



Briefing and public feedback update

Final ORC Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy

ORC Strategy team | 13 May 2026



Update ahead of council paper on the 27th

- Adopting the strategy doesn't commit council to new spending. It's a framework for making the most of what we already have to deliver our statutory functions
- This follows the council briefing in October, since then we've had public feedback on the draft strategy

The journey so far

- **March 2024**, started with clear statutory functions, two existing strategies and an LTP commitment to develop a new strategy
- **Reviewed existing strategies:** Are we on track to maintain indigenous biodiversity? –not yet
- **Developed a new strategy**, in partnership, building support across Otago
- **50+ key stakeholder meetings**, remarkably consistent view of the role ORC can play
- **June 2025 - Council endorsed the draft strategy** for public feedback
- **Public feedback** showed a consensus of support and optimism for the strategy
- **Final strategy on the 27th of May Council agenda**

Where did we start?

March 2024

ORC has a Biodiversity Strategy (2018) and Biosecurity Strategy (2019) — written before the current national direction and national strategy. The new strategy replaces both and aligns ORC with current national direction.



Statutory functions and national direction: ORC is required by national direction to prepare and implement a regional biodiversity strategy. We have statutory functions under the RMA S30(1)(ga) to maintain Otago's indigenous biodiversity, and under the Biosecurity Act to lead biosecurity within the region.

Reinforced by reform: The direction of travel of resource management reform, including the Natural Environment Bill, reinforces ORC's role in this space.

LTP Level of Service: A new biodiversity strategy is a level of service in the current Long-term Plan.

Are we on track to maintain indigenous biodiversity? –not yet

Review of the existing strategies

- Many individuals, businesses and organisations across Otago are making a difference.
- ORC has made good progress on the actions in its existing strategies, improving our knowledge, relationships and capabilities.
- Despite this progress and effort, state of the environment monitoring shows that the region is not on track to maintain indigenous biodiversity.
- A more focussed approach could help us meet our statutory function to maintain indigenous biodiversity under s30(1)(ga) RMA

Otago plants and animals at risk or threatened with extinction within a decade

97%
of reptiles

61%
of birds

42%
of plants



Developing a non-regulatory strategy to lift the trajectory

In partnership, building support across Otago step by step

10

Councillor touchpoints

**Councillor and
Mana whenua**

Reference Group

50+

key stakeholders

**Aukaha, Te Ao Mārama,
DOC and local councils
alongside us every step**

**National strategy
providing the framework**

**ORC teams
ready to deliver**

In June 2025 Councillors endorsed the vision and outcomes to align with the national strategy and existing regional strategies and policies

We spoke to 50+ Key Stakeholders

They were generous with their time and insights and shared a remarkably consistent view of the role ORC can play

Beef & Lamb NZ
Blakely Pacific
Catchment Groups
City Forests LTD
Contact Energy
Southern Inshore Fisheries and CRA7
DairyNZ
Deer Industry NZ
Destination Queenstown
Dunedin Airport
EarnslawOne
Federated Farmers
Fish and Game
Forest and Bird - Te Reo O Te Taiao
Guardians of Lake Hawea
Guardians. of Lake Wānaka
Hikaroroa / Mt Watkin Conservation Group
LINZ / Toitu Te Whenua
Landcorp / Pāmu

Landscape Connections Trust
Mana Tahuna
Manawa Energy
Ministry for Primary Industries / Manatū
Ahu Matua
Ministry for the Environment / Manatū Mō
Te Taiao
New Zealand Sea Lion Trust
Ngā Whenua Rāhui
NZ Landcare Trust / Ngā Matapopore
Whenua
Oceana Gold LTD
Orokonui Ecosanctuary - Te Korowai o
Mihiwaka
OSPRI
Otago Catchment Community Inc
Otago Conservation Board
Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group
Port Otago LTD

Predator Free Dunedin
Predator Free Wanaka
Professor David Norton
QEII National Trust / Ngā Kairauhi Papa
Ravensdown
Matariki Forests
Real NZ
Rural Support Trust
Save the Otago Peninsula
Silverfern Farms
Southern Lakes Sanctuary
Te Uru Rakau - NZ Forest Service
Toroa Foundation
University Of Otago / Ōtākou Whakaihu
Waka
Wai Wanaka
Wakatipu Conservation Alliance

This has informed the resulting ORC Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy



Ambition

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, so that both nature and people can thrive.

