



Otago Regional Council

Draft **Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy** 2025

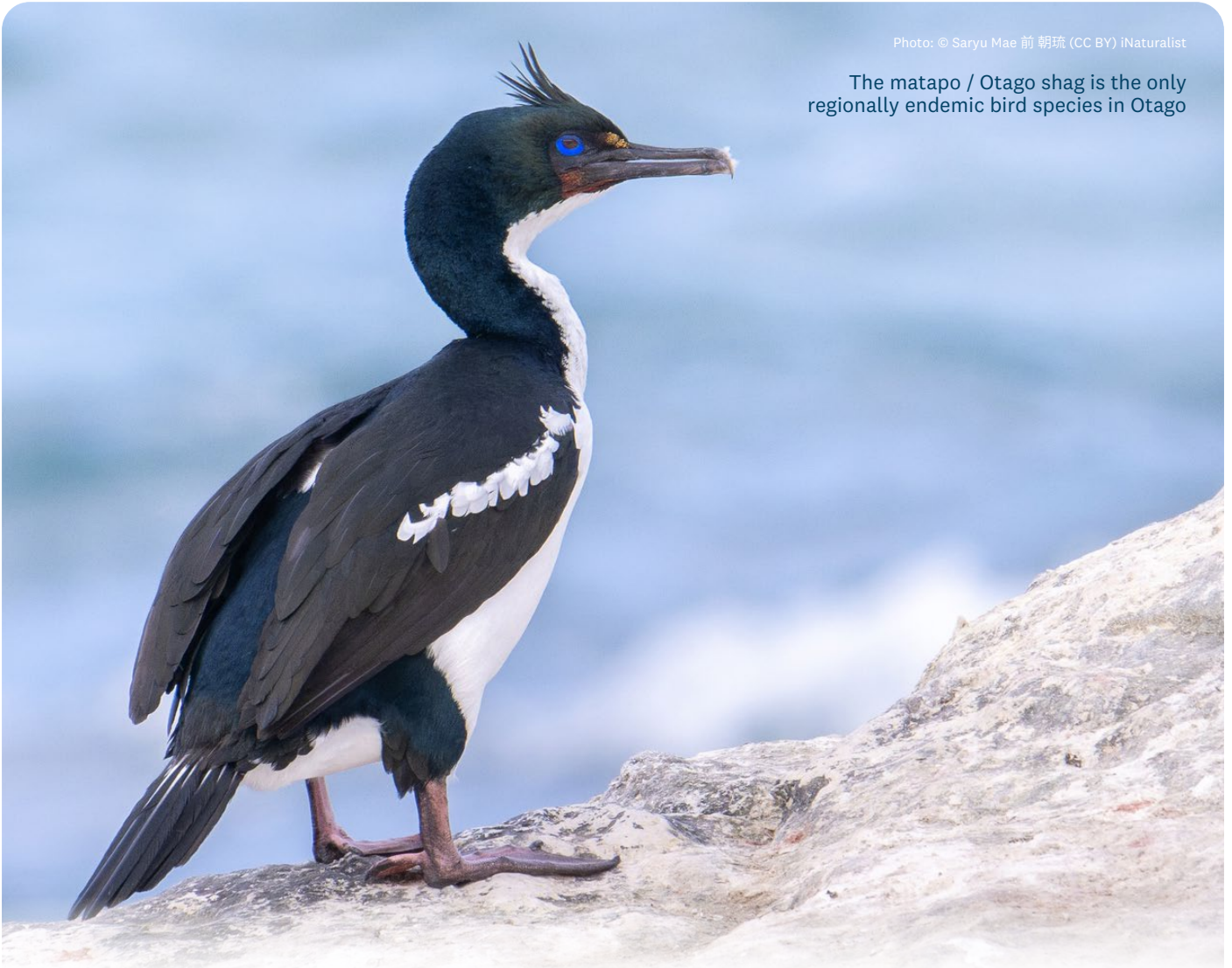
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Pakake / New Zealand sea lion enjoying a beach walk on Otago Peninsula.
Cover image: Toroa / Northern royal albatross, Papanui Canyon.
PHOTO: OSCAR THOMAS.

The matapo / Otago shag is the only regionally endemic bird species in Otago



Foreword

Otago's native plants, animals and fungi — and the relationships between them and how they shape our landscapes — are something we all treasure. They shape who we are, where we live, and the connection we feel to this region we call home.

We rely on our uniquely Otago biodiversity for our wellbeing and our livelihoods.

Toitū te marae a Tāne, toitū te marae a Takaroa, toitū te tangata.

(If the land is well and the sea is well, the people will thrive).

Yet this important living system is under pressure from pests, habitat loss, pollution and, increasingly, climate change.

Otago is rising to the challenge, with projects across the region led by mana whenua,

community groups, and other organisations. Individuals, businesses, farmers, and landowners are taking action at their place and in their operations.

We can be proud of the difference this is making, but there is more to do. Looking after the things we treasure and rely on will take all of us.

This strategy will guide Otago Regional Council's contribution. It is our part in strengthening the Otago-wide effort.

Many thanks,
Hilary Calvert
ORC Chairperson

Draft Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy on a page

Long-term vision

Ki uta ki tai, our awa connect our mountains and great lakes to our beautiful coastline and ocean depths, reflecting the mauri of te taiao. Mana whenua as kaitiaki and our communities as stewards work together to achieve healthy, thriving and resilient indigenous biodiversity across our region's catchments, coast and ocean, providing for the health of the people.

Outcomes

What we're aiming to achieve by 2040 or earlier

1. Indigenous biodiversity is maintained and resilient.
2. Indigenous biodiversity is enhanced strategically.
3. Mana whenua are supported to exercise kaitiakitaka
4. Communities are empowered as stewards.
5. ORC is leading proactive responses to emerging issues.
6. The decline of indigenous species and ecosystems is reversed.

Principles

How we'll work

Mauri — Prioritising the mauri, intrinsic value and wellbeing of indigenous biodiversity.

Ki uta ki tai — Managing the environment as an interconnected system. Adopting catchment-scale approaches, and align efforts across land, freshwater, coast and marine environments. Creating connections with and among our communities.

He awa whiria — Applying mātauraka Māori, science, and community knowledge as distinct and complementary sources of knowledge.

Kotahitaka — Valuing relationships and being purposeful about how we work together.

The problem

We are not on track to maintain Otago's indigenous biodiversity due to pressures including invasive species, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. These pressures are made worse by division of roles and responsibilities, limited resources and knowledge, and a growing disconnection from nature. But action is already underway to remedy this. By building on local efforts, we can maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity so that both nature and people can thrive.

Why this is important

People are part of the natural world, and indigenous biodiversity underpins life, culture, and livelihoods in Otago. Our wellbeing is tied to the health of native species and ecosystems. For Kāi Tahu, this connection is grounded in whakapapa and the exercise of kaitiakitaka. Indigenous biodiversity holds its own intrinsic value and is deeply connected to our identity and sense of place. A future where indigenous biodiversity thrives will support the wellbeing of people and communities across Otago.

Strategic Pou

What we'll do across our biodiversity and biosecurity work

1. Focus action to maintain and enhance — *Tiaki me te Whakahaumanu*

- Identify indigenous biodiversity focus areas.
- Partner with mana whenua to ensure the sustainability of taoka species and their habitats, and mahika kai (gathering of food and other natural resources).
- Work with communities to create landscape-scale visions for maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.
- Promote and fund actions to achieve the above, monitor the outcomes, and continuously improve.
- Monitor for emerging pests and other threats to indigenous biodiversity and respond effectively.

