastructure, marine aquaculture, commercial forestry, papakāinga, electricity network activities and telecommunication facilities

Presenter: Naomi Crawford

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Update on national direction

Result of Packages 1, 2 and 4 from 2025

NPS-NH - Natural Hazards (New)

NPS-I - Infrastructure (New)

NES-MA – Marine Aquaculture (Amended)

NES-CF – Commercial Forestry (Amended)

NES-P - Papakāinga (New)

NES-ENA - Electricity Network Activities
(scope expanded, covers broader network)

NES-TF - Telecommunication Facilities
(Amended)



Update on national direction



STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION & RISKS



Immediate Legal Effect on Consenting

National direction must be applied to resource consents immediately, even before regional plans update.



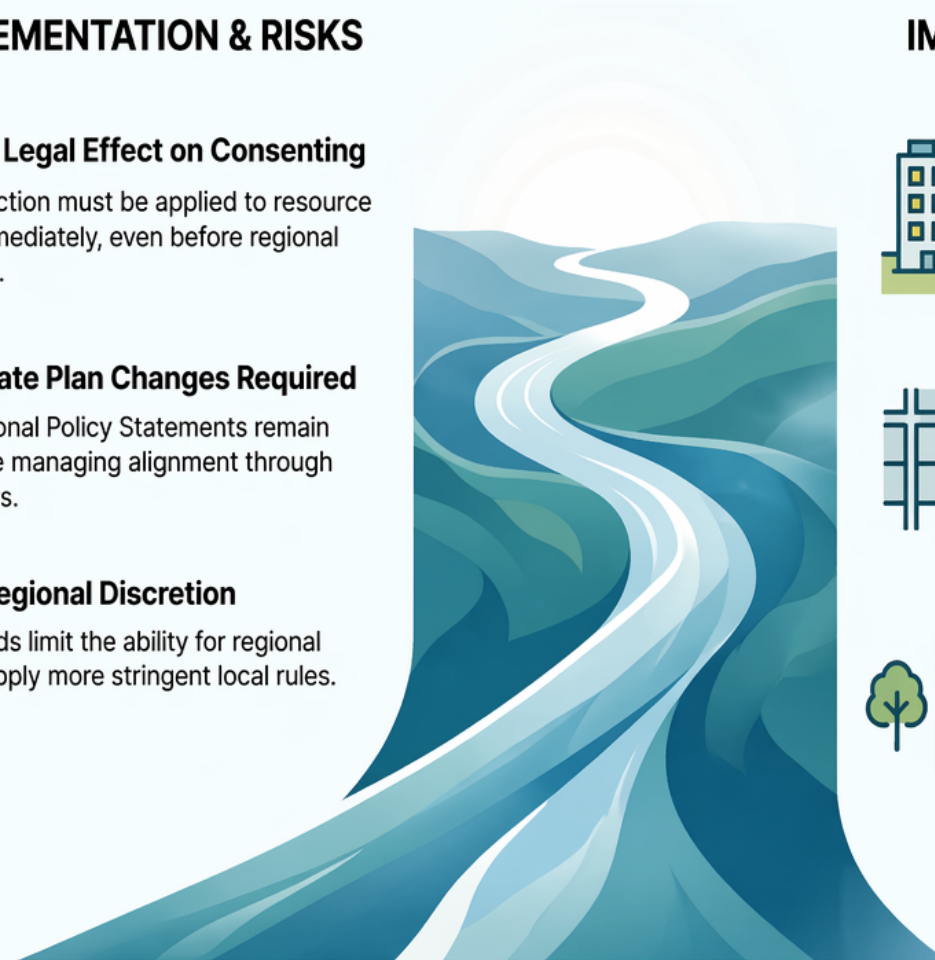
No Immediate Plan Changes Required

Current Regional Policy Statements remain in place while managing alignment through future reviews.



Reduced Regional Discretion

New standards limit the ability for regional councils to apply more stringent local rules.



IMPACTS ON KEY POLICY AREAS



The Infrastructure vs. Hazard Paradox

Infrastructure is excluded from strict hazard-avoidance rules, creating complexity for mixed-use developments.



Rigid Natural Hazard Risk Matrix

The NPS-NH introduces a standardized 'avoid' threshold for high-risk areas like flooding.



Primary Sector Standardization

New forestry and aquaculture rules prioritize national consistency over regionally tailored environmental management.