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
--	--	---	--	--	---

This has informed the resulting ORC Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy



Three pou to guide our work

**TIAKI ME TE
WHAKAHAUMANU**

Focus action

Focus effort where it can make the biggest difference: drawing on ORC science, mātauraka, and community knowledge

WHAKAHAU

Empower action

Make it easy to get know-how and support so communities, landowners and businesses can make a bigger difference

TŪĀPAPA

Get the system right

Rally everyone around a shared plan; attract investment; decisions, plans and policies that help; and monitor to see if we are making a difference

Mana whenua as kaitiaki and our communities as stewards, ORC in support

Council endorsed the draft strategy for public feedback during November 2025

Who did we hear from?

180

Survey respondents

27

letters

Community groups

Businesses

Farmers

Individuals

Department of Conservation

Rural

Urban

Local councils

Community boards

Conservation groups

The survey was widely promoted in newspapers, newsletters, and online



Responses were roughly proportionate to district population

Feedback on the draft strategy

93%

of survey
respondents
supported the
ambition, or
wanted to see more
ambition (45%)

People particularly liked

Mana whenua as kaitiaki and communities as stewards

Mountains to sea – Ki uta ki tai

ORC in support

All of the strategic pou were rated effective / highly effective

Focus Action

Empower Action

Get the System Right

7%

had concerns
about cost or
ORC's role

26/27

of letters recieved
were supportive

Feedback has led to several straightforward
refinements that don't change ambition or approach

From Federated Farmers to Forest and Bird, there was broad consensus of support and optimism for the strategy

CONSENSUS – SUPPORT AND OPTIMISM FOR OUR STRATEGY

We've got something rare. Let's make the most of it.

Otago sees this strategy as the approach that is needed

It provides:

- A framework to achieve our statutory function
- Better use of our existing resources and strengths, giving effect to national direction
- A no regrets approach for whatever comes next in terms of local government reform

- It also supports delivery of at least 17 of the recently adopted Council Priority Actions 2026-2028

It tells the people and organisations who contributed that we heard them

Next steps

- The final strategy and a paper recommending adoption is on the agenda for the 27th May Council meeting
- Staff are ready to begin implementation, and will report progress annually
- If any additional funding is required it will be sought through the 2027-2037 Long-term Plan, when Council will make funding decisions on the merits

Glossary of Te Reo Māori terms used in the strategy



Term	Meaning in the context of the strategy
awa	River
he awa whiria	Braided river — a metaphor for weaving together mātauraka, science and community knowledge as distinct but complementary streams
Kāi Tahu	The iwi (tribe) whose territory covers a large part of the South Island, including Otago. Ngāi Tahu in northern dialect
kaitiaki	One who exercises kaitiakitaka
kaitiakitaka	A guardian role, exercised by mana whenua, whose responsibilities flow from whakapapa / genealogical connection to a place or species as an ancestor. Kaitiakitanga in northern dialect
ki uta ki tai	From the mountains to the sea — managing the environment as one interconnected system across land, freshwater, coast and marine
kotahitaka	Unity, working together — investing in relationships as the foundation for combined effort. Kotahitanga in northern dialect
mahika kai	The customary gathering of food and natural materials and the places where those resources are gathered. Mahinga kai in northern dialect
mana whenua	The iwi (tribes) and hapū (kinship groups) who hold customary authority over a particular area
mātauraka	Knowledge — particularly Kāi Tahu knowledge built up over generations. Mātauranga in northern dialect
mauri	Life force — the intrinsic value and wellbeing of the natural world
pou	Pillar, post — a supporting or guiding structure. The Strategy is organised around three strategic pou
taiao	The natural world
taoka	Something treasured — tangible or intangible, including species, places, knowledge, and values — to which mana whenua hold kaitiaki responsibilities. Taonga in northern dialect.
whakapapa	Genealogy — kinship connections linking people to ancestors, to each other, and to the natural world
Tiaki me te Whakahaumanu	Maintain and enhance (Pou 1 — Focus action)
Whakahau	Empower (Pou 2 — Empower action)
Tūāpapa	Foundation (Pou 3 — Get the system right)