

Taranaki Biodiversity Priorities Forum Discussion Report

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato



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Executive Summary

On February 26th 2016 the Taranaki Biodiversity forum for regional priority setting was attended by around 75 people who represented Taranaki Biodiversity Trust members and interested parties. The objective of the forum was to identify priority areas for, and approaches to, the protection and enhancement of native biodiversity in the Taranaki region on a landscape scale. These priorities will inform and direct the work of the Taranaki Biodiversity Trust members.

The forum discussions were framed by the four following focus questions and responses were analysed using a basic framework analysis.

1. What are our priority places/locations in Taranaki?
2. What types of ecosystems are a priority in Taranaki?
3. Where and how can we make connections?
4. Project ideas

The number of recorded responses for each question ranged from 28 to 96 with many common themes. The key recommendation from analysis of these responses is that the Taranaki Biodiversity Trust coordinates a regional, collaborative project that protects and enhances native biodiversity in a range of ecosystems, links existing projects across the landscape, and connects with local people and communities.

Background

The Taranaki Biodiversity Forum Accord was signed in 2012 as a community response to protecting native plants, animals and habitats in the Taranaki region. The focus of the Accord is on the region's most valuable, yet vulnerable, biodiversity assets.

Three priorities for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in the region were identified:

- Protect the distribution and abundance of the 70 native animal species and 99 native plant species whose natural ranges include Taranaki and which have been listed as 'threatened', 'at risk' or 'regionally distinctive';
- Secure a full range of sites that provide core habitat for threatened, at risk or regionally distinctive species;
- Maintain the areal extent of systems that are historically rare or representative of a threatened ecosystem type where native vegetation is now reduced to 20% or less for that ecosystem type.

Alongside the important biodiversity work undertaken by the Trust members, progress toward the Accord priorities has been aided by the employment of a Regional Biodiversity Coordinator in mid-2014 and the establishment of the Taranaki Biodiversity Trust in April 2015.

The recent Trust formation provides a new mechanism to establish, grow and support large-scale collaborative, regional flagship projects. To identify priority areas/ecosystems/projects for this new

level of support, the Trust members and interested parties gathered for a discussion forum on February 26th 2016 at the Taranaki Electricity Trust (TET) Multisports Centre in Stratford.

Prioritising biodiversity management and restoration

To aid the prioritisation of future biodiversity work in Taranaki, a compilation of key information and data sets has been initiated. These characterise different components of biodiversity and management actions being undertaken across the region and are presented as spatial layers in a Geographic Information System (GIS). This enables overlays to be created to show hotspots of biodiversity, management and restoration activity. Progress in this work stream was provided as a background to the forum workshop. To date, the following spatial layers are available:

- Landcover database v4 (showing indigenous cover) with an intersect of LENZ Level I-III classifications (showing 'acutely threatened', 'chronically threatened' and 'at risk' areas);
- Animal pest control (predators and rats) during the 2013 - early 2015 period by Trust members as well as other groups;
- Public conservation land (Department of Conservation), QEII reserves and selected District Council reserves with high biodiversity values;
- Taranaki Regional Council key native ecosystems – significant natural areas, regionally significant wetlands, regionally significant rivers & moderate and high value coastal inventory sites;
- Department of Conservation priority sites;
- Key sites from Forest Research Institute reporting;
- Outstanding freshwater bodies;
- Landcare Research mapped wetlands;
- Potential inanga spawning sites;
- and threatened species records for western brown kiwi, long- and short-tailed bats, and little blue penguins

The resulting preliminary map (Fig. 1) shows both alignment and discrepancies between biodiversity values and the work that is being undertaken to protect and enhance these values. Other information such as goat and pest plant control was available but excluded for this preliminary map.

The Taranaki Biodiversity Trust acknowledged that the picture is not complete due to gaps in the data, the scale of the mapping exercise and the lack of metrics for the quantity or quality of biodiversity work. However, this map provided a valuable starting point for the forum discussions.

With the Accord priorities in mind, forum participants were asked to discuss and respond to four focus questions:

1. What are our priority places/locations in Taranaki?
2. What types of ecosystems are a priority in Taranaki?
3. Where and how can we make connections?
4. What are your suggestions for projects?

This report presents the key findings from analysis of participant responses.