2. Empower action — *Whakahau*

- Partner with mana whenua on action.
- Connect people to local indigenous biodiversity to inspire action.
- Share knowledge and build capability to enable action.
- Collaborate with those leading action in the community.
- Build on mana whenua, landowner, and community best practice.
- Share information about where action is and isn't happening.
- Co-design solutions with our communities and coordinate action.

3. Get the system right — *Tūāpapa*

- Strengthen leadership and collaboration on shared interests with central government and councils in partnership with mana whenua.
- Explore incentives and co-investment models and encourage investment and innovation to support maintenance and enhancement.
- Monitor the status and trends of indigenous biodiversity.
- Make sure that plans and decisions contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.



Indigenous biodiversity in Otago

Otago's indigenous biodiversity is remarkably varied.

It ranges from the cheeky kea in the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana to mokomoko (skinks) sun-basking on schist tors in Central Otago; from giant wētā literally freezing on Pātearoa / the Rock and Pillar Range to hoiho / yellow-eyed penguins on our coast. Galaxiid fishes cling to refuge streams, while threatened cushion plants and native grasses eke out a living on wind-scoured ridgetops. Lowland podocarps, kānuka shrublands, and rare dune systems hold remnants of once-dominant ecosystems. Tuaki/cockles nestle in coastal estuaries, and offshore, pakake / New Zealand sea-lions, forests of rimurapa / giant kelp and sponge gardens play their part.

Each of these species is a thread in a wider ecological fabric. When that fabric frays — through habitat loss, the impact of pests, or climate stresses — every other thread is put at risk. Maintaining indigenous biodiversity is both a duty and a practical necessity for the health and resilience of Otago's environment and our communities.

For Kāi Tahu, the relationship with indigenous biodiversity is through the Te Ao Māori world view, anchored in whakapapa (genealogy), which begins with the union of Rakinui and Papatūānuku. Raki coupled with a number of wives, including Papatūānuku. From Raki's many unions came offspring, who together were responsible for creating the elements that constitute the taiao (natural world) today, including the mountains, rivers, forests and seas, and all fish, bird and other animal life (including humans). Kāi Tahu claim the same descent from Raki and his wives and are therefore connected to all things by whakapapa (genealogical ties). This is reflected in the exercise of rakatirataka, the inherited authority to give effect to Kāi Tahu culture and traditions in the management of the natural world. Kaitiakitaka is the practical expression of rakatirataka, and in this context, it can be briefly summarised as having the right and responsibility to care and look after the environment.



The pīwauwau / southern rock wren has a regionally critical status.



Otago communities have expressed a deep connection to indigenous biodiversity and a strong desire to maintain and enhance it. Indigenous biodiversity is valued in its own right, as well as for the sense of place and identity it provides. Our tourism industry relies on it for its branding, and it is an important part of functioning natural systems. These systems contribute essential services such as clean water, fertile soil, climate regulation, and protection from floods and erosion. In Otago, these support community wellbeing and many industries, including farming, forestry and tourism.

Maintenance of indigenous biodiversity is one of Otago Regional Council's (ORC) core responsibilities under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). Section 30(1) (ga) of the RMA tasks every regional council with "the establishment, implementation, and review of objectives, policies, and methods for maintaining indigenous biological diversity". Maintaining the native plants, animals and fungi, and the places they live, is a core part of how ORC gives effect to the RMA in Otago. Community expectations clearly reinforce this mandate and call for leadership, ambition, and meaningful action, indicating the need for a strategy.

Legislation provides clear, complementary definitions for indigenous biodiversity:

RMA definition (as "biological diversity")

"The variability among living organisms, and the ecological complexes of which they are a part, including diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems."

National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (definition of indigenous biodiversity)

"The living organisms that occur naturally in New Zealand, and the ecological complexes of which they are part, including all forms of indigenous flora, fauna, and fungi, and their habitats."

Together, these definitions tell us that indigenous biodiversity is not just the species themselves; it is the full tapestry of genes, species, habitats, and ecological relationships that occur here naturally.

Otago species and ecosystems found nowhere else on earth

1
bird



6
reptiles



39
vascular
plants



101
spiders



8
freshwater
fishes



1
naturally
uncommon
ecosystem



Where are we now?

Otago's extraordinary mix of alpine, freshwater, lowland and marine ecosystems is in crisis as a result of threats such as invasive pests, habitat loss and climate change.

For example, rabbits and wilding conifers are reshaping landscapes and eroding soil health, and freshwater and marine pests — such as didymo, lake snow, lagarosiphon and exotic seaweeds — displace native species and undermine recreation and tourism. These biological threats sit alongside longstanding pressures of habitat loss, drainage of remaining wetlands, and modification of rivers, streams and coastlines for urban expansion, flood control, irrigation and hydro-generation. These pressures, combined with pollution from land use and urban activities, have led to declining water quality and the degradation of many freshwater and coastal marine habitats.

In Otago, 97% of lizards, 42% of plants and 61% of native birds are now threatened or at risk of regional extinction, while many ecosystem types survive at only a fraction of their pre-human extent.

Climate change will intensify these threats and increase the occurrence of new pests. Efforts to reverse the decline are fragmented

across agencies and initiatives, with no shared mandate or coordinated strategy to drive collective action or align investment at landscape scale.

This carries clear economic, cultural and social costs: higher pest-control expenditure, lost productivity, diminished natural capital and tourism brand, and reduced recreational and cultural wellbeing for Otago communities who value indigenous biodiversity.

For Kāi Tahu, who are connected with Otago's indigenous biodiversity through whakapapa, the loss of indigenous biodiversity and the growing distance between the people and what indigenous biodiversity remains affects the ability to exercise rakatirataka by undermining this relationship, responsibilities and practices.

The loss of mahika kai and taoka species and habitats has had a drastic effect on cultural identity and the ability to fulfil kaitiaki responsibilities and pass on mātauraka to future generations.



A wilding conifer overlooking Lake Hāwea

But across the region, people are already taking action.

Kāi Tahu lead place-based projects grounded in whakapapa and mātauraka. Landowners and communities act as stewards of indigenous biodiversity on their whenua. Community groups, farmers, and businesses are taking action and establishing best practice, and many are highly effective. Central and local government initiatives complement this work.

There is growing ambition across Otago to increase and enhance our indigenous biodiversity. At the same time, there is recognition that our first responsibility is to protect what remains; the ecosystems and species we still have are irreplaceable foundations to build from.

Central government investment in several Otago biodiversity projects through its Jobs for Nature programme has shown that investment in indigenous biodiversity can unlock action at scale, build capability, and strengthen relationships. While this funding has ended, it has built momentum that Otago can continue to build on.

There is growing interest in investing in indigenous biodiversity enhancement — for a range of reasons including climate goals, water quantity and quality, flood mitigation, environmental outcomes, and social or cultural values. These efforts can help achieve maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity if they are locally grounded and directed to where they make the greatest contribution.

Biodiversity loss is not inevitable. But reversing current trends will require clear priorities, sustained commitment, and coordination across the many groups and sectors who have a part to play.



Example of a naturally uncommon ecosystem found in Otago

Threatened or at risk of extinction in Otago

42%

vascular
plants

(545/1308)



61%

birds

(36/59)



3%

mushroom
fungi

(9/331)



100%

bats

(1/1)



97%

reptiles

(30/31)



65%

naturally
uncommon
ecosystems

(30/46)



Proportion of Otago's resident indigenous species/ ecosystems threatened or at risk of extinction, that we know of. Data does not include extinct species.

What are we aiming to achieve?

Long-term vision

Ki uta ki tai, our awa connect our mountains and great lakes to our beautiful coastline and ocean depths, reflecting the mauri of te taiao.

