Regional Biodiversity Strategy- Survey Results

Background

Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council is developing a regional biodiversity strategy that will support local efforts to deliver meaningful outcomes for nature. This is a requirement under the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, which came into force on 4 August 2024.

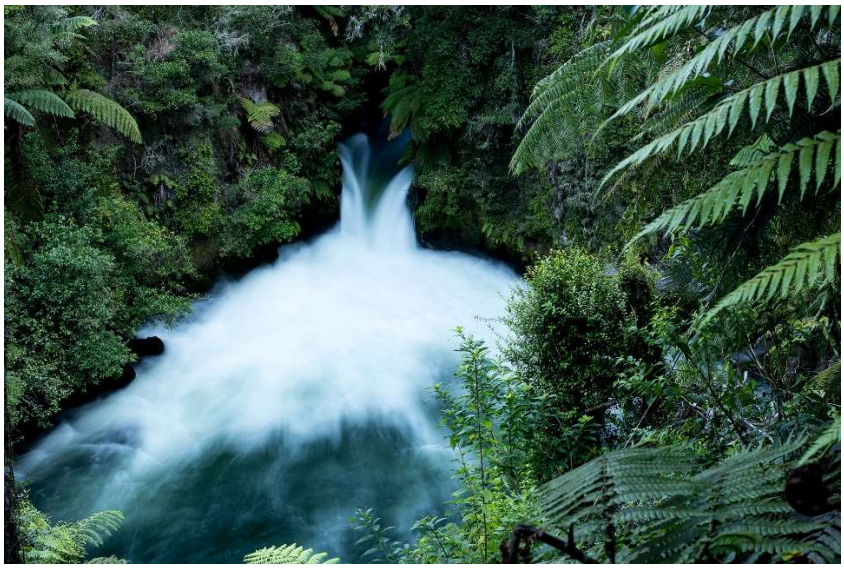
To inform this strategy, Toi Moana staff invited iwi partners and other environmental stakeholders (e.g. community groups, government departments, funders, and contractors) to complete an online survey over the period 25 September – 26 October 2025. The survey asked stakeholders to identify:

- Their organisation's purpose and contribution to biodiversity mahi
- Whether certain issues (e.g. funding, governance/leadership, health, and safety) were a strength or challenge for their group.
- How those issues could be addressed or supported by a regional biodiversity strategy
- How they saw their organisation contributing to strategy development and implementation
- Any perceived risks or concerns associated with a regional biodiversity strategy.
- Their preferences (e.g. timing, location, online vs. in person) for a biodiversity symposium to bring stakeholders together and take the next step in developing the strategy.

The feedback from these surveys has been used to plan the symposium, which will take place on Thursday 5 March 2026. This report provides a summary of the responses to facilitate a shared understanding for organisations who wish to participate in the symposium and developing the regional biodiversity strategy.

Note: As several of the questions permitted respondents to select multiple options, the results will not always total to 100%.

For any further information on the survey or strategy development, please visit www.participate.boprc.govt.nz/biodiversity or email: biodiversity@boprc.govt.nz



Survey participants

Who we heard from

A total of fifty-nine surveys were completed. Most respondents (60%) were representatives of care or catchment groups, followed by network/umbrella organisations (19%) and landowners or land managers (9%). Responses were also received from iwi representatives, government agencies, territorial authorities, academic or research institutions and private sector organisations.

Geographic location

Responses were received from across the Bay of Plenty, with 41% of respondents operating in the Western Bay, 21% in Tauranga, 27% in the Eastern Bay, and 25% in Rotorua. Furthermore, eleven organisations (20%) indicated that they operated region wide.

Biodiversity activities

Survey participants were also asked to list the main biodiversity activities that they undertook. The most common responses were pest plant control (79%), pest animal control (75%) and native species protection (68%). Other responses included education, advocacy, climate change, training, research, policy and mātauranga Māori.

Habitat types

Most respondents operated in native forest habitats (70%), followed by freshwater (50%) and wetland environments (43%). Other habitat types included estuaries, marine and coastal ecosystems, alpine/forest flats, and urban environments.