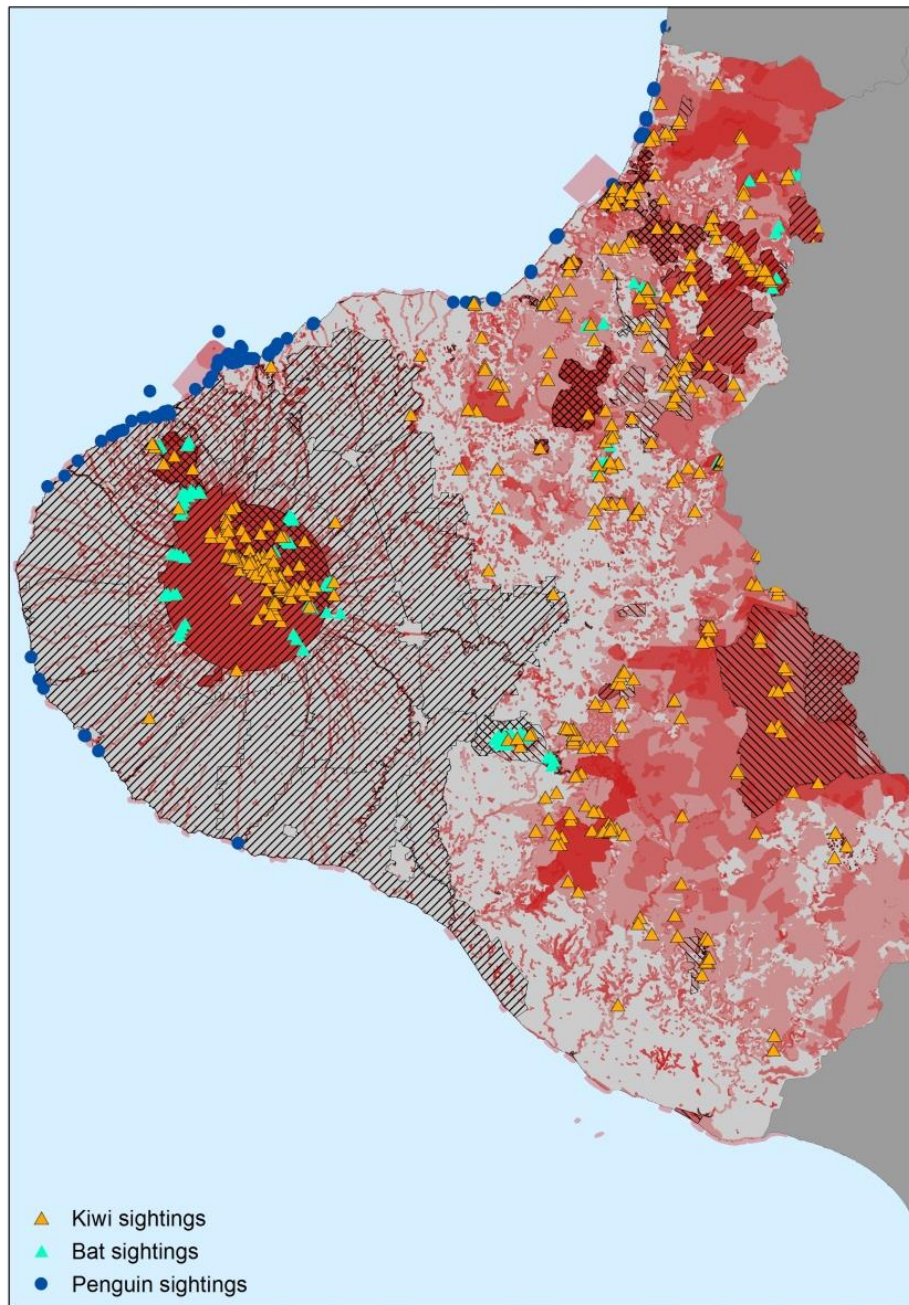


Figure 1: Taranaki Biodiversity prioritisation map – February 2016. Produced by Taranaki Biodiversity Trust.

Analysis of responses

The Taranaki Biodiversity forum on February 26th 2016 was attended by around 75 people who were divided into nine smaller groups to discuss the four focus questions and report back to the wider audience. Responses from audio recordings and group worksheets were transcribed and organised by the four key questions (Appendix 2) and a basic framework analysis was performed. Frequent response themes were identified using tallies and word frequency diagrams (Appendix 1) and applied in a thematic analysis of responses by question. Theme frequencies for each question were then described and interpreted to develop the key findings and recommendations.