Mana whenua as kaitiaki and our communities as stewards work together to achieve healthy, thriving and resilient indigenous biodiversity across our region's catchments, coast and ocean, providing for the health of the people.

Toitū te marae a Tane-Mahuta.

Toitū te marae a Takaroa.

Toitū te takata.

“When the land is well and the sea is well, the people thrive.”



Two hoiho / yellow-eyed penguins
(Regionally Critical status)



Photo: © Samuel Purdie
(CC BY-NC) iNaturalist

Above: *Powelliphanta spedeni*, one of two
carnivorous snail species in Otago.
Right: *Peripatoides otepoti*, a type of velvet worm.



Photo: © Diego Carena-Santiago
(CC BY-NC) iNaturalist

Outcomes

What we are aiming to achieve by 2040 or earlier

Indigenous biodiversity is maintained and resilient

The condition, quantity and diversity of indigenous biodiversity is maintained, and indigenous biodiversity is resilient to pressures such as pests, pressures on habitats and climate change.

Mana whenua are supported to exercise kaitiakitaka

Kāi Tahu exercise rakatirataka, leading and participating in indigenous biodiversity management. Kāi Tahu are supported to exercise kaitiakitaka, with mātauraka and mahika kai practices valued and upheld.

ORC is leading proactive responses to emerging issues

ORC leads a region-wide approach; threats to indigenous biodiversity are being detected early; and timely, appropriate responses are happening even when the issue was not predicted.

Indigenous biodiversity is enhanced strategically

Enhancement efforts are targeted to achieve shared visions that are developed with our communities to reflect their aspirations.

Communities are empowered as stewards

People across Otago are enabled to take action, with support tailored to their role, place and stage of their journey as stewards of indigenous biodiversity.

The decline of indigenous species and ecosystems is reversed

Overall loss of species and ecosystems is stopped, and action is taken to target key drivers of their decline.

How we'll work

Principles

Mauri

We will prioritise the mauri, intrinsic value and wellbeing of indigenous biodiversity and recognise people's connections and relationships with it. The health and wellbeing of people and communities are dependent on the health and wellbeing of indigenous biodiversity, and in return, people have a responsibility to care for and nurture it.

Biodiversity in Otago includes valued introduced species, many of which are important for our everyday lives, the primary sector, and recreation and commercial opportunities. To reflect our specific role, however, we will work to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity.

He awa whiria

Valuing our diverse knowledge systems

We will apply mātauraka Kāi Tahu, science and community knowledge as valuable, complementary and distinct knowledge systems in the management of indigenous biodiversity.

We have distinct responsibilities to each. We will identify where these knowledge systems mingle and mix, like the ever-changing streams of a braided river, to generate new approaches and ways of understanding for better results.

Ki uta ki tai

From the mountains to the sea

We will embrace ki uta ki tai, recognising that the environment is an interconnected system which depends on its connections to flourish and must be managed as interdependent across land, freshwater, coast and marine environments — from the mountains to the sea, from urban to rural.

This acknowledges the web of interconnectedness between indigenous species, ecosystems, the wider environment, and the community, at both a physical and metaphysical level.

We will adopt catchment-scale approaches and align efforts across land, freshwater, coast and marine environments.

We will reflect ki uta ki tai in the way we connect communities, organisations and those taking action.

Kotahitaka

Investing in working together

We will value and invest in relationships and ways of working together as a foundation for knowledge sharing, working to our strengths, combining efforts, and enabling clear and decisive action.



View of Karitane Peninsula

What we'll do — Strategic Pou

Central to our work between now and 2040 are three pou (pillars), which provide direction and focus to guide us towards the transformational change needed to achieve the strategy outcomes.

This transformation is mapped out in Appendix 3.

1. Focus action to maintain and enhance — *Tiaki me te Whakahaumanu*

Identify indigenous biodiversity focus areas

We will continue to develop a comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge base of what indigenous biodiversity exists in Otago, where it is located, how it is doing, why it is in its current state, and what methods and actions can support its maintenance.

This knowledge base draws on ORC's monitoring and analysis, contributions from partners, and relevant data provided by others. Respecting confidentiality, this information will be made accessible and understandable for a wide audience, from landowners and community groups to policymakers and planners.

We will use this knowledge to identify focus areas based on their importance in contributing to the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity in Otago, and the availability and effectiveness of practical methods to maintain or enhance them.

While these areas are only part of what is required for the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity, they will allow action to be targeted where it will have the most impact. Additional focus areas will be identified where indigenous biodiversity supports critical ecosystem services for communities and the economy.

Partner with mana whenua to ensure the sustainability of taoka species and their habitats, and mahika kai.

We will work in partnership with mana whenua to identify taoka species, their habitats, and mahika kai values. This includes co-designing and delivering a process to identify relevant indigenous biodiversity focus areas that support their sustainability.

Work with communities to create landscape-scale visions for maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.

We will co-design landscape-scale visions for the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity, including through catchment action plans. We will seek commitment from mana whenua, our communities, central government agencies and councils on these visions. If we all commit to them and actively work to achieve them, they will become the heart of Otago's strategic approach and shape how we apply resource management legislation and national direction in Otago.

Promote and fund actions to achieve the above, monitor the outcomes, and continuously improve.

We will promote, fund and enable mana whenua, community action groups, landowners, and businesses to take effective action across indigenous biodiversity focus areas and to achieve landscape-scale visions. This contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity and sustains taoka species, their habitats, and mahika kai.

We will set outcome indicators to track progress and guide continuous improvement where action is underway.

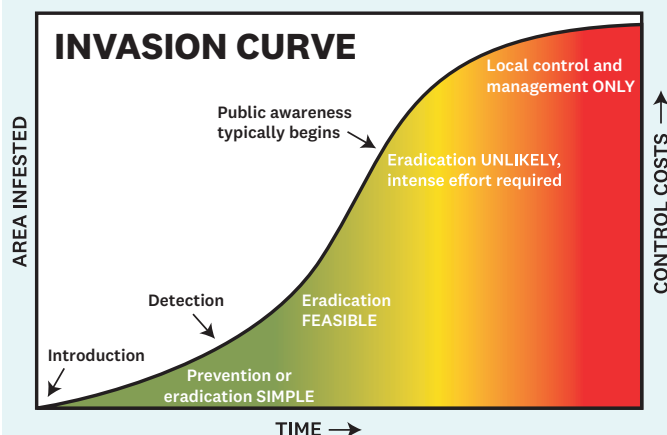
We will prioritise action and funding where indigenous biodiversity has received legal protection, e.g. voluntary open space covenant or Ngā Whenua Rāhui, to ensure its maintenance (e.g. pest control and fencing).

Monitor for emerging pests and other threats to indigenous biodiversity and respond effectively.

We will establish best-practice pathways management, risk-based surveillance and monitoring, and systems that enable a timely and appropriate response to pests and other threats to indigenous biodiversity — including through the Regional Pest Management Plan.

In indigenous biodiversity focus areas, we will undertake targeted surveillance to provide early warning of emerging pests/pressures, enabling timely and effective action where it matters most.

Proactive intervention: So that monitoring and surveillance for emerging pests and threats to indigenous biodiversity lead to effective action, we will use the invasion-curve concept from pest management to guide decision making and prioritise effort. The invasion curve illustrates that the earlier a pest or threat is detected and addressed, the more cost effective and impactful the response is likely to be. Early action — such as exclusion or eradication — offers the greatest ecological return, while delayed responses often require more sustained and costly control with diminishing benefits.



2. Empower action — *Whakahau*

Partner with mana whenua on action.