Challenges and strengths

Participants were provided with a list of issues and asked to identify whether the issue was a challenge or a strength (or neutral) for their group. The top three challenges identified by respondents were funding (59%), succession planning (59%), and forming mutually beneficial relationships with iwi and hapū (41%). Conversely the top three strengths were governance/leadership (66%), coordination with other groups (66%), and labour skills (64%). Notably, whilst some issues such as governance/leadership were seen as a strength for some organisations, they were viewed as a challenge for other groups (see Figure 1.)

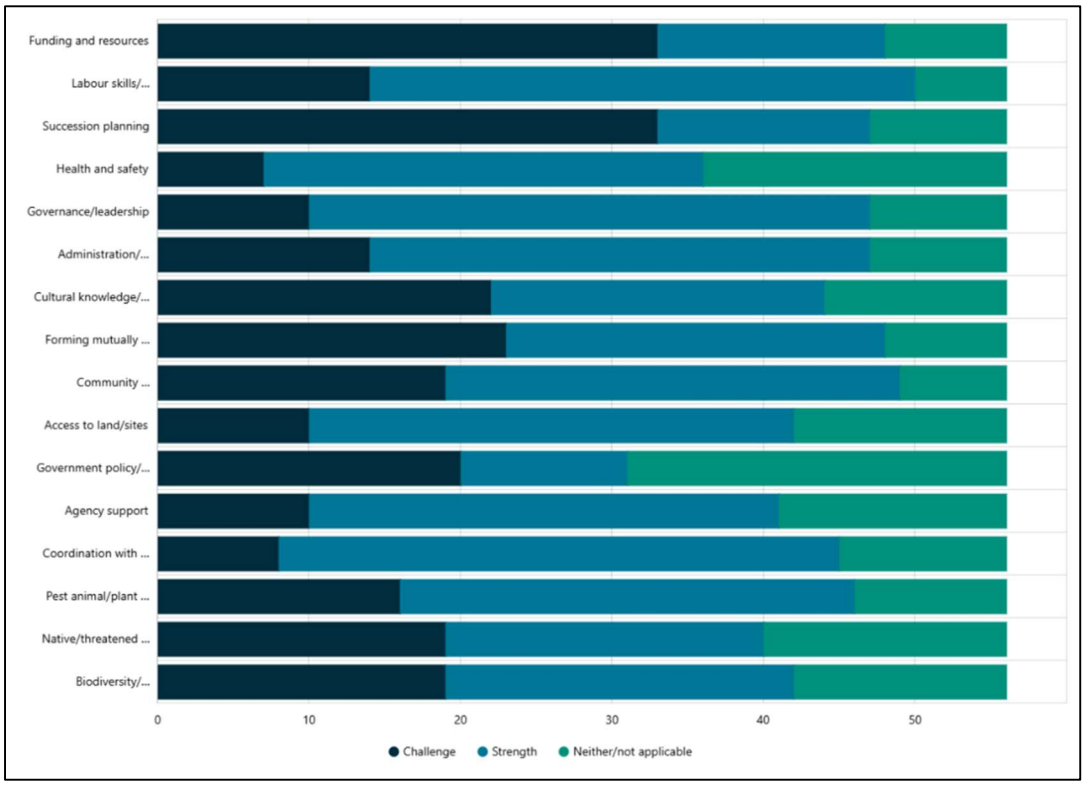


Figure 1. Perceptions of potential challenges or strengths facing organisations

What support or conditions would help you resolve the challenges you identified?

Common themes in response to this question included:

- Paid staff who can do tasks that are not desirable/feasible for volunteers
- Succession planning
- Funding and support for work on privately owned land
- Long-term, generational funding – and advice about what support or funding is available
- Developing leadership and governance capability
- Results and outcome monitoring (data analysis and sharing of data)
- Greater coordination between environmental groups and across sectors to avoid duplication of effort and competition for funding
- Forming positive relationships with iwi/hapū
- Removing unnecessary bureaucracy and permitting requirements (e.g. Controlled substance licencing was a common example)
- Advocacy at the national level (i.e. with central government)

How could a regional biodiversity strategy help achieve biodiversity outcomes?

Respondents saw a number of potential benefits arising from the development of a regional biodiversity strategy. The most common response was ‘Encouraging more biodiversity action’ (82%), followed by ‘Build public awareness’ (76%) and ‘Identify priority areas and actions’ (71%). The remaining response options were evenly weighted in the 60 – 70% range (See Figure 2 below).