Key findings

Question 1: What are our priority places/locations in Taranaki?

Prioritisation of places/locations in Taranaki was reasonably even across a small number of areas. The Eastern region of Taranaki was the most frequent priority location listed in a total of 28 responses. However, this area only received two more recommendations than Mt. Taranaki and coastal areas which in turn were only slightly more frequent than the ring plain, catchments, Rotokare, and corridors. The four ungrouped priority locations were all specific sites that featured once only.

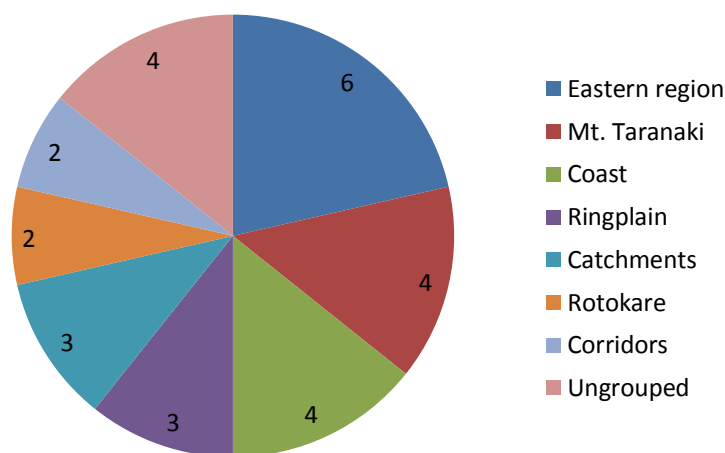


Figure 2. Frequency of responses by theme to question 1: What are our priority places/locations in Taranaki? Total responses: 28.

Question 2: What types of ecosystems are a priority in Taranaki?

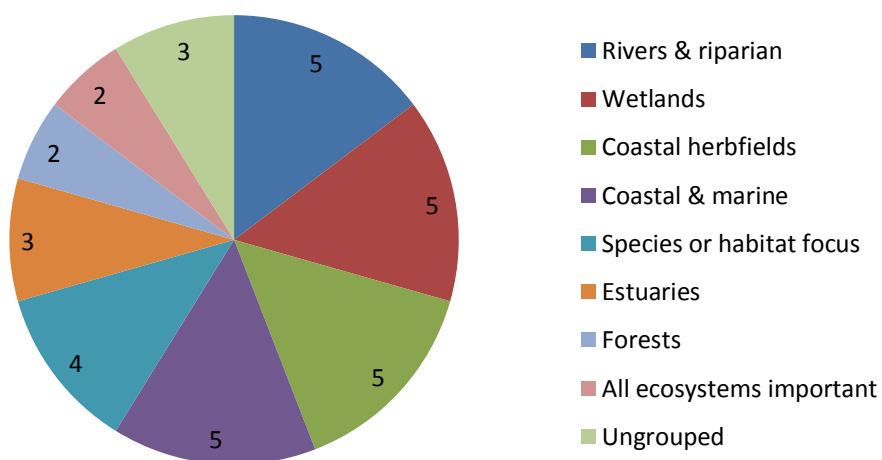


Figure 3: Frequency of responses by theme to question 2: What types of ecosystems are a priority in Taranaki? Total responses: 34.

Ecosystem prioritisation showed a reasonably even spread. Ecosystems described as rivers & riparian, wetlands, coastal herbfields, and coastal and marine, as well as those with an individual species or habitat focus were frequently listed as priorities. Freshwater (rivers, riparian and wetlands) and coastal (coastal herbfields, coastal and marine) systems were well represented in response to this question.

Estuaries were listed three times and forests twice. Two responses identified “all ecosystems” as being important. Three responses described ecosystems or ideas that only featured once.

Question 3: Where and how can we make connections?

Discussion around making connections received a total of 96 responses with the majority describing suggestions to:

- link to local people;
- communicate and coordinate;
- expand existing projects.

The responses grouped as ‘link to local people’ frequently related to linking projects to potential volunteers, supporters and advocates through strategic public relations. It also included engagement and education of residents (including urban populations) and local industry, as well as discussion of the cultural, social and economic benefits that could be gained.

The responses grouped as ‘communication and coordination’ discussed the potential role of the Taranaki Biodiversity Trust in facilitating communication and coordination among the various interest groups. This included annual forums, biodiversity advocacy and a strategic approach that could increase efficiencies.

