



Waikato RiverCare Inc.

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/2024

Photo: Mangawara Lagoon Project



Our Vision

Kia whakahii taatou ki ngaa awa o Waikato
Pride in our Waikato rivers



Our Mission

Ecological restoration that enhances the Waikato River catchment for the wellbeing of our communities.



Our Values

Partnerships

Our stakeholders are as passionate and dedicated as us in supporting our Mission and Values

Leadership

We are committed to share our knowledge and skills

Transparency

We are transparent in our resourcing and our operations

Trust

We are trusting of our partners, participants and our processes

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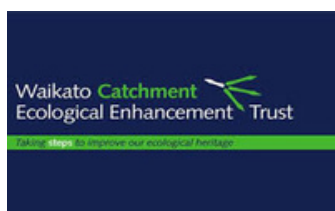
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Sponsors

Waikato RiverCare sincerely thanks its supporters, funders, project partners and landowners, who enable us to keep up the momentum of restoration work within the Waikato catchment.

Major Sponsors



Sponsors



BELL GULLY

Introduction

Waikato RiverCare Incorporated is delighted to present our Annual Report for the 2023/24 period, showcasing our accomplishments in both ongoing and newly initiated projects. Since our establishment in 1999, we have been dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the lower Waikato River and its surrounding catchments. Officially recognized as an incorporated society in 2001 and as a registered charity in 2008, Waikato RiverCare boasts a diverse membership comprising various organizations and individuals who share a common passion for safeguarding the natural heritage of this vital ecosystem.

As the foremost riparian restoration charity in the region, our primary focus remains on the preparation, planting, and maintenance of native plant habitats along the banks of the lower Waikato River and its associated catchments. Furthermore, we actively seek new opportunities to support and execute these conservation efforts. Central to our mission are principles of sound scientific practices, cultural appreciation and engagement, sustainability, and collaborative partnerships in all our endeavours.



“The Waikato River is a national and regional icon holding significant cultural, economic, social and environmental values. Waikato RiverCare Incorporated (trading as ‘Waikato RiverCare’) links these values with interested organisations and provides a vehicle for riparian habitat restoration using a base of native plant species.

The Structure of Waikato RiverCare Inc.

The organisation is governed by an Executive Committee whose membership comprises of one representative from each Foundation organisation. In addition, up to three General Members can also be appointed to the Committee. Up to three Advisory Members offer high level support and political advocacy (currently only one position filled).

Executive Committee

Representative

Michelle Archer - ***Chairperson***
David Klee - ***Deputy Chairperson***
Simon Hill - ***Treasurer***
Dawn Metcalfe
Peter Buckley
Todd Baldwin
Lorraine Dixon
Elyse LaFace
Sarah Lealand
Anita Shannon
Kelvin Tupuhi
Ben Wolf

Organisation

Independent member of the public
Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Council
Mercury
Independent member of the public
North Waikato Federated Farmers
Mercury
Waikato Tainui
Genesis
Waikato Regional Council
Department of Conservation
Nga Muka Development Trust
Waikato District Council

General Members

Emma Baker

Advisory Members

Don Scarlet

Staff (at end of March 2024)

Kevin Hutchinson - Operations Manager

Mandy Bathen - Administrator (Secretary)

Chairperson's Report

As I write this report and reflect back on the year, I continue to be proud of the organisation and its resilience to environmental and political challenges. We recovered well from the very wet start to 2023 and were able to move into planting and maintenance and meet all the targets for the year in regards to our projects. We encountered a new challenge where established plantings were cut down by residents to improve their river view. This highlights that there is a long way to go regarding education of the general public, particularly on the importance of riverbank plantings for stability and individual rights to cut native vegetation on public land. As we head into the new financial year, updates of our website and potential social media presence is an opportunity to upskill the public in this area, so look out for these!

The support of the executive committee has long been recognised as the key to success for RiverCare, with long term members providing key advice, and new people bringing new ideas and energy to the group. During the year we farewelled Sara Fryett from the Administrator role and welcomed Mandy Bathan. Mandy has stepped into the role with new ideas including our River Warrior profiles of Executive Committee members. This was an opportunity to introduce ourselves and our passion for the area. I look forward to reading more of these in the coming months from other members!

Larnie Chrystall moved on from the Executive Committee with Todd Balwin coming on as the new Mercury representative.

Larnie had been at Rivercare for over a decade and along with her excellent strategic acumen, she was instrumental in the development of the forecasting document that still drives our financial stability. We all appreciated the work and time Larnie committed to RiverCare over her tenure. Nathaniel Wilson has also moved onto a different role at Watercare, and Emma Baker has officially stepped onto the committee. Nathaniel was key in helping RiverCare to secure funding for large scale projects and we will miss his insight and strategic thinking.

