

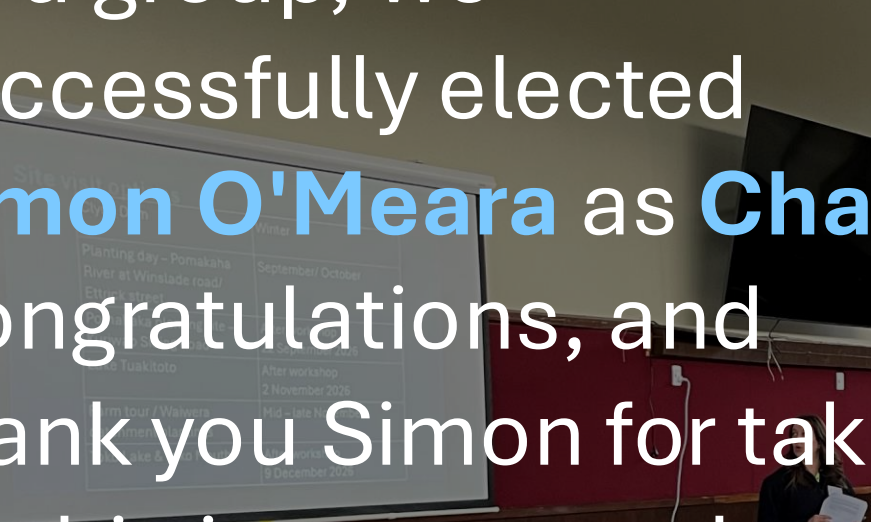


Lower Mata-au Clutha

Integrated Catchment Group
Workshop 2

04 August 2026 – Lawrence

On the snowiest day of the year, we gathered at the Simpson Park Hall in Lawrence for our second workshop. We achieved a lot: electing our chair, assessing catchment health and discussing the pressures affecting the environment, with constructive conversations around some significant and complex topics.



As a group, we successfully elected **Simon O'Meara** as **Chair**. Congratulations, and thank you Simon for taking on this important role.





Our first exercise focused on key environmental attributes (KEA).

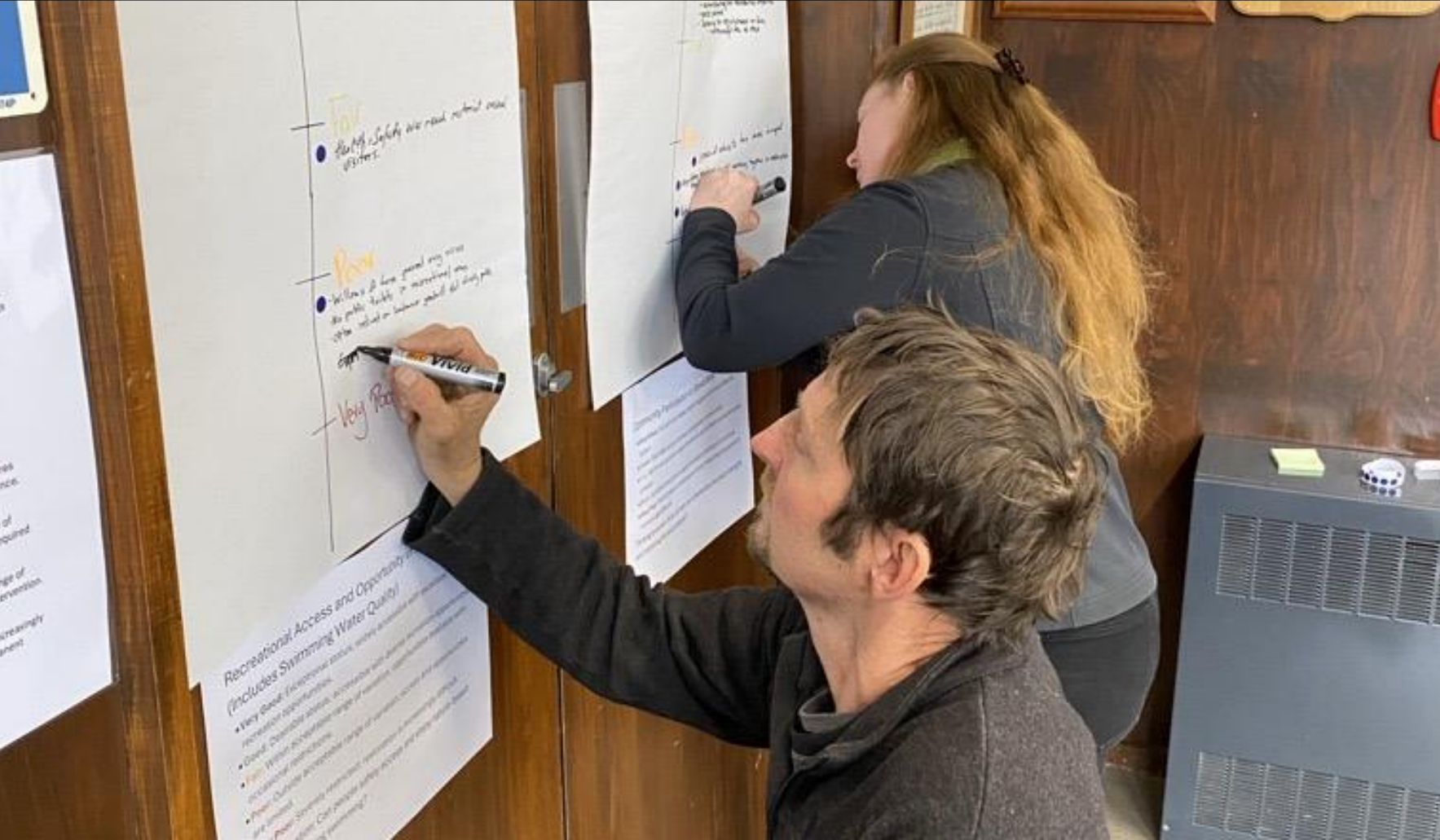
"Key environmental attributes are the physical, chemical, biological, social and cultural characteristics of the environment that need to remain healthy and function well for the things people value to continue over time."