We will work with mana whenua to identify opportunities for partnership on action that maintains and enhances indigenous biodiversity and ensures the sustainability of taoka species and their habitats, and mahika kai. These partnerships enable the exercise of kaitiakitaka and the application of mātauraka Māori, creating intergenerational outcomes for indigenous biodiversity and communities across Otago.

Connect people to local indigenous biodiversity to inspire action.

We will take a targeted engagement approach that highlights Otago's unique indigenous biodiversity — whether in neighbourhoods, on farms, or in local streams — while testing what most effectively converts inspiration into action. By meeting people where they are, we will work with mana whenua, schools, landowners, and community groups. We'll encourage those we inspire to join existing efforts as a priority and — where they are equipped and motivated — launch new projects in local focus areas and advance work on landscape-scale visions where gaps once existed.

Share knowledge and build capability to enable action.

We will identify the knowledge and capabilities needed to enable effective action and connect those taking action with existing support, tools, or expertise — whether provided by ORC or others. Where gaps exist, we will help fill them. This will ensure mana whenua, landowners, communities, and businesses are equipped to take confident, sustained, and impactful action across focus areas and landscape-scale visions, making the outcomes of kaitiakitaka and stewardship increasingly visible across Otago.

Collaborate with those leading action in the community.

We will collaborate with mana whenua, community groups, landowners, and businesses who are already leading action for indigenous biodiversity. By working to our respective strengths, we will enable and support these leaders to extend their impact and, where appropriate, help others take action.

Build on mana whenua, landowner, and community best practice.

We will identify best practices developed by mana whenua, landowners, and communities that lead to strong outcomes for indigenous biodiversity. We will facilitate opportunities for these to be shared across Otago, peer-to-peer, by helping to bring people together.

Share information about where action is and isn't happening.

We will map where action is — and isn't — happening across Otago and, where appropriate, share this alongside relevant indigenous biodiversity knowledge and landscape-scale visions. This will help identify gaps, contribute to success stories, and connect people taking similar action.

Co-design solutions with our communities and coordinate action.

We will use co-design and coordinated planning to guide indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity work across the region. This place-based approach will bring together mana whenua, landowners, communities, and others to manage pests and deliver action for indigenous biodiversity focus areas and landscape-scale visions. It will support stronger local ownership, lasting action, and more-resilient indigenous biodiversity.

3. Get the system right — *Tūāpapa*

Strengthen leadership and collaboration on shared interests with central government and councils in partnership with mana whenua.

We will establish and support a coordinated leadership group — bringing together central government, councils, and mana whenua — to form an alliance for the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity. This alliance will provide clarity, leadership, and decision making in areas of shared interest and will invest in strong relationships and effective ways of working. The Otago Biodiversity Forum will continue to promote collaboration and action at staff level between central government, councils, and mana whenua and provide advice to the leadership group.

We will work closely with neighbouring councils to ensure consistent planning, best practice sharing, and coordinated responses to cross-regional pests and other threats to biodiversity.

We will identify region-wide pests and other threats to biodiversity and work with the agencies, groups or individuals with the right capabilities to address these.

Explore incentives and co-investment models and encourage investment and innovation to support maintenance and enhancement.

We will explore ways to support landowners to take action that maintains and enhances indigenous biodiversity, including incentives, such as rates relief.

We will explore co-investment approaches and encourage market- and regulation-driven investment — such as offsetting — toward actions needed to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity in focus areas and landscape-scale visions. Investment will be directed to where it has the greatest impact, guided by mana whenua and community values and informed by our knowledge base.

We will use our knowledge base to identify the innovative tools and methods needed to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity and encourage others to provide these.

Monitor the status and trends of indigenous biodiversity.

We will provide regional indicators that track the status and trend of indigenous biodiversity in Otago and, where possible, the cultural health of taoka species, their habitats, and mahika kai. These indicators will help to inform regional and local decision making and support communication of both progress and gaps. A relevant subset will be made available for use by district councils. Outcome measures will continue to be applied in areas where action is underway, helping to guide continuous improvement and demonstrate impact.

Make sure that plans and decisions contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.

Working with mana whenua and our communities, we will prepare and implement a fit-for-purpose Regional Pest Management Plan that addresses pests impacting the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity.

Regional policies and regulation will continue to be developed and implemented to set clear expectations for the management of activities that have the potential to adversely impact indigenous biodiversity. Compliance monitoring and enforcement will continue to be prioritised to support these outcomes. Across all decisions — including infrastructure investment — ORC will have processes in place to ensure indigenous biodiversity is considered.

Together, non-regulatory action, pest management, planning and decision making will all work to uphold kaitiakitaka, empower stewardship, and deliver improved indigenous biodiversity outcomes across Otago.



Maintaining indigenous biodiversity: why it's a huge task

The scale, effort, and ambition required just to hold the line

Maintenance doesn't mean standing still, it means working constantly to hold the line against loss. This requires effort every day — across our landscapes, rivers, and coastlines.

Maintaining indigenous biodiversity requires more than just setting policies and regulations. It also depends on the actions of many others beyond ORC's direct control. This reinforces the need for ORC to combine strong policy and regulation with effective pest management, coordinated leadership and collaboration, and to enable kaitiakitaka, empower stewardship, and support action on the ground.



Many of our most threatened species survive only because of constant effort. Landowners, mana whenua, communities and councils all have a role to play.

Biodiversity vs biosecurity — what's the difference?



Biodiversity is **what** we protect.

Biodiversity is the species, ecosystems and habitats that occur naturally in Otago and are part of our regional prosperity and identity.

Protecting indigenous biodiversity requires a team effort between mana whenua, communities, agencies, landowners and businesses.



Biosecurity is **one way** we protect it.

Pests are one of the things that cause harm to our indigenous biodiversity. They also cause harm to productive land and many other things we value.

Biosecurity is about managing pests to reduce this harm. It includes trying to prevent their introduction into Otago or managing their impacts should they get here.

It works best when mana whenua, agencies, communities and businesses work together across the land and water to control, contain or eradicate pests.

Both are part of ORC's role

ORC has distinct but complementary biodiversity and biosecurity roles: working to maintain biodiversity under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and providing leadership of pest management in Otago under the Biosecurity Act 1993.



How the strategy relates to Otago Regional Council work

ORC's biodiversity work is shaped by

- Legislation: the Resource Management Act (RMA) and Biosecurity Act
- National direction: national policy statements and strategies
- Regional direction: the proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement (pORPS)
- ORC's Strategic Directions
- Mana whenua Natural Resource Management Plans (NRMPs).

The strategy aligns with all of these. It is our approach to performing our RMA and biosecurity roles, guided by national policy, drawing on the strategic elements of the pORPS, NRMPs, and in strong alignment with the national biodiversity strategy.



The strategy's relationship to existing work

ORC already has a range of strengths and established work programmes — Integrated Catchment Management planning, catchment advisors, plans and rules, compliance functions, and our science work that builds our knowledge base PLUS regional pest management plan (RPMP) rules and biosecurity compliance and community programmes.

The strategy doesn't replace these — it sets the course for how they evolve so we perform our role more effectively.

What the strategy builds on and replaces

Guided by our 2018 Biodiversity Strategy and 2019 Biosecurity Strategy, we've invested in relationships and strengths. This strategy builds on these to take the next step (as outlined in Appendix 2).



Appendices

Mountain daisies at
upper Beans Burn

Appendix 1

About the strategy

Strategy is about choosing a particular approach or course of action to achieve desired outcomes.

It is essential for navigating our complex environmental challenges, such as managing the region's indigenous biodiversity. Strategy helps us to prioritise actions and investments, coordinate with other councils, central government, mana whenua and stakeholders, and manage our limited resources responsibly. It also helps us to respond proactively to emerging issues while ensuring transparency and accountability to ratepayers.

