

Our Region

Manawatū-Whanganui

Around
251,000*
PEOPLE
call it home
*2023 Census data

**WE HAVE
THREE**
major river systems,
two coasts and the
Central Plateau

Mean annual rainfall in the region ranges from 900mm

TO OVER
2,000mm

**WE HAVE
SEVEN
DISTRICTS**
and approximately
70%
of our ratepayers
live in urban centres

WE HAVE ONE OF THE

largest areas of hill country in New Zealand and highest proportion of highly erodible land of any region

The Horizons Region
is made up of

**2.2 MILLION
HECTARES**

of land (8% of New Zealand's total land area),
plus 31,000 hectares of marine area

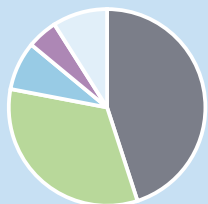
Approximately
117,000
RATEABLE PROPERTIES
contribute to our
work programmes

**206,000
HECTARES**
or 18% of the nation's versatile
soils are in the region

**THERE ARE
OVER
35,000km**
of waterways in the
Horizons Region

HOROWHENUA

LAND USE IS:



- 45% Sheep and beef
- 33% Native cover
- 8% Dairy
- 5% Forestry
- 9% Other

WE HAVE OVER

230
LAKES

This includes 67 dune, 44 riverine, 24 landslide, 7 volcanic lakes and 88 artificial reservoirs

THERE ARE
40

ESTUARIES

in our region, including Manawatū Estuary, an internationally recognised RAMSAR site

We also have two coasts
with jurisdiction extending

12
**NAUTICAL
MILES**
out to sea

OVER
27%

of our region's
people identify as Māori

There are approximately
30 iwi, 110 hapū
and more than 60 Marae



Te anga rautaki Strategic framework



Tō mātou wawata Our vision

Tō tātou whenua ora – mauri wai, mauri whenua, mauri ora
Our region – a healthy environment where people are thriving

Ngā rautaki arotau Our strategic priorities

Te piki manawaroa ki te āhuarangi hurihuri
Building resilience to the impacts of climate change

Te whakakaha whanaungatanga ki te tangata whenua
Strengthening partnerships with tangata whenua

He ara torowhārahi – mai i ngā maunga ki te moana
(whakahaere riu)
A holistic approach, from the mountains to the sea
(integrated catchment management)

He tūhono wāhi he honohono tangata
Connecting people and place through effective
public transport connections

Ngā putanga ā-hapori Our community outcomes



He whakamana hapori, he hapori kori
Our region's communities are vibrant and empowered



He whanaungatanga whai mana
Our region's relationship with iwi and hapū
are respectful and mana-enhancing



He pūnaha hauropi ora
Our region's ecosystems are healthy



He whatunga waka mauritau
Our region has effective transport networks



He rohe piki te ōhanga, piki te taiao
Our region's economy is thriving and environmentally
sustainable



He hapori manawaroa
Our region's communities are resilient to the impact
of natural hazards and climate change

Ngā rautaki arotau

Our strategic priorities

Te piki manawaroa ki te āhuarangi hurihuri

Building resilience to the impacts of climate change

Reducing risk and building resilience of communities, the economy and the environment.

The impact of climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing our region. Almost all of Horizons' mahi touches on this issue in some way, including science, regulation, policy, river management, transport planning, biodiversity and biosecurity, environmental education and collaboration with local, regional and central government.

Climate change is already impacting the size and scale of weather events, with Cyclone Gabrielle a recent example. One way we are preparing our communities for this is by increasing the size of our Emergency Management team. The team grew in size in the 2024-25 Annual Plan, and will add a further role as part of the 2025-26 Annual Plan. This role will be focused on community readiness, working across the region to ensure people are prepared not just for climatic events but other kinds of emergencies (e.g. earthquakes and pandemics).

Ngā rautaki arotau

Our strategic priorities



Te whakakaha whanaungatanga ki te tangata whenua

Strengthening partnerships with tangata whenua

Responding constructively to changing expectations, realising the potential contribution of Māori leadership, building mana-enhancing relationships.

Horizons is committed to strengthening our partnerships with tangata whenua across the rohe. We want to foster relationships, enable participation, protect Māori interests and values, and encourage meaningful engagement.

A key function of local government is enabling participation in local decision making by everyone, including tangata whenua. Our councillors are a key part of this. In October 2025 a new council will be elected, including two Māori constituency councillors. Preparing for the election will be a key function for our Partnerships, Governance and Leadership group at the start of the 2025-26 financial year. The election of 14 councillors includes two in our Māori constituencies: Raki Māori and Tonga Māori.

This election also includes the requirement to hold and enact the results of a referendum on the retention of Māori constituencies. We have had two Māori constituencies since the 2022 local government elections, each represented by one councillor. While we will have those two constituencies for the next term of council, the results of the referendum will apply to the two terms after. It is our role to ensure all voters can take part in the referendum to ensure fair democratic participation.

Ngā rautaki arotau

Our strategic priorities

He ara torowha-rahi – mai I ngā maunga ki te moana (whakahaere riu)

A holistic approach, from the mountains to the sea (integrated catchment management)

Working together to protect and enhance what matters most.

This coming year, we will continue our journey towards 'integrated catchment management'. Integrated catchment management is about taking a holistic approach to environmental management – a 'mountains to sea' approach – rather than dividing catchments into pieces.

This, however, does not always mean new approaches. Our Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI) programme has operated with a 'mountains to sea' approach for some time. SLUI aims to build resilience to climate change and achieve water quality outcomes through erosion control.

The programme has a budget of \$5.4 million in 2025/26, with \$910,000 of this cost being met by continued funding from the central government's Hill Country Erosion Fund. The 2025/26 year will be year three of the current four-year contract. The programme will continue to fund works on erosion

prone land with a target of achieving 3,540 ha of new work with a budget cost of around \$2.4m. This will contribute towards a cost share of works with landowners for afforestation, space planting, fencing and retirement. Landowners will contribute at least the same dollar amount as their share of these works. There is also a target of mapping 10,000 hectares of hill country land, follow-up erosion works can be targeted to the right land type. This work is estimated to cost around \$170,000.

Council has allocated resources to this important project as an investment in the health of te taiao in the long term.

Ngā rautaki arotau

Our strategic priorities



He hūhono wāhi he honohono tangata

Connecting people and place through effective public transport connections

Providing public bus services, and total mobility services, also supporting national and local road safety education programmes.

Our vision for public transport is to have an attractive, integrated and convenient system that connects people, enhances our wellbeing and environment, and becomes the preferred mode of transport in and between urban centres. Our ambition is for public transport to become the preferred choice of transport for more people, especially as it helps to reduce our region's greenhouse gas emissions.

The Aorangi Feilding bus network provides both regional and urban benefits, and will be improved in the 2025-26 financial year. The network consists of two services: The Orbiter (which services the Feilding township), and the Feilding-Palmerston North service.

The two services combined carried about 95,000 people in the 2023-24 financial year, an increase of nearly 10 percent from the year prior. The new services have slightly tweaked routes, but are primarily designed to deliver on the feedback we received during consultation in 2024: increased frequency, longer running hours, and improved services on weekends (including adding Sunday services). The contract will be tendered this year, with the new network currently scheduled to go live in July 2026.