I also want to thank Simon Hill, Dawn Metcalfe and David Klee for their ongoing passion and drive to move projects forward while undertaking their own roles and personal responsibilities. These efforts do not go unnoticed, and I know it is reassuring for Kevin and Mandy to have key members that can be relied on for advice and guidance.

This year we have worked through Waikato RiverCare's constitution to ensure that our processes are streamlined and appropriate for recent changes to bank regulations. We acknowledge Bell Gully for their support in legal review and advice for this piece of work.

Finally, I want to thank and commend Kevin for his hard work and commitment to Waikato RiverCare. Your knowledge and advice is much appreciated and you continue to ensure we are successful year on year.

Michelle Archer
Chair

Operation's Managers Report

It's somewhat of a relief to have enjoyed a classic kiwi summer after last year's disastrous summer cyclones and their significant impact on so many communities around Aotearoa. In the months that followed Hale and Gabrielle, RiverCare successfully regrouped and connected with our rural partners to prioritise and support the cleanup and repair work required across many of our projects. RiverCare acknowledges the generous support provided by our funders, contractors, and landowners to get projects back on track. The financial contribution provided by Genesis Energy was exceptional and gratefully accepted by RiverCare on behalf of our project partners.

RiverCare's mahi over the last 12 months would not have been possible without the excellent support and dedication of our Executive Committee. A massive thanks to those individuals and organisations for all their support and commitment to RiverCare, our communities, goals, and environment.

RiverCare's 2023 planting season will be remembered as one of our wetter planting years, however soft ground conditions didn't slow us down with 88,655 plants planted across nine different projects. Projects planted included several 'green field' sites and plantings around lowland lagoons, wetlands, lakes, and streams.

'Climate resilience' is a new term now being widely used when discussing plantings around waterways, and RiverCare is continually reviewing our model for project delivery to ensure the best possible outcomes for our funders and project partners. As extreme weather events become more frequent and costly to remedy, RiverCare seeks to ensure our efforts to resort the awa and surrounding catchments are consistent with industry best practice.

RiverCare's ability to work with community groups on projects (particularly schools) was again limited this year as school administrators struggle to find resourcing and helpers to transport children to projects, and hosting events off school grounds becomes increasingly regulated. I'm hopeful community planting events will return but understand there are significant challenges for teachers, school administrators and parents, particularly with escalating household costs.

Like many other groups and organisations RiverCare has battled changeable weather this spring/summer which has put a handbrake on our annual vegetation control programme across 23 different projects, the main cause being persistent southwesterlies and southerly winds. Settled autumn weather should provide opportunities to tame vegetation growth prior to this season's planting getting started.

Operation Manager's Report continued

Sadly, due to circumstances beyond our control RiverCare was unable to retain Sara Fryett as our administrator and the executive committee welcomed Mandy Bathen as our new administrator in late October. Mandy's enthusiasm and experience in the NGO space has provided a significant boost to the organisation and her efforts in updating RiverCare's social media profile are already delivering results with more content being read and a slow but steady increase in Facebook followers. Other highlights or key milestones that have occurred over the last 12 months included:

- RiverCare successfully completed (over a three-month period), our biggest ever planting project with 45,500 plants going into the Pungapunga wetland project. RiverCare is extremely thankful for the co-funding support received from multiple co-funders which has made this massive 50ha project possible.
- This year marked the completion of project work at the Lapwood Rd planting (1,830 plants) just out of Tuakau and the Horsham Downs Lake Area project (5,865 plants) in partnership with the WRA/WDC and Doc.
- The two Waipa District Council funded planting projects, one in proximity to the Te Awamutu WWTP (9,820 plants) and the other at Te Tahi Rd (3,640 plants) have now been completed.

RiverCare continues to invest time and resources into partnerships with mana whenua, aimed at building and supporting capacity in the restoration space. In 2023 RiverCare formalised this commitment signing a service agreement with Huntly based POU Ltd. Over the last 6 months staff at POU Ltd have assisted RiverCare in delivering project milestones at two local projects in the Huntly/Taupiri area.

RiverCare was successful in securing new project funding in 2023 for the Barbour Farm project \$137,251.00 and the Hamilton Farm project \$152,601.00.

RiverCare's focus over the next 12 months will be in the following key areas:

- To continue our efforts in supporting mana whenua to build capacity in the restoration space with formalised partnerships (MOU) agreements, and to apply for funding to support programme delivery.
- To confirm RiverCare's strategic plan for the next three years out to 2027.
- To continue to update and maintain the organisation compliance with both the Incorporated Societies Act and Charities Act.
- To work with our project partners and landowners during this challenging economic period to develop cost effective solutions that allow project development and delivery to continue.