The purpose of this indigenous biodiversity strategy is to provide clarity on what we're aiming to achieve and how we plan to get there. It sets out the approach that we will take and provides a framework for decision making. It helps us plan our actions, allocate resources effectively, coordinate across different areas of responsibility, and build capability and capacity where it is needed. It provides the rationale to help communicate both what we are going to focus on and what will not be a priority for us just now.

By taking a strategic approach, we can ensure that our work is focused, future-proofed and aligned with the long-term wellbeing of the people and places we serve.

The strategy:

- Describes the approach that we, ORC, will take to achieve the desired outcomes for the region's indigenous biodiversity
- Outlines the activities that we, ORC, will prioritise when developing work programmes and budgets and when making strategic decisions about resource allocation
- Informs our business planning processes for each long-term plan and annual plan
- Guides the development of policies and regulations
- Is referred to in Council papers to support our elected members when making strategic decisions
- Helps us understand how all our activities interact.

The strategy is a non-statutory document that shows how we intend to give effect to the relevant components of ORC's Strategic Directions and our legislative and statutory responsibilities.



Photo: Carey Knox

The kowari gecko is regionally endemic and found in Central Otago

The strategy is owned by Otago Regional Council, but it also describes how we will work with others in pursuit of our common ambitions. Key relationships for the delivery of this strategy include:

- Mana whenua, due to our ambition of further strengthening effective and meaningful partnerships and to go above and beyond our statutory responsibilities (as prescribed in local government and treaty settlement legislation) to support the intention of the Crown to uphold the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi
- The region's district and city councils, due to our aligned legislative and moral responsibilities to the region's communities, which are best delivered when we work together

- Other agencies with clear mandated responsibilities in this space, such as the Department of Conservation and research and educational institutions
- Groups with strong interest and influence in this space, such as environmental conservation community groups
- All those people and groups who will be directly affected by our activities.

Successful implementation of the strategy will be evident through decision making that results in the desired shifts and outcomes for the region's indigenous biodiversity. We will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this strategy and ensure it is reviewed if it is not having the desired impact and/or changes to the operating environment mean that it is no longer fit for purpose.



Photo: © Simon Madill

The dusky galaxias is regionally endemic and found in east Otago. Classified as 'Nationally Endangered', they share the same threat status as the rare South Island kākā.

Appendix 2

Building on our biodiversity and biosecurity foundations

The 2018 Biodiversity Strategy and the 2019 Biosecurity Strategy have guided ORC's biodiversity and biosecurity work, laying the foundation for where we are today. While the final strategy will replace them, they helped build the strengths we will benefit from in the future.



2018 Biodiversity Strategy

The 2018 Biodiversity Strategy laid important groundwork for ORC. It clarified ORC's role in maintaining indigenous biodiversity and led to a better indigenous biodiversity knowledge base, improved relationships, and collaboration with mana whenua and other agencies, along with an increasing ability to empower communities and collaborate with those leading action as well as better internal coordination.



2019 Biosecurity Strategy

The 2019 Biosecurity Strategy led ORC to build strengths in best practice pest management and step into an enabling, coordinating leadership role aligned with the Biosecurity Act 1993. It also led to a focus on prevention, early response and sustained control.

Continuing to build strengths

ORC has continued to build the required capabilities to deliver its biodiversity and biosecurity roles beyond the current strategies. Through the Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) programme, we are building strengths in co-design with our communities and mana whenua. Our Catchments team is building capabilities to inspire and enable landowners and groups to take action, and our Biosecurity team has built strengths in coordinating community-led responses to pests.

This strategy builds on those strengths, bringing them together to respond to current challenges and define the next step toward our long-term vision.

The scope of this strategy

This strategy includes indigenous biodiversity across land, freshwater, and coastal marine environments, recognising that the environment is an interconnected system ki uta ki tai.

This strategy brings together and replaces our previous biodiversity and biosecurity strategies, setting the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity as the goal, and recognising biosecurity as a key tool to achieve it. Pests are one of the biggest pressures on indigenous biodiversity, so effective biosecurity is essential to maintain what we have.

By combining the two strategies, we can focus on outcomes and make use of all our strengths, knowledge and relationships.



Tahakopa River
looking out to
Stuarts Marsh,
The Catlins



Appendix 3

What we're doing now and what comes next

1. Focus action to maintain and enhance — *Tiaki me te Whakahaumanu*

	What we are doing now	2025–2027 Goals	2027–2032 Goals	2032–2040 Goals
1.1 Identify indigenous biodiversity focus areas.	Across terrestrial, freshwater and coastal marine environments, ORC has begun to build a knowledge base of what indigenous biodiversity is in Otago and how it is doing. ORC has also started work on understanding where it is located, why it's in its current state, and what methods and actions can help to maintain it. Alongside this, ORC has advocated for national tools to support this work and developed science criteria to help spatially prioritise indigenous biodiversity action.	1.1a Our indigenous biodiversity knowledge base continues to build and has allowed indigenous biodiversity focus areas to be identified. These are where action should be focused, based on its importance as a contributor to the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity in Otago and the availability and effectiveness of suitable methods. Our knowledge base also contains well-structured relevant data provided by other parties.	1.1b Indigenous biodiversity focus areas are regularly reviewed using an up-to-date knowledge base that comprehensively spans terrestrial, freshwater, and coastal marine environments. Respecting confidentiality, this information is easily accessed and understood by a wide audience, from individuals making decisions on specific projects to those making policy and other regulatory decisions. Indigenous biodiversity focus areas have been identified for action to maintain and enhance the ecosystem services that indigenous biodiversity provides to our communities and economy.	1.1c Action is focused and supports the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides.
1.2 Partner with mana whenua to ensure the sustainability of taoka species and their habitats, and mahika kai.	ORC has demonstrated a commitment to partnering with mana whenua through policy development, collaboration through the Otago Biodiversity Forum, and through action on multiple site-specific projects.	1.2a An approach to identifying taoka species, their habitats, and mahika kai values is being designed and carried out in partnership with mana whenua.	1.2b Indigenous biodiversity focus areas to ensure the sustainability of taoka species, their habitats, and mahika kai values have been identified, along with actions required to ensure these outcomes.	1.2c Action is focused and supports the sustainability of taoka species and their habitats and restoration of mahika kai locations.