Update on national direction

- Immediate legal effect on consenting
- No immediate changes required to the WRPS, WRP or RCP
- Primary implications are for implementation through consenting, and plan interpretation
- Matters will need to be carefully managed in practice, guidance given to consenting staff

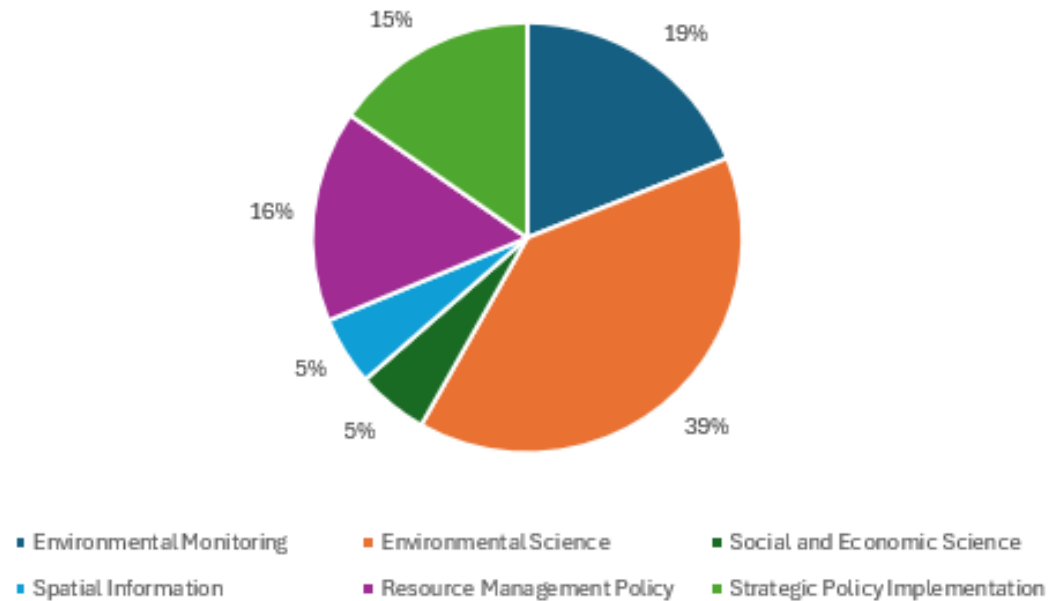
Committee cost of activities (Science, Policy and Information)

Presenter: Tracey May

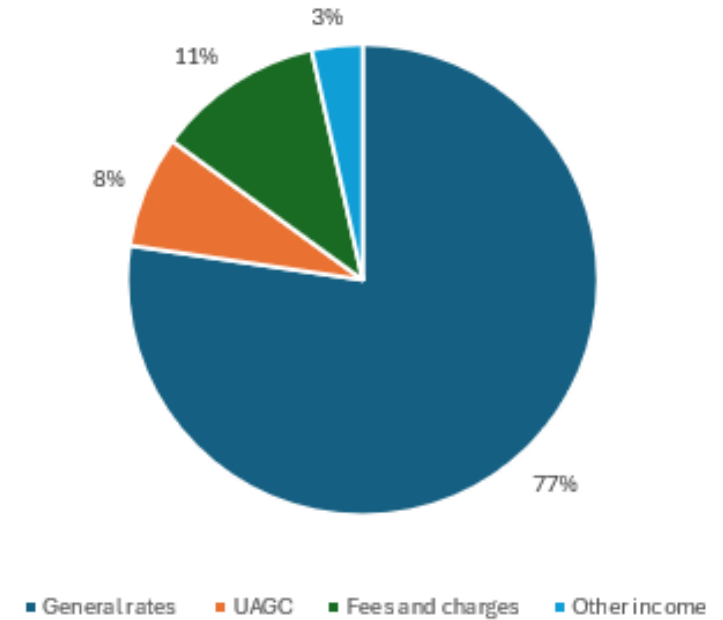
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Overview of cost of activities (SPI)