The responses grouped as ‘expand existing projects’ all recommended that existing projects and biodiversity successes should be built on and linked together

Other frequent responses for making connections included the importance of working with schools and young people, followed by the opportunity to engage with visitors to the region, and the importance of supporting small, existing groups.

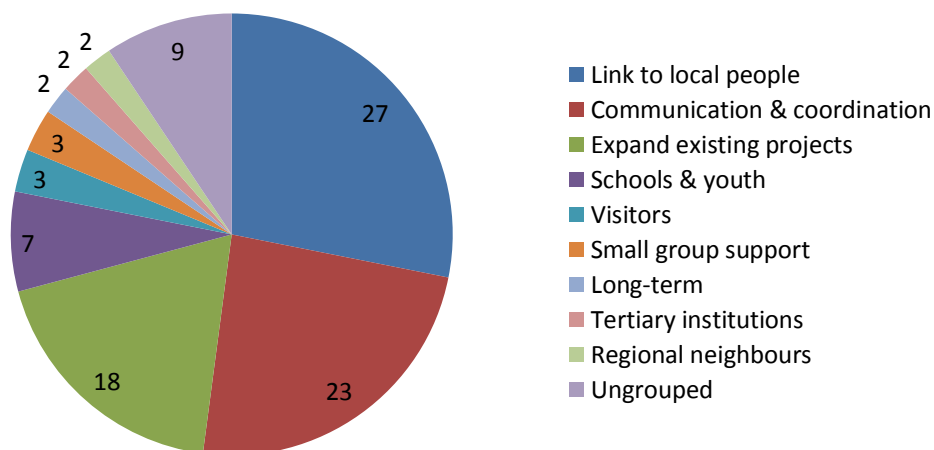


Figure 4: Frequency of responses by theme to question 3: Where and how can we make connections?
Total responses: 96.

The importance of considering a long-term view, working with tertiary institutions and connecting with regional neighbours (e.g. Horizons Manawatu and Waikato Regional Council) were each reported twice while the nine ungrouped responses were either very specific or very general comments that were each only recorded once.

Question 4: Project suggestions

When asked to list specific projects that could benefit the biodiversity of Taranaki, 20 of the 53 responses focussed on links across the region. These were described as corridors, catchments or halos and often focussed on altitudinal gradients or ecological sequences (e.g. mountain to sea or hillcountry to sea). Twenty responses were specific projects that were each mentioned once but frequently had a catchment or waterway focus (e.g. Patea catchment). Projects focussed on the protection of an individual species were listed seven times while an interest in projects outside Egmont National Park, waterways and Rotokare were each listed twice.

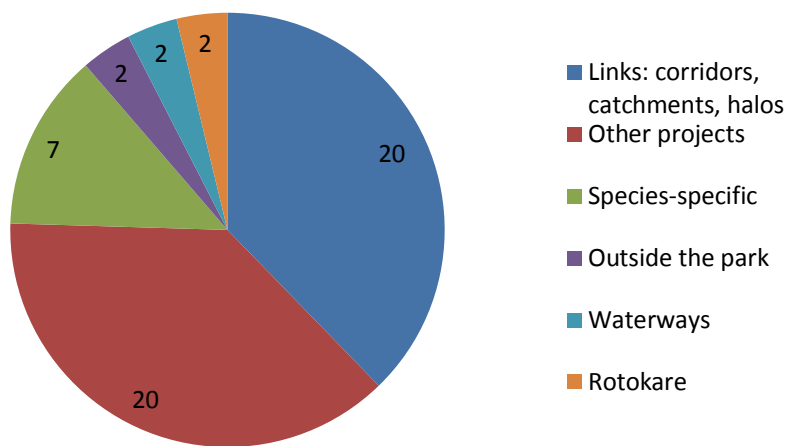


Figure 5: Frequency of responses by theme to question 4: Project ideas. Total responses: 53.

Summary and recommendations

The February 2016 forum of the Taranaki Biodiversity Accord and Trust successfully initiated a dialogue on the identification of biodiversity priorities by Trust members and interest groups.

The forum participants highlighted the importance of freshwater and coastal ecosystems but indicated that there is no one place or ecosystem that is more important than the others. Instead, it can be deduced that the biodiversity of the region's diverse and interdependent natural environments needs to be considered for a regional vision and/or project(s).