What we are doing now		2025–2027 Goals	2027–2032 Goals	2032–2040 Goals
1.3 Work with communities to create landscape-scale visions for the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.	Through the Draft Land and Water Regional Plan, ORC worked with mana whenua and communities to identify collective visions for Otago’s freshwater ecosystems. ORC’s Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) programme is working with mana whenua and communities to develop catchment action plans (CAPs) that set landscape-scale environmental visions — including for maintaining and enhancing indigenous biodiversity.	1.3a Working with mana whenua and our communities, CAPs have been completed for the whole region and are being delivered on. Using a risk-based approach, each CAP identifies and rates the direct threats (pressures) most likely to undermine those goals, then lays out the strategies and actions needed to mitigate them. CAPs are monitored and reviewed regularly to allow new information and lessons learned to be included.	1.3b Landscape-scale visions for maintaining and enhancing indigenous biodiversity have been reviewed with up-to-date information and lessons learned. They sit at the heart of Otago’s strategic approach, guiding how we implement resource-management legislation and national direction. Central government, councils, mana whenua and our communities are committed to these and are actively working together to deliver on them.	1.3c Action is focused and supports the achievement of landscape-scale visions.
1.4 Promote and fund actions to achieve the above, monitor the outcomes and continuously improve.	ORC currently funds projects that support indigenous biodiversity, taoka species and mahika kai through the ECO Fund, with larger grants directed to work on threatened or rare species and ecosystems. ORC delivers the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) through surveillance, compliance, public education and collaboration with landowners and other agencies. Through CAPs, outcome indicators are established for action and continuously inform improvements.	1.4a Effective and impactful action is enabled and funded across biodiversity focus areas and to implement CAPs. Where action is not yet occurring, it is actively promoted. Outcome indicators are established for action and continuously inform improvements. Decision-making criteria have been developed to ensure that the most effective methods are being applied in focus areas and across pest management.	1.4b Effective and impactful action is occurring at most biodiversity focus areas and towards landscape-scale maintenance and enhancement visions. Action is continuously improving, contributing to outcomes for the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity and the sustainability of taoka species and mahika kai. Decisions are being made that mean the most effective methods are being applied in focus areas and across pest management.	1.4c Action is focused and impactful. The outcomes of kaitiakitaka and stewardship are increasingly visible, and effective, across Otago.
1.5 Monitor for emerging pests and other threats to indigenous biodiversity and respond effectively.	Some pest surveillance is undertaken as part of ORC’s delivery of the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP), including monitoring in freshwater environments. Surveillance is supported through compliance activities, landowner reporting and coordination with other agencies.	1.5a Best-practice pathways and risk-based surveillance and monitoring plans have been developed for pests and other threats to biodiversity. Decision-making criteria have been developed to support timely and appropriate impact-to-effort responses to pest incursions or emerging threats to indigenous biodiversity, even when these are not anticipated.	1.5b Pest incursions or emerging threats to indigenous biodiversity are prevented or identified early. Action to respond is timely and effective even when these are not anticipated. At indigenous biodiversity focus areas, targeted surveillance provides early warning of emerging pests/pressures, enabling timely and effective action where it matters most.	Pests and other pressures are identified early and addressed efficiently, supporting the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity values and the management of pests.

2. Empower action — *Whakahau*

	What we are doing now	2025–2027 Goals	2027–2032 Goals	2032–2040 Goals
Partner with mana whenua on action.	ORC has demonstrated a commitment to partnering with mana whenua by partnering on multiple projects, e.g. the Maintaining the Gains project.	Opportunities to partner on action are being identified and implemented with mana whenua.	Mana whenua projects are enabling kaitiakitaka and mātauraka Māori to be practiced.	Mana whenua are creating intergenerational outcomes for indigenous biodiversity and our communities.
Connect people to local indigenous biodiversity to inspire action.	The Catchments team engage with schools and community groups to inspire action for stream health, and the Biosecurity team raise awareness of pest species across the region, including face-to-face with landowners or communities and by attending A&P shows and other community events. ORC's communications channels are used to share resources that showcase Otago's unique species and ecosystems and tell indigenous biodiversity success stories.	A targeted engagement approach highlights Otago's unique indigenous biodiversity — in the neighbourhood, on the farm, or living in the local stream — while testing what most effectively converts inspiration to action. By meeting people where they are, working with schools, mana whenua, landowners and community groups and focusing on where there is existing interest, the approach delivers rapid insight to inform region-wide success.	Proven approaches have been scaled up across Otago, strengthening local connection to nature and measurably inspiring action. Communities, businesses and groups are joining existing efforts, and — where they are equipped and motivated — are launching new projects in local focus areas and advancing work on landscape-scale visions where gaps once existed.	Care for indigenous biodiversity has deepened, on-the-ground action has grown, and kaitiakitaka and stewardship are more visible throughout Otago's environments.
Share knowledge and build capability to enable action.	The Catchments team delivers farm biodiversity and stream health check workshops, develops management plans aligned with industry assurance programmes, and supports community nurseries and propagation.	The knowledge and capabilities needed to enable effective action are starting to be identified. Where these are already provided by others, ORC is connecting them with action-takers and identifying gaps that ORC can help fill.	Mana whenua, landowners, communities and businesses have the knowledge, capability and support systems needed to take sustained and impactful action on focus areas and landscape-scale visions.	Mana whenua, landowners, and communities act with confidence and impact. The outcomes of kaitiakitaka and stewardship are increasingly visible, and effective, across Otago.
Collaborate with those leading action in the community.	Mana whenua, community groups, landowners and businesses are leading action across Otago.	ORC is identifying ways to collaborate with those leading action that reflect the strengths of both parties. Some of those leading action are collaborating with ORC to support others to take action.	ORC and those leading action are working to their strengths, enabling action across the region.	Those leading action are a key enabler of region-wide action for indigenous biodiversity.



	What we are doing now	2025–2027 Goals	2027–2032 Goals	2032–2040 Goals
Build on mana whenua, landowner and community best practice.	Best practice is already happening across the region. In our work with those taking action, ORC staff — such as the Catchments team — take note of best practice and share this where it is helpful.	Mana whenua, landowner and community best practices have been appropriately identified, and ORC has facilitated peer-to-peer sharing of these across Otago.	Best practice is well known and shared peer to peer, and ORC is helping to bring people together to share best practices.	Best practice is widely adopted and leads to good outcomes.
Share information about where action is and isn't happening.	The Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) programme's GIS tool is a platform for mapping environmental information, mapping where action is happening, and supporting collaboration to identify local priorities, threats and methods.	Information about where action is — and isn't — happening is being mapped and, where appropriate, shared alongside relevant indigenous biodiversity knowledge and landscape-scale visions. This helps identify gaps and connect people taking similar action.	Up-to-date mapping of action informs where efforts to inspire and enable further work are directed. Regional stories of success and gaps are shared to motivate action, while connections between those taking similar approaches help build communities of practice.	Success stories are well known in Otago, and effective action is occurring at most focus areas and on landscape-scale visions.
Co-design solutions with our communities and coordinate action.	ORC is applying co-design and coordination through existing programmes, such as ICM and community rabbit programmes. These processes foster collective ownership and delivery through the consideration of multiple values in decision making.	ICM catchment action planning continues across the region using this co-design approach and building capability. The same methods are now being piloted in indigenous biodiversity focus areas — for example, to enable coordinated pest control.	Co-design and coordination are now the standard approach for planning and delivering indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity work across the region — moving beyond pilots — and applied across focus areas and to achieve landscape-scale visions where necessary. This approach builds on lessons from earlier efforts and uses place-based planning that brings together mana whenua, communities and others.	Co-design and coordination approaches result in stronger local ownership, more-resilient indigenous biodiversity, and lasting action across the region.