They provide a basis for assessing the current health and condition of the catchment(s).

The **key environmental attributes** were drawn from the recurring themes identified in workshop one. Thirteen were selected for a catchment health assessment in this workshop. Many attributes are relevant across multiple parts of the landscape and provide an integrated way of looking at the catchment.



Our catchment health assessment was guided by a scale ranging from **very good to very poor**. The ratings provide a structured indication of the current health of each key environmental attribute, rather than a precise scientific measurement.



Very good

Exceptional status; requires no intervention for maintenance; ecosystem functioning well.

Good

Desirable status; requires little intervention for maintenance.

Fair

Within acceptable range of variation; some intervention required for maintenance

Poor

Outside acceptable range of variation; requires human intervention.

Very poor

Restoration increasingly difficult; may result in permanent degradation.



The health of an attribute can vary significantly between locations, so we recorded multiple ratings along the scale. Equally important are the places where monitoring and community experience differ. Understanding why these perspectives align, or why they do not, is an important part of building a shared understanding of catchment health.



Prior to the workshop, the Project Support Team (at ORC) assessed the health of each key environmental attribute using available monitoring and technical expertise. Their ratings are shown by the **yellow dots**. We then completed the same assessment, using our lived experience and local knowledge. Their ratings are shown by the **blue dots**. Placing both perspectives side by side helps show where they align, where they differ, and where we may need to learn more.

Catchment Health Scorecard

Key environmental attribute-based catchment health assessment summary results are shown here – a full report is available separately.

Water quality



Highly variable, with some rivers and headwaters in very good condition, while others are affected by nutrients, sediment, E. coli contamination and land-use pressures. Water quality differs, with better quality occurring in less modified systems and worse quality being more apparent in intensively developed areas.

Landscape Hydrological Resilience and Flood-Flow Attenuation



Mixed overall, with natural headwaters, soils and water storage infrastructure providing important flood mitigation and water regulation functions. Historical wetland loss, land-use change and modified hydrological processes have reduced the landscape's ability to absorb, store and slowly release water.

Wetland extent, condition & function



Many significant wetlands continue to provide important ecological and hydrological functions, but overall wetland extent has been substantially reduced, and remaining wetlands are often fragmented and isolated. Agricultural pressures, altered hydrology and habitat modification continue to affect wetland condition.

Native vegetation extent



Very good in some isolated managed uplands; Poor to Very Poor across many lowland and dryland areas. Restoration, pest control and reduced burning are helping some native vegetation recover. Historic clearance, fragmentation, weeds and poor condition of remaining ecosystems remain major issues.

Native wildlife abundance & diversity



Generally poor to fair, with strong native biodiversity remaining in protected areas and key habitats, but habitat loss, predation, freshwater degradation and limited connectivity continue to constrain many native species. Some populations are improving through targeted management, although vulnerable species remain under pressure.