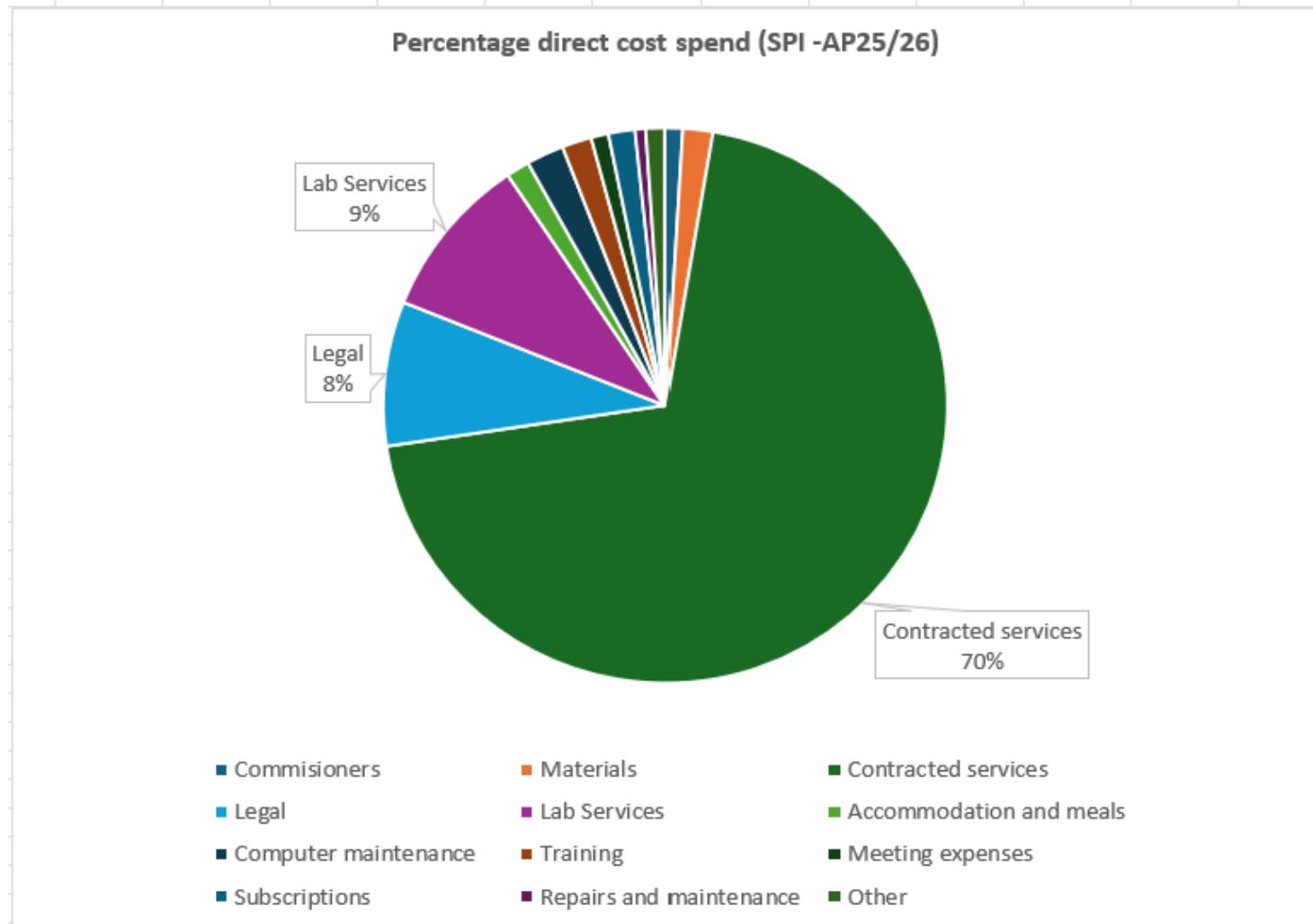
Distribution of costs(%) SPI Directorate



Revenue sources SPI Directorate



Direct costs overview (AP25/26 - \$8.4m)



Where are the areas for focus going into the LTP process?

What aspects of the business do councillors want to understand more?

What further information would be useful in LTP discussions?

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POLICY WORK PROGRAMME REFOCUS 2026/27

Presenter: Jo Bromley

[waikatoregion.govt.nz](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz)

The context and rationale

- National reform impact
- Key details are still uncertain, but change is significant
- Still must meet current legal obligations
- Working under two systems at the same time

What this means?

- Refocus – on work that remains useful and avoid duplication
- Avoid spending on may need to be redone
- Readiness to respond once national direction is confirmed

Approach: “Pause but be ready”

Work that continues	What that is paused	Why this approach?
Maintain existing plans and legal obligations	Detailed policy drafting under the current framework	Reduces risk of duplication and waste effort
Progressing appeals and plan maintenance	Developing new rules and regulatory provisions	Protects ratepayer investment
Building science, data and evidence base (i.e., monitoring, modelling and economic analysis)	Setting environmental limits under the existing system	Keeps council flexible and ready as national policies evolve.
Improving data and spatial information to support future planning	Full plan reviews tied to current legislation (regional plans and policy statements) – as these are likely to be replaced	Balances current responsibilities with future readiness
Maintaining relationships with stakeholders and iwi	Formal policy engagement processes on options that may change.	Work that is likely to change is paused
Preparing for future national direction (Regional Spatial Plan and Natural Environment Plan)		Essential and ensuring work continues

What does this deliver for the region?

Short-term compliance and confidence

Meeting legal obligations, ensuring compliance and maintaining confidence in the short term

Strengthens decision-making

Ongoing investment in science and evidence strengthens decision-making capabilities for current and future decisions

Long-term planning and risk reduction

Ensures the region remains prepared, credible and able to respond quickly once national direction is clear, while still meeting current obligations

He taiao mauriora

Healthy environment

He ōhanga pakari

Strong economy

He hapori hihiri

Vibrant communities

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