3. Get the system right — *Tūāpapa*

	What we are doing now	2025–2027 Goals	2027–2032 Goals	2032–2040 Goals
Strengthen leadership and collaboration on shared interests with central government and councils in partnership with mana whenua.	ORC has a robust and constructive relationship with mana whenua and good working relationships with central government and other councils. ORC leads the Otago Biodiversity Forum, including staff from central government, local councils and mana whenua, to collaborate and take action to enhance indigenous biodiversity. ORC collaborates with neighbouring regional councils on biosecurity action.	Building on existing forums, a coordinated leadership group is established between central government, councils, and mana whenua, with a charter to establish an alliance for the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity and provide leadership, decision making and clarity in areas of shared interest. The Otago Biodiversity Forum continues to promote effective collaboration at the kaimahi level and provides relevant advice to the leadership group. Collaboration and coordination with neighbouring regional councils allows best-practice sharing, consistency, pathways planning, and surveillance to manage pests and to address threats to indigenous biodiversity.	An alliance is established between central government, councils and mana whenua to address areas of shared interest and the challenge of maintaining and enhancing indigenous biodiversity. The alliance invests in relationships and ways of working together as a foundation for knowledge sharing, working to strengths, combined effort, and clear and decisive action. Effective collaboration and coordination with neighbouring regional councils is occurring and providing a coherent response to pests and other threats to indigenous biodiversity across boundaries. Region-wide pests and other threats to indigenous biodiversity have been identified and work is beginning to address these by those with the right capabilities.	Central government, councils and mana whenua are working together seamlessly, across Otago and neighbouring regions, to empower stewardship and kaitiakitaka, and maintain and enhance biodiversity.
Explore incentives and co-investment models and encourage investment and innovation to support maintenance and enhancement.	ORC provides rates relief for land protected by open space covenants.	Incentives such as rates relief are being explored to support landowners to take action that contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity, especially in focus areas, or to achieve landscape-scale visions.	Appropriate incentives are in place, and landowners are taking action to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity. Indigenous biodiversity focus areas and landscape-scale visions are investment-ready and informed by evidence, mana whenua and community values. Co-investment is coordinated, and the knowledge and relationships required to support investment are in place. The innovative methods needed to effectively maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity in Otago are being provided by innovators.	Landowners are taking action to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity. Investment is consistently directed to the most impactful places (innovation, focus areas and enhancement visions), informed by a strong knowledge base and mana whenua and community values.

	What we are doing now	2025–2027 Goals	2027–2032 Goals	2032–2040 Goals
Monitor the status and trends of indigenous biodiversity.	ORC has been building the knowledge required for and supported national work on status and trend indicators for indigenous biodiversity. This includes Regional Threat Classification, ecosystem mapping, and health indicators for some ecosystem types.	Regional indicators are provided for Otago, covering some elements of the state of indigenous biodiversity and, to the extent possible, cultural health of taoka species, their habitats and mahika kai. ORC has investigated how district councils might use a subset of these indicators in the future. Outcome measures are in place in areas where action is underway, e.g. those in ICM catchment action plans.	Regional indicators begin to include both status and trend data for Otago, cover most elements of indigenous biodiversity maintenance, and to the extent possible cultural health of taoka species, their habitats and mahika kai. These can be used to inform decision making as well as storytelling about successes and gaps. A relevant subset of these is available at district council scale. Outcome measures are informing action, e.g. those in ICM catchment action plans.	Indicators show progress on the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity and are informing regional and local decision making and storytelling about successes and gaps. Outcome measures are demonstrating continual improvement.
Make sure that plans and decisions contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.	To carry out its function to maintain indigenous biodiversity and manage pests, ORC prepares and implements the RPMP, Otago Regional Policy Statement, and regional plans; makes decisions on resource consents; and monitors and enforces compliance with these consents and relevant national environmental standards. Compliance monitoring follows a compliance plan, which currently includes relevant priorities to support the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity.	The current RPMP continues to be implemented. Work with mana whenua and our communities is progressing to update the RPMP, addressing pests that impact the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity. Regional policy statements, and regional plans containing objectives, policies, and methods to achieve the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity continue to be implemented. Compliance monitoring and enforcement that supports the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity continues to be prioritised. ORC has processes to ensure indigenous biodiversity is considered in all decisions, e.g. assessing nature-based solutions as options in infrastructure investment.	A fit-for-purpose Regional Pest Management Plan in alignment with the Biosecurity Act 1993 is in place and being implemented, addressing pests that impact the maintenance of biodiversity. Regional policies and regulations are developed and implemented to achieve the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity. Compliance monitoring and enforcement that supports the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity continues to be prioritised. ORC has processes to ensure indigenous biodiversity is considered in all decisions.	Non-regulatory action, pest management, policies, regulations and decisions work together, empower stewardship and kaitiakitaka, and ensure maintenance of indigenous biodiversity and contribute to its enhancement. Decision making has resulted in increased maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity across the region, delivering better value for money and contributing to multiple outcomes.

Appendix 4

Measuring progress and review

Measuring progress on this strategy will be part of a wider framework of outcome reporting undertaken for our Strategic Directions 2024–2034.

Measuring progress on actions that result from the strategy

An implementation plan, including actions to implement the strategy, will be prepared by June 2026. This will inform the Long-Term Plan, and progress on actions will be reported to council annually.

Measuring progress to maintain indigenous biodiversity across Otago

To understand the effectiveness of the strategy, we will track measures that help us understand whether indigenous biodiversity is being maintained. These measures will cover what we measure and the trend we aim to see. They will be developed by June 2026, drawing on available data, and reported annually. Data sources include national datasets, data from other agencies, and ORC's own monitoring programmes across land, freshwater, wetland, estuarine, and coastal marine environments.

Example measures:

Environment	Source	Measure	Trend we aim to see
Land	Regional Threat Assessments	% terrestrial species threatened with extinction	Decrease
	New Zealand Land Cover Database	Area of indigenous biodiversity extent on land lost (ha)	Decrease
		Area of indigenous biodiversity extent on land gained (ha)	Increase
	Open space covenant, Ngā Whenua Rāhui, Conservation Act.	Area of legally protected land (ha)	Increase

Measuring the pressures on indigenous biodiversity across Otago

We will also develop indicators that track pressures on indigenous biodiversity. These will be in place by June 2026 and reported annually to Council.

Example measures:

Environment	Source	Measure	Trend we aim to see
Land	Pest surveillance	% of first inspections compliant with the Regional Pest Management Plan	Increase
	Wilding conifer control programme	Area infested with wilding conifers (ha)	Decrease
Freshwater	State of the Environment monitoring	Water quality	Increase

About our monitoring programmes

In response to requirements in national policy statements and the Resource Management Act, ORC has been building its ability to monitor indigenous biodiversity in Otago.

These programmes are beginning to be established and have been developed in line with national best practice. Monitoring is repeated on a regular cycle. Some programmes are already beginning to show patterns, while those more recently established will do this over time as monitoring is repeated.

During the course of strategy implementation, these programmes will begin to provide a more complete picture across Otago's land, freshwater, wetland, estuarine, and coastal marine environments and both the status and trends of indigenous biodiversity in Otago. Where possible, we will also begin to infer indigenous biodiversity trajectories using historic datasets, allowing us to identify emerging patterns and anticipate future risks and opportunities.

Measuring the outcome of actions on the ground to inform adaptive management

In areas where action is being taken, we will carry out targeted monitoring to assess whether those actions are effective. This supports adaptive management to ensure we adjust our approach as needed to improve outcomes. This is already part of the catchment action plans produced by the Integrated Catchment Management programme.

Review

This strategy will be reviewed every three years, using the measures described above, to ensure it remains effective and relevant.



Appendix 5

The role of ORC in indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity

Otago Regional Council has two distinct but complementary responsibilities when it comes to supporting indigenous biodiversity in the region: maintaining biodiversity under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and managing pests under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

ORC is responsible for establishing, implementing, and reviewing objectives, policies, and methods for maintaining indigenous biological diversity

This is a function of all regional councils under section 30(1)(ga) of the RMA. The National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) provides national direction to inform this role. Clause 1.7 of the NPSIB defines maintenance as:

“the maintenance and at least no overall reduction of all the following: (i) the size of populations of indigenous species; (ii) indigenous species occupancy across their natural range; (iii) the properties and function of ecosystems and habitats used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity; (iv) the full range and extent of ecosystems and habitats used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity; (v) connectivity between, and buffering around, ecosystems used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity; (vi) the resilience and adaptability of ecosystems; and (b) where necessary, the restoration and enhancement of ecosystems and habitats.”

To achieve this, ORC sets policy across land, freshwater, and the coastal marine area, and regulations for the freshwater and the coastal marine area (including the seabed). Regulation to achieve this on land is the responsibility of territorial authorities (TAs), meaning that a high level of coordination is required to ensure alignment and avoid gaps.

