

# Department Of Conservation River Restoration Context

## Key messages

### Primary

- Freshwater funding from Budget '18 will see DOC work with iwi, council and community partners to restore 14 river catchments around New Zealand from 'mountains to the sea'
- New Zealand's rivers have been impacted by pollution, land use change, invasion by pest species, deforestation, and run off
- Restoring the ecological integrity of our river catchments will contribute to the long-term resilience of freshwater systems and the native species they support
- DOC will invest \$9 million of the Budget '18 funds to support the ecological restoration of the priority river catchments over the next four years, ramping up to \$4m per year thereafter
- Around \$140k per annum per catchment will go to on-the-ground operations to restore the 14 priority catchments. This is in addition to funding for salaries and monitoring and research
- Priority river funding will put more staff on the ground and provide more technical expertise so DOC can work with partners and communities on the best ways to restore river catchments
- With our partners we will identify threats and pressures, and opportunities and activities for restoration
- Depending on the river catchment, restoration activities could include work with partners on habitat restoration, pest control, establishing water quality and quantity limits, addressing fish barriers, managing fishing pressures, creating ecological linkages and corridors, and safeguarding against climate change
- DOC's priority river catchment work supports the Government's Essential Freshwater programme plan to restore and protect freshwater systems in New Zealand

### Secondary

- Partnerships will be the key to successful river catchment restoration. The new funding, on its own, won't deliver full ecological restoration at each of these catchments.
- DOC will use its resources to work collaboratively and in partnership with Treaty partners, regional councils, other government agencies such as MfE and MPI, existing community

restoration groups, private landowners, Fish and Game, universities, science institutions, private business partners and local councils

- In the first instance, Budget '18 funding for priority rivers will be used to recruit for locally based river coordinator positions.
- These roles are a crucial for building relationships with iwi partners, stakeholders, landowners and other agencies
- The river rangers will establish partnerships and pull a collective together to agree on a common vision, identify the threats and pressures facing the catchment, identify the opportunities for restoration, the actions needed to achieve the vision
- DOC will boost its technical, partnership, planning, monitoring and reporting expertise, so each catchment coordinator has a strong cross functional team to draw upon for support.
- Money from the budget will help to optimise our the freshwater research we do in partnership with other research providers such as Landcare Research and universities.
- Monitoring and reporting are essential elements of the work so we can chart progress towards restoration targets.
- Two of DOC's priority rivers – the Hoteo and Te Hoiere – have been identified by the Minister for the Environment as exemplar catchments. The Manahurikia is also an exemplar catchment which isn't in the DOC's priority river programme, but already benefits from DOC and Otago Regional Council restoration activities.

## **Q&As**

### **Why is DOC involved in catchment restoration work?**

One of DOC's key roles is to enhance New Zealand's natural heritage. This includes river ecosystems, so DOC has a goal to see 50 freshwater ecosystems restored from mountains to the sea.

However, DOC isn't actually mandated to manage catchments or freshwater quality or quantity. This is the role of councils. Therefore, achieving the goal of restoring a river to a healthy functioning state will involve DOC working collaboratively with regional councils, Treaty partners, and communities.

The priority rivers' work programme will allow DOC to boost collaborative restoration work by contributing resources, lessons from its other site restoration work, and operational and technical skills and expertise.

### **How much of the Budget '18 money will each priority river get?**

We're at the early stages of our priority rivers' work programme. Specific funding for each priority river will only be determined once DOC has worked with partners to scope the restoration work and identify the resources needed.

### **How will you know when the priority river catchments are successfully restored?**

For each priority river, we will work with partners on agreed restoration goals.

Progress along the way will be measured through assessments against the restoration plan, the number and strength of the relationships with partners, the usefulness of research in terms of reviewing and refining restoration activities undertaken, and direct, instream measures of ecological health.

### **What is your strategy for restoring the 14 river catchments?**

Resources from Budget '18 will be used in the first instance to recruit for locally based river coordinator positions. These roles have been found a crucial element in the first phase of DOC's similar programmes, in terms of building relationships with iwi partners, stakeholders, landowners and other agencies to do planning work.

The first challenge for those roles will be to establish partnerships and pull a collective together to be able to agree on a common vision, identify the threats and pressures facing the catchment, identify the opportunities for restoration, the actions needed to achieve the vision – including who will take the lead and what resources will be required – and how the work will be monitored and reported on.

We are also increasing the amount of freshwater technical, partnership and planning/monitoring and reporting expertise within DOC, so each catchment coordinator will have a strong cross functional team to draw upon for support.

### **How did you decide which catchments to prioritise?**

We used a mixture of technical analysis and expert local knowledge from DOC staff to identify river catchments with the greatest restoration potential. Our criteria included high biodiversity values, existing community engagement and the potential to fix current pressures.

### **Where are the 14 priority rivers?**

We have already begun scoping or having early discussions for eight priority catchments: Hotoe River (Auckland), Mahurangi River (Auckland), Waikanae River (Kapiti), Rangitata River (Canterbury), Lower Waitaki River (Canterbury), Te Hoiere/Pelorus River (northern South Island), Waipoua River (Northland), and Arahura River (western South Island).

We expect to announce six more priority catchments over the next financial year (July 2019-June 2020).