Habitat connectivity



Generally poor across terrestrial and freshwater environments, with fragmentation, barriers to fish passage and limited remnant native vegetation restricting species movement. Local opportunities exist to improve connectivity, but dams, culverts and habitat fragmentation continue to affect ecological resilience.

Air quality



Generally good across most of the area, particularly outside urban centres, although seasonal smoke, pollen and localised air quality issues can affect some communities. Education and compliance activities support good outcomes, but occasional breaches and winter air quality challenges remain.

Very poor Poor Fair Good Very good

Soil health & productive capacity



Variable across the catchment, with many productive areas benefiting from improved management practices and technology. However, legacy drainage issues, intensive land use, forestry harvest cycles and erosion risks continue to affect soil resilience and long-term condition in some locations.

Enabling conditions for change



Fair to Poor, with some Good progress in knowledge and practices. Knowledge is growing and people have increasing ability to improve environmental practices. Funding, monitoring gaps, limited baseline information and low wider-community knowledge still constrain action.

Community climate resilience



Moderate overall, with some communities benefiting from natural buffers, local knowledge and adaptive capacity. However, exposure to flooding, climate variability and changing land-use pressures highlights the need for increased preparedness, self-reliance and long-term planning.

Recreational access & opportunity in nature



Generally widespread across all categories, with many opportunities for people to access rivers, waterways and natural areas. However, water quality concerns, infrastructure limitations, restricted access and perceptions regarding waterway condition can reduce recreational opportunities in some locations.

Community participation in stewardship



Strong where catchment groups, community organisations and motivated individuals are active, but participation remains uneven across the catchment. Time, resources and varying levels of awareness continue to influence the extent of community involvement in environmental stewardship.

Regenerating and Sustainable Land Use



Improving as awareness of regenerative and sustainable practices grows, with increasing recognition of the need to balance economic productivity with environmental outcomes. Progress is occurring through innovation and education, although financial barriers and existing land-use systems continue to limit widespread adoption.

Our afternoon activity focused on identifying the pressures affecting catchment health. To help guide the discussion, we used three key terms:

- A **"driver"** is a root cause or underlying force leading change.
- A **"pressure"** is a human activity or human-caused process that places stress on the catchment.
- A **"stress"** is the resulting damage to the catchment health



[illegible]

In smaller groups, we focused on different parts of our landscape — **rivers, wetlands, terrestrial ecosystems, urban areas and productive land** — and brainstormed the pressures affecting each.

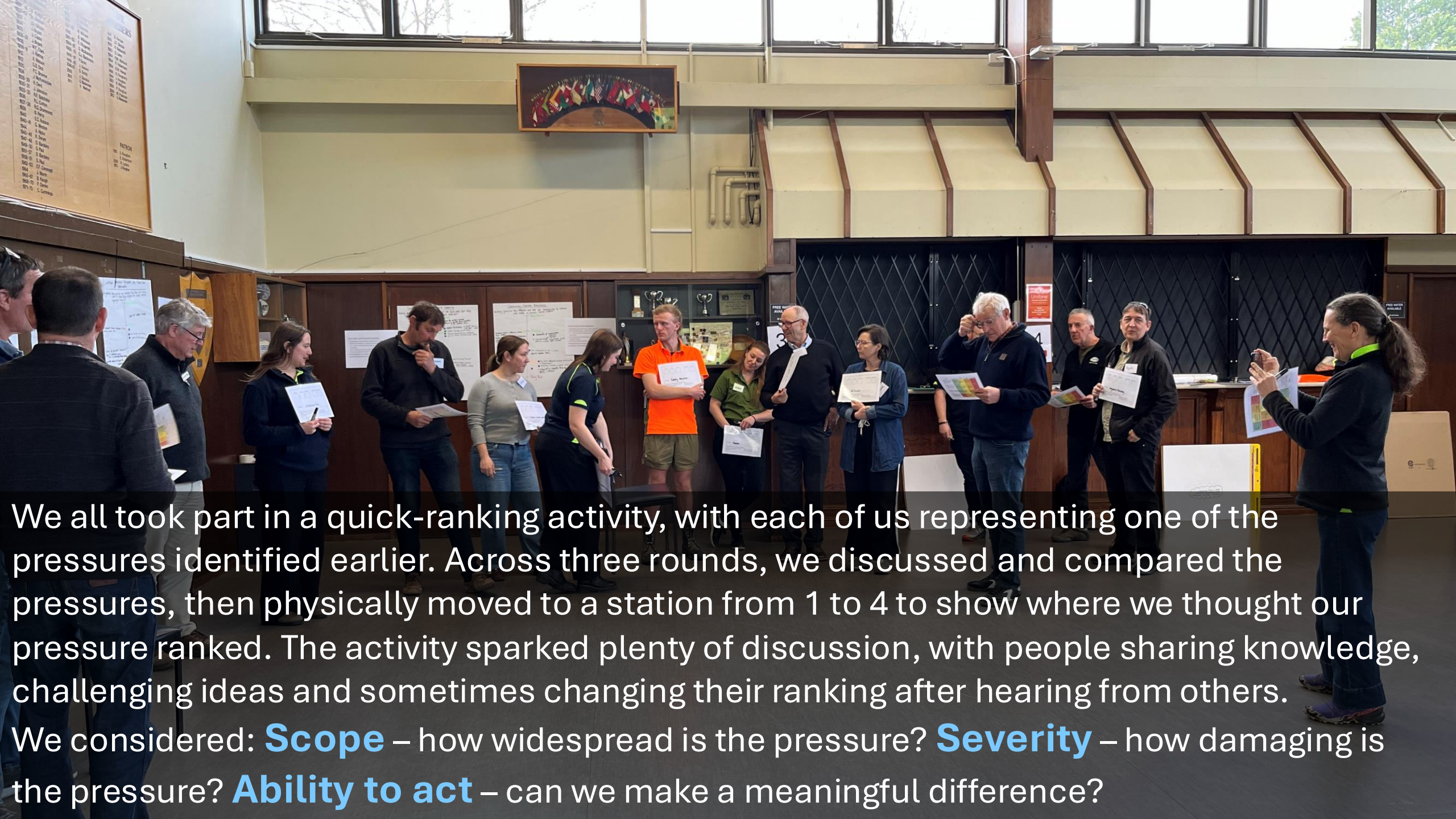
We used the window as our shared workspace, sticking all our ideas together so we could see common themes and connections across the landscape.