In contrast, the suggested approaches to achieving physical and organisational connections throughout the region had three clear priorities:

- Link projects to local people;
- Communicate and coordinate;
- Expand existing projects.

These three approaches were reflected in the project suggestions presented at the end of the forum day. Projects that made links across the landscape (corridors, catchments and halos) were frequently discussed along with a strong desire to work together and expand existing work.

The responses to the four focus questions thus characterise what the forum attendees would expect to see in a future collaborative project or projects.

Consideration of these results leads to a recommendation that the Taranaki Biodiversity Trust is expected to assume a strong coordination and communication role amongst interest groups and Trust members. This is consistent with the Trust's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

With a coordination directive, it is recommended that the Trust now progresses the selection of a regional, collaborative biodiversity project or projects that:

- protects and enhances native biodiversity in a range of ecosystems;
- links existing projects across the landscape;
- and connects biodiversity work with local people and communities.

This will require consideration of the additional data and spatial layers currently being compiled (e.g., Ecosystems of Taranaki) and a range of specific proposals that could be assessed against the guiding framework identified by the forum workshop participants and other participants who were unable to attend the forum event.

Appendix 1 – Word frequency diagrams

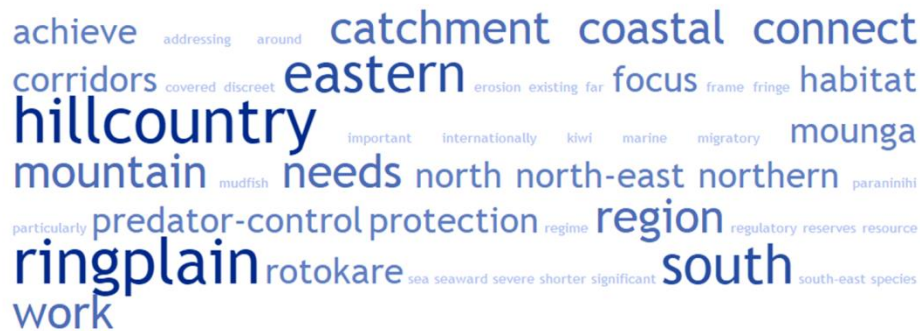


Figure 6: Most frequent words used in response to Question 1: What are our priority places/locations in Taranaki? Large words were more frequently used than small words.



Figure 7: Most frequent words used in response to Question 2: What types of ecosystems are a priority in Taranaki? Large words were more frequently used than small words.



Figure 8: Most frequent words used in response to Question 3: Where and how can we make connections? Large words were more frequently used than small words.

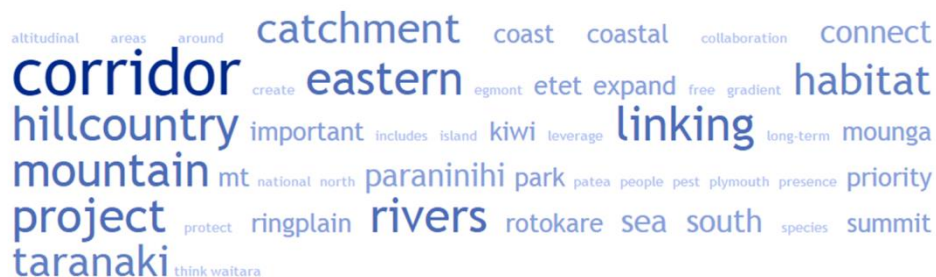


Figure 9: Most frequent words used in response to Question 4: Project ideas Large words were more frequently used than small words.

Appendix 2 – Thematic analysis tables

QUESTION 1

Summary table

Theme #	Theme name	Frequency
1	Ringplain	3
2	Mounga	4
3	Coast	4
4	Eastern region	6
5	Catchments	3
7	Rotokare	2
8	Corridors	2
9	Ungrouped	4