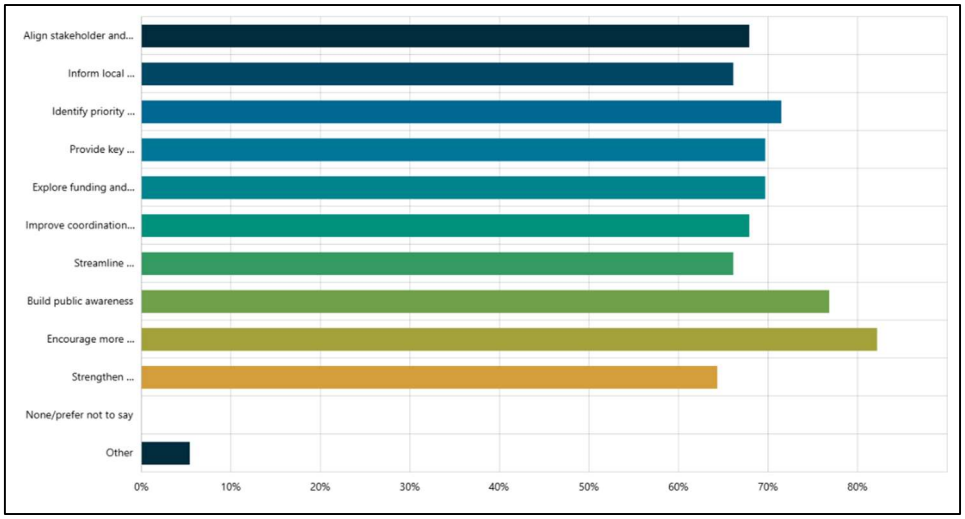


Figure 2. How a regional strategy could help achieve biodiversity outcomes.

What concerns or risks do you see with a regional biodiversity strategy?

Common themes or responses to this question included:

- Inability to gain consensus on shared vision or priorities across diverse stakeholder groups
- Unmanaged expectations amongst stakeholder groups
- Insufficient funding to implement the strategy
- Agencies will rely too heavily on volunteers to delivery biodiversity programmes
- Risk of ‘top-down’ decision making that overlooks local context and knowledge
- Danger of ‘one size fits all’ approach
- All talk and no action

What should be the key outcomes of the strategy?

Common themes or responses to this question included:

- Aligned long term vision and agreed priorities (Noting that a focus on the protection of high value ecological sites may conflict with the priorities of community-led projects).
- Tangible and measurable outcomes (supported by monitoring data) and a focus on 'boots on the ground' action.
- Clear biodiversity goals (i.e. what aspects of species diversity are being measured).
- Identification of long-term funding mechanisms.
- Better coordination of effort and resources.
- Clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities across agencies (e.g. Regional Council, territorial authorities, Department of Conservation).
- A voice for iwi and hapū and incorporation of mātauranga Māori alongside Western science.
- Increased community awareness and involvement in biodiversity protection.
- Increased climate resilience through nature-based solutions.

It was also proposed that the strategy should highlight the value of native biodiversity and ecosystem services such as clean air, safe drinking water, climate resilience, recreation, and amenity values.

The key themes above were aptly summarised in the following response from Manawahe Eco Trust:

> *"A coordinated, landscape-scale approach to biodiversity across the Bay of Plenty that connects community, iwi, and agency efforts; strengthens ecological corridors; supports local groups with resources and data; embeds Te Ao Māori; and delivers measurable gains in native species recovery and habitat resilience."*

How would your group/organisation like to be involved in the development of the strategy?

Most respondents saw themselves contributing to a regional biodiversity strategy by sharing knowledge and experience (75%) and shaping the vision (60%). Other key areas where groups thought they could add value were in community relations, technical advice, and peer review.

Next Steps

Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of everyone who works to protect and restore native biodiversity in the Bay of Plenty. We would also like to thank those individuals and organisations who took the time to complete the survey and share their knowledge and perspectives with us. This information will be used by staff to inform the agenda and objectives for the regional biodiversity symposium in March 2026.