From this large brainstorm, we grouped similar ideas into around 20 key pressures to take forward for further discussion and assessment.

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We all took part in a quick-ranking activity, with each of us representing one of the pressures identified earlier. Across three rounds, we discussed and compared the pressures, then physically moved to a station from 1 to 4 to show where we thought our pressure ranked. The activity sparked plenty of discussion, with people sharing knowledge, challenging ideas and sometimes changing their ranking after hearing from others. We considered: **Scope** – how widespread is the pressure? **Severity** – how damaging is the pressure? **Ability to act** – can we make a meaningful difference?

What did the quick-ranking tell us?

Pressure (ordered by magnitude)	Scope - how widespread is the pressure?	Severity - how damaging is the pressure?	Magnitude (scope + severity)	Ability to act - can we make a meaningful difference?
Predator mammals	4	4	8	2.5
Ungulate browsing	4	3	7	3
Invasive plants (excluding conifers and willows)	3	3	6	2
River modification	3	3	6	2
Forestry Activities	3	3	6	3
Waste water	2	4	6	2
Willows	3	3	6	3
Dams, fords and culverts	3	2.5	5.5	3
Rabbits	3	2.5	5.5	3
Burning plastic	4	1.5	5.5	3
Coastal erosion*	1.67	3.67	5.33	2
Sea level rise*	2.18	2.95	5.14	2
Aquatic pests e.g. didymo	3	2	5	1
Winter grazing	2	3	5	3
Increased drought & storm frequency and severity*	2.5	2.45	4.95	1.5
Vehicles on beaches and wetlands	1	3	4	2
Tillage Practices	2	3	4	4
Storm water	2	2	4	2
Coastal development and modification	1	3	4	3
Overuse of fertiliser	1	3	4	3.5
Vegetation clearance	1	3	4	3
Introduced fish species	2	2	4	2.5
Water abstraction	1.86	2.02	3.88	3

Rows marked with an asterisk (*) were added after the workshop for completeness.

The results give us an indication our overall thinking and help us see which pressures may warrant more attention. Importantly, the ranking is a tool to support discussion — it does not make decisions for us. These results will be considered alongside the best available evidence as we develop the plan

Where to from here?

Workshop 2 gave us a much clearer shared picture of how our landscape is doing, the pressures affecting it, and where we may have opportunities to make a difference.

The conversations don't end here. We'll carry what we heard, including the different perspectives, questions and ideas raised throughout the day, into our next workshop as we continue working towards what we want for the catchment and what we can do together to get there.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, knowledge and energy to the day.