Categorised responses

Theme #	Response
1	Taranaki ringplain
1	Ringplain and Mountain
1	Ringplain – little vegetation remaining
2	Ringplain and Mountain
2	Mountain
2	3 discreet areas: North-East, South-East and Mountain, work within each then connect them together
2	Mounga, Northern hillcountry, Eastern hillcountry and coastal region
3	Coastal fringe, land-sea interface around the ringplain
3	Coast – EEZ and beyond? How far seaward? More marine reserves
3	Coastal environment – protection regime, needs focus on habitat creation and predator-control
3	Mounga, Northern hillcountry, Eastern hillcountry and coastal region
4	Eastern hillcountry – north to south but particularly south
4	3 discreet areas: North-East, South-East and Mountain, work within each then connect them together
4	Mounga, Northern hillcountry, Eastern hillcountry and coastal region
4	Eastern hillcountry connectivity – North to the South through the eastern hillcountry – working with neighbouring councils/regions to achieve this
4	Short-term priority would be to make connections within the North-East, achievable in a shorter time frame
4	Mounga, Northern hillcountry, Eastern hillcountry and coastal region
5	Catchment protection between mounga & sea
5	Corridors & catchments
5	Upper catchment – severe erosion needs addressing
7	Rotokare
7	Rotokare is a great resource for the region
8	Corridors & catchments
8	Gullies & wetlands important in corridors
9	Paraninihi and northern kiwi habitat – building on existing work
9	Further south
9	Sites for international migratory species – those that could be internationally significant
9	Microhabitats needs to be identified, e.g. mudfish or fernbirds

- Ringplain is generally covered with predator-control and regulatory focus,

QUESTION 2

Summary table

Theme #	Theme name	Frequency
1	Coastal herbfields	5
2	Estuaries	3
3	Wetlands	5
4	Rivers & riparian	5
5	Coastal & marine	5
6	Species or habitat focus	4
7	Forests	2
8	All ecosystems important	2
9	Ungrouped	3

Categorised responses

Theme #	Response
1	Coastal herbfields – where are the threatened plants? is more work needed on this?
1	Coastal herbfields – limited information
1	Wetland habitat, dunelands, coastal herbfields
1	Coastal herbfields
1	Micro herb fields – management at a different scale, different thinking and approach
2	Estuaries
2	Estuaries with rivers and linkages to mountain
2	Estuaries – small but important
3	Wetlands
3	Wetlands
3	Wetland habitat, dunelands, coastal herbfields
3	Wetlands
3	Wetlands and river systems
4	Riparian margins
4	Freshwater
4	River mouths
4	Wetlands and river systems
4	Forests and rivers
5	Coast – kaimoana
5	Marine & coastal concerns as well
5	Wetland habitat, dunelands, coastal herbfields
5	Extend marine mammal sanctuaries off shore
5	Reefs
6	Habitat focus
6	Kiwi & dabchick habitat
6	Freshwater, including blue duck habitat out of the National Park
6	Habitat for bats & brown mudfish & saddleback
7	Forest focus

- 7 Forests and rivers
- 8 Its all important – we need to work on a range of ecosystems
- 8 All ecosystems need full representation through catchment focus
- 9 Vulnerable ecosystems – do you go with most endangered or projects that are most successful and can get the community buy-in?
- 9 Ecosystem boundaries – more diversity between ecosystems – could focus here
- 9 Threatened habitats but don't disconnect habitats with good community drive because of their value for education and engagement

QUESTION 3

Summary table

Theme #	Theme name	Theme notes	Frequency
1	Expand existing projects	Expand existing projects and link together	18
3	Schools & youth	Schools & youth - link education initiatives	7
4	Visitors	Visitors & tourists -> volunteers	3
5	Link to local people	Link to local people: link to potential volunteers, supporters, advocates with strategic PR - urban populations - engage and educate - local ownership - cultural/social & economic benefits - local industry	27
6	Communication & coordination	Trust facilitates communication, coordination & strategic approaches - annual forums - advocacy	23
7	Small group support	Small group support	3
8	Long-term Tertiary	Long-term	2
9	institutions Regional	Tertiary institutions	2
10	neighbours	Link to regional neighbours	2
11	Uncategorised		9

Categorised responses

Theme #	Response
1	Build on existing, successful projects
1	Use existing relationships – e.g. self-help possum-control programme
1	Use those areas that are well supported in terms of biodiversity – build out and link
1	Habitat connections – join projects together, start from source
1	Work in stages, bite-sized pieces then join up the dots, needs coordination
1	Expand on what is already happening
1	Work with the willing
1	Priorities should be those with maximum outcome and based on connectivity or cascading benefits
1	Each ecosystem requires a different strategy but can be worked on at the same time
1	Building on successful projects
1	Linking existing boundaries to make more efficient fencing setups
1	Halos and buffers around existing areas – securing significant areas
1	Nodes building back to the Mountain – join things together
1	North-East, South-East and Mountain: directional expansion of pest-control, identify weak areas for pest-control and planting e.g. riparian, maximise connections within each area
1	Link corridors
1	Focus on catchments, build on riparian planting programme
1	Capitalise on existing projects and success