Maintaining indigenous biodiversity requires more than just setting policies and regulations. It also depends on the actions of many others beyond ORC’s direct control. This reinforces the need for ORC to combine strong policy and regulation with effective pest management, coordinated leadership and collaboration, and to enable kaitiakitaka, empower stewardship, and support action on the ground. Sources include national datasets, data from other agencies, and ORC’s own monitoring programmes across land, freshwater, wetland, estuarine, and coastal marine environments.

ORC is responsible for monitoring the status and trend of indigenous biodiversity in Otago

This monitoring is required under section 35 of the RMA and helps the council and the community understand whether policies and actions are working. It also provides a basis for science-informed decision making, adaptive management and early intervention when issues emerge.

ORC has a leadership role in pest management within Otago

Under the Biosecurity Act 1993, regional councils provide leadership within their regions to prevent, reduce, or eliminate adverse effects caused by harmful organisms that are present in New Zealand. ORC holds this role in the Otago region.

This role includes the preparation and delivery of a Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP). This plan sets out which organisms are considered ‘pests’ in Otago and the approach to excluding, eradicating, containing or controlling them to reduce their impact on biodiversity, productive land and community values. This plan can set rules that landowners and occupiers, and in some cases agencies, must follow.

ORC’s role can also include encouraging public support for pest management, coordinating action across the region, monitoring pests and unwanted organisms, and developing pathway management plans to address the ways pests or diseases might spread into or around Otago.



ORC’s area of responsibility — land, freshwater and coastal marine area (CMA).

These roles cannot be carried out in isolation

Indigenous biodiversity spans ecological boundaries — across land, freshwater and coastal systems — and crosses institutional boundaries between local, regional and national authorities. Successfully maintaining and enhancing biodiversity requires collaboration across these domains, grounded in shared purpose and mutual respect.

Mana whenua hold a central role, with responsibilities grounded in whakapapa, rakatirataka, mātauraka Māori and kaitiakitaka. The Department of Conservation (DOC) contributes deep expertise in threatened species recovery, manages extensive conservation lands and plays a key role in marine protection. Local councils play a vital role in land use decisions, manage reserves, fund biodiversity initiatives and undertake local pest control. Many community groups, landowners and businesses are already leading action on the ground, bringing place-based knowledge, resources and commitment.

The scale and complexity of biodiversity challenges call for deliberate coordination across these roles. ORC’s success depends on working collaboratively to identify shared priorities, align actions, support complementary strengths and fill gaps where needed.

The map on this page illustrates the spatial scope of ORC’s role in maintaining indigenous biodiversity and managing biosecurity — across Otago’s land, freshwater and coastal marine environments.



Appendix 6

The roles of other agencies with statutory responsibilities for indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity

Territorial Authorities (TAs)

TAs have specific functions under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) to ensure the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity within their districts. They are responsible for controlling the effects of land use and subdivision for this purpose, and for identifying and protecting areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna. They must also have regard to the intrinsic values of ecosystems in their decision making. These responsibilities are delivered through district plans and consent conditions.

Otago is made up of five TAs: Dunedin City Council, Clutha District Council, Central Otago District Council, Queenstown Lakes District Council, and Waitaki District Council (noting that Waitaki spans both the Otago and Canterbury regions). Each council manages reserves and other council-administered land and is responsible for undertaking pest management on that land where required by the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP). This land may contain or contribute to indigenous biodiversity values, including habitat for native species or ecological connectivity.

TAs are also required to give effect to the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) and to work alongside regional councils, mana whenua and communities to ensure land use decisions and management actions support the ongoing maintenance of indigenous biodiversity. Several

of Otago's TAs are actively leading, facilitating and funding on-the-ground action to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity in their districts.

Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)

MPI is the central government agency responsible for leading New Zealand's biosecurity system. MPI administers the Biosecurity Act and provides national direction through key frameworks such as the National Policy Direction for Pest Management (2015), the Biosecurity 2025 Direction Statement and the Biosecurity System Action Plan (2025).

MPI works in partnership with other agencies, iwi/Māori, industry and communities. Its role includes preventing the introduction and spread of harmful organisms to New Zealand, undertaking national surveillance and leading national and sub-national responses to biosecurity incursions.

All MPI functions are carried out under ministerial direction and within available government funding.

Department of Conservation (DOC)

DOC is the central government agency responsible for protecting New Zealand's natural and historic resources. Its indigenous biodiversity role focuses on managing 8.75 million hectares of public conservation lands and waters, preserving native species and ecosystems (s6 Conservation Act), and delivering on-the-ground programmes such as weed and pest control. DOC prepares conservation management strategies, develops

recovery plans for threatened species, and delivers species- and ecosystem-focused programmes based on conservation priorities and resourcing.

DOC provides legal protection to certain species and habitats — including indigenous freshwater fish and their habitats — under the Wildlife Act 1953, Fisheries Act 1996 and other legislation. DOC also plays a significant role in marine protection, including the establishment and management of marine reserves under the Marine Reserves Act 1971.

Under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, DOC manages wild animals such as deer, goats, pigs, and tahr on public conservation land to limit ecological harm, using targeted control, permits, and regulated hunting. DOC is also responsible for undertaking pest management where required by regional pest management plans.

DOC acts as a conservation advocate under the Resource Management Act 1991, participating in planning and policy processes and making submissions. It is also responsible for preparing and monitoring the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS), which sets national direction for the management of the Coastal Marine Area (CMA). All DOC functions are carried out under ministerial direction and within available government funding.

Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)

LINZ is the central government agency responsible for managing Crown land not administered by other agencies. It oversees around 1.7 million hectares across Aotearoa — about 8% of the country's land area — including high country pastoral leases, Crown forest licensed land, surplus railway land, and the beds of many lakes and rivers.

This land contains or contributes to indigenous biodiversity values, including habitat for native species and ecological connectivity. LINZ is responsible for biosecurity on the land it manages, undertaking pest control programmes in collaboration with regional councils and other partners. These efforts contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and help meet obligations under regional pest management plans.

All LINZ functions are carried out under ministerial direction and within available government funding.



Appendix 7

Risk management

Risk	What we'll do about it
People may expect ORC to do everything. Some may think ORC is responsible for all biodiversity work, including on-the-ground action.	We're clear that ORC's job is to lead, coordinate, collaborate and empower. The strategy explains how outcomes will only be achieved by working together.
The targets are ambitious. People may expect big results quickly.	Throughout this strategy, we have emphasised the importance of working together, using methods such as the ICM programme and regional forums to co-develop plans and share responsibility.
Insufficient capacity to support collaborative work. If ORC under-resources its capacity to collaborate with others, it may limit the ability to achieve the outcomes.	Right-size the investment in our ability to collaborate.
Fragmented action across land, freshwater, and marine — outcomes are undermined if work is siloed by environment type or agency boundary.	We will apply a ki uta ki tai lens across planning and delivery using methods such as the ICM programme to strengthen coordination between ORC teams and with external partners.
Community burnout or unclear support boundaries — if ORC oversteps or under-supports community-led efforts, trust and momentum may be lost.	We will communicate that ORC's role is to enable and not to require people to act, and not to replace community stewardship.
Inability to anticipate or respond to emerging threats.	We are investing in monitoring and science and using flexible planning so we can respond quickly as new challenges and opportunities arise.
RMA reform could change ORC's legal responsibilities.	We are prioritising no regrets actions: a strong knowledge base, strong relationships and trust. These will help us stay effective no matter how the legal framework evolves.



Native forest, Mount
Aspiring National Park