1 Working collaboratively with DOC to achieve mouna objectives
 3 Schools & community groups
 3 Start with the young –easily encouraged and they take the message home
 3 Focus on next generation and education
 3 Get kids involved, they love it
 3 Schools, industry, local events
 3 Link education programmes with each project (making connections)
 3 Education – biodiversity and public link, schools – RSNZ teacher placement – why does biodiversity matter
 4 Improve visitor conservation experiences
 4 Conservation volunteers and ecotourism
 4 Tourism – importance of marketing as a region – tourism choices, volunteer opportunities and economic development
 4 Industries – dairy, agriculture, oil, gas
 5 Schools & community groups
 5 Need to show the benefits for the community
 5 Use high profile local people
 5 Urban biodiversity
 5 People with place
 5 Urban people with native biodiversity – labour and funding gains – access funds, hearts and minds
 5 Education and advocacy linking all projects with online resources
 5 Linking urban with rural through volunteering
 5 Community ownership and awareness, share results and enhance story-telling, the more people who know what is going on the more will want to be involved, focus funding to increase awareness
 5 Focus on funding and increasing awareness
 5 Establish networks & work in communities
 5 Strategic campaigning/marketing – education and awareness based on priority species and ecosystems, good news stories
 5 Schools, industry, local events
 5 Multi-win situations, integrated outcomes – including biodiversity, cultural, economic
 5 Annual forum workshop with training and tools
 5 Walk the rivers – bring different groups, sectors, iwi together
 5 Social media – focus on the young people
 5 Use existing community support for greater impact e.g. Mouna to Moana through Oakura
 5 Business and jobs out of restoration projects
 5 Involve public
 5 Backyard planting with education and involvement
 5 Environmental, social and cultural interests – small urban and rural areas as well
 5 Education – biodiversity and public link, schools – RSNZ teacher placement – why does biodiversity matter
 5 Engage people and community – New Plymouth is a key population
 5 Every catchment and every community – living the philosophy and strategy and extend beyond biodiversity trust – make it a goal for Taranaki.
 5 Citizen science projects – crowdsourcing, info like naturewatch and hotspot – Taranaki-specific app
 6 Good communication
 6 Biodiversity trust coordinating conservation volunteering
 6 Education and advocacy linking all projects with online resources
 6 Communications
 6 Work in stages, bite-sized pieces then join up the dots, needs coordination
 6 Multi-groups submitting funding applications together, organisational connections, efficient training & monitoring

- 6 Make connections between organisations e.g. eastern hillcountry forum, work together, quarterly meetings for project areas, information sharing
- 6 Need information about available help from different groups
- 6 Help with funding limitations and more sustainable funding e.g. strategic pest-control – every 3 years
- 6 Trust could fill the gap in long-term funding solutions
- 6 Bring groups together - collaboration
- 6 Open source data – share for connectivity
- 6 Education and support around strategic weed management regionally
- 6 Strategic management on regional basis for long-term community attitude change toward conservation, land and place, work with schools and groups like scouts
- 6 Large-body consensus to lobby government and funding assistance
- 6 Information sharing – from other biodiversity forums
- 6 Database of sympathetic landowners – path of least resistance in private land – build from these people
- 6 Umbrella: regional sustainability – requires information sharing
- 6 Coordination is critical through regional plan that structures the efforts of stakeholders – everyone knows what the collective goals and priorities are
- 6 Person to collate information in a centralised database
- 6 Annual biodiversity forum
- 6 Advocate for increased central government support
- 6 Policy
- 7 Support admin for smaller groups
- 7 Support smaller projects that are successful and grow them
- 7 We don't want smaller projects to be ignored
- 8 What is the long-term vision? How far should we look forward? 50? 100 years?
- 8 Long-term (50-100 year) vision
- 9 Tertiary links – expand WITT – building relationships with universities
- 9 University postgrad projects that feed into trust projects
- 10 Representatives on forum from nearby regions e.g. Horizons & Waikato
- 10 Linking corridors – across regional boundaries
- 11 How will DOC-iwi relationships function in future post-settlement
- 11 Flexible enough to be regionally and nationally relevant as well as locally significant
- 11 TRC's ongoing programmes, Puke Ariki, School programmes, Forest & Bird KCC
- 11 Robust and direct eligibility criteria – what people can apply for and how it is delivered
- 11 Think timeframes
- 11 Funding – Universities, MBIE, George Mason Charitable Trust
- 11 Risk – stretching resources
- 11 Strategy: Large goals
- 11 Include the sea with catchment considerations

QUESTION 4

Summary table

Theme			Frequency
#	Theme name		
1	Links: corridors, catchments, halos		20
2	Think big		0
3	Outside the park		2
4	Species-specific		7

5	Eastern hillcountry	0
7	Waterways	20
8	Rotokare	2
6	Other projects	2

Categorised responses

Theme

#	Response
1	Corridors on the ringplain – South Taranaki to Eastern hillcountry
1	Corridors linking National Park to Eastern Taranaki
1	Corridors on the rivers
1	Mountain to sea corridor – coastal to alpine gradient
1	Mountain & Halo around it - keyhole shape from Stony River to Waiwhakaiho Rivers with altitudinal gradient from coast to summit
1	Summit to coast corridor
1	Summit to hillcountry
1	Paraninihi expansion
1	Need to create Eastern corridor as a buffer zone – protection, habitat, predator-control
1	Eastern corridor
1	Connections are priority: hillcountry to sea (insea), mountain to sea (insea)
1	Build corridors – mounnga, eastern hillcountry, triangulation with river links
1	Snow to surf – corridor that includes full altitudinal sequence and encapsulates the idea of inclusiveness
1	Connect North-East with South-East over the long-term
1	Corridor between ETET & Paraninihi
1	Connect city to mounnga, sea to mountain – wide habitat representation, social and cultural elements
1	Waitara catchment – Paraninihi, ETET, coastal & Mt Messenger
1	Corridors
1	Integrated catchment across hillcountry, ringplain, coastal, private and public land
1	Eastern hillcountry – linking priority sites
1	Corridor enhancement, species specific,
3	Predator trapping and blue duck habitat outside the park
3	Projects outside the Mountain – connecting ecosystems to the South and East, capturing important areas that aren't actively managed at the moment
4	Predator trapping and blue duck habitat outside the park
4	20,000 hectares of kiwi habitat by 2020
4	Alpine moth surveys - relate to Key Fox collection
4	Kiwi Corridor – Paraninihi, ETET & Rotokare
4	Regional bat survey – consecutive years (as Dave Bell does) with deeper analysis and advanced post-processing technology to speed it up
4	Project hotspot, species focus, draws people in, focus on achievable bits and important features
4	Expand saddleback and kokako range
4	Corridor enhancement, species specific,
6	Think big, don't think too small – pest free Taranaki – can be broken down to smaller pieces working towards the big end game
6	New Plymouth people involved in sugar loaf island, kaitake etc.
6	Fill in South Taranaki gaps
6	Cycle trail around the Mountain and linking with rivers, coast, towns, central North Island and biodiversity projects (map included with notes)
6	Need more information coordination and gathering of existing data in Marine environments

- 6 Waitotara catchment project – collaboration and links
- 6 Mt Hiwi project – collaboration to protect kiwi habitat in South Taranaki – linked to Waitotara
- 6 Expand possum self-help and riparian programmes to rats, mustelids & cats
- 6 Ongoing 1080 drops across different priority areas, assisting long-term to keep on top of pest-control for community groups
- 6 Ringplain streams leverage off project mouna
- 6 Kapuni, Wairongoro catchments, Nagruahine rohe
- 6 Restore swampland at Ngaere – what used to be there, cultural and natural benefits
- 6 Manganui awa gully and upstream to create strong corridor to North Egmont.
- 6 Manganui, Patea & Waitara Rivers as well as forest alongside
- 6 Update presence/absence knowledge – absence just as important as presence
- 6 Matemateonga to Te Rere
- 6 Egmont National Park
- 6 New Mt Messenger Road – opportunities for walk/community engagement, leverage of money
- 6 Pest free New Plymouth
- 6 Patea catchment
- 7 Waterways
- 7 Waterways – fish migration and identification and removal of impediments
- 8 Expand Rotokare
- 8 Rotokare – source of seed and species