RiverCare's Performance Review

Waikato RiverCare Incorporated has been compliant with the objects and rules listed in its Constitution:

The Society was established for environmental and charitable purposes within New Zealand only.

(a) **Core activities** - The enhancement of the natural water and riverside environment of the Waikato River and associated catchments to improve habitats and thereby benefit the users of the river and its environs, local communities and visitors, now and for future generations through:

(i) Providing improved plant and animal habitat in and around the Waikato River and associated catchments for general ecological benefit.

(ii) Promoting public interest and appreciation of the Waikato River and associated catchments and its environs through education and communication with local communities and other river users for the benefit of achieving awareness and support for the need to maintain and enhance the riverline environment.

(b) **Funding** - to raise, accept, accumulate and employ funds for the environmental and charitable purposes authorised by these objects.

(c) **General** - to do all such things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of the environmental and charitable purposes authorised by these objects.

Performance Measures

Performance is measured through project evaluations which monitor planting health, establishment, pest plant prevalence, fence condition and stock exclusion. The use of several photo points helps illustrate planting success and condition, and assist in identifying long term management considerations.

Project progression from active management to receiving pulse maintenance after five years is the underlying measure of project success for Waikato RiverCare.

Performance in Relation to the Strategic Business Plan

Waikato RiverCare has continued to actively look for and develop new project opportunities within the Waikato catchment with a focus on upper catchments, constructed wetlands, critical habitat projects and identified priority areas for our project partners. This approach has been instrumental in the organisation's success in securing new funding for the following projects

Project	Funder(s)
Barbour Farm Waotu Wetland	Waikato River Authority, Waikato Regional Council and WCEET
Genesis Wetland Restoration - Bone Road	Genesis
Hamilton Farm	Waikato River Authority and WCEET

Enhancing Online Presence: A Year of Progress for RiverCare

RiverCare has made progress in enhancing its online presence and visibility over the past year. Through increased activity on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as ongoing improvements to our website design and content, we are now better positioned to reach and engage with our audience, ultimately advancing our mission of preserving and protecting our rivers and waterways.



www.waikatorivercare.co.nz



facebook.com/waikatorivercare



instagram.com/waikatorivercare/

Our Year In Numbers

2023 - 2024

\$575,543
Total Spending

\$652,913
Total Funding
(grants, sponsorship and interest)

88,655
Plants Planted

10
Number of volunteers

14
Current Projects

27.04
Hectares Planted

2022 - 2023

\$568,627
Total Spending

\$568,627
Total Funding
(grants, sponsorship and interest)

111,618
Plants Planted

4
Number of volunteers

24
Current Projects

35.55
Hectares Planted



Breakdown of Financial Statements

Our full Financial Statements are available on our website www.waikatorivercare.co.nz and on the Charities Services website <https://www.charities.govt.nz/>

Waikato RiverCare's project delivery is reliant on annual funding provided by our generous corporate supporters including local Waikato businesses and members of the public. In addition to donations, RiverCare applies to contestable funds for project funding, community grants and central government funding. RiverCare receives excellent industry support from our suppliers and contractors including significant in-kind support from a variety of organisations and individuals.

Revenue	2023/24
Grants/Sponsorship	\$508,931.08
Interest	\$29,705.09
Other Revenue	\$76,703.04
Total	\$615,339.21
Expenses	2023/24
Project Costs	\$407,404.28
Staff Costs	\$141,644.18
Other Expenses*	\$34,504.48
Total	\$583,552.94
Surplus/Deficit	\$31,786.27

*Other expenses include:- Kiwi Saver, ACC, depreciation, advertising & community engagement, vehicle use, office expenses, printing & postage, website & accounting package, general expenses

RiverCare Projects

RiverCare's projects usually cover a three to five year period and involves pre-planting, vegetation control, planting, post-planting care, infill planting and maintenance of the project.

Projects in Progress

Churchill Farm	2.86 ha
HPS Enhancement Project, Genesis	4.5 ha
Lake Kopuera	3.3 ha
Lake Ohinewai Recreational Reserve	7.05 ha
Mangawera Lagoons/Wetlands	2.12 ha
Opuatia Catchment	7.71 ha
Pokaiwhenua Stream	2.75 ha
Rumball- Healy	50.3 ha
Storey Farm	1.0 ha
Smythe Farm	6.27 ha
Te Kowhai WWTP	0.23 ha
Te Onetea Lake Waikare	3.79 ha
Taupiri Cemetery	1.85 ha
Wai O Te Atua Project	4 ha

New Projects

Genesis Wetland Restoration - Bone Road	5.10 ha
Barbour Farm Waotu Wetland	5.77 ha
Hamilton Farm	8 ha

Completed Projects

Lake Areare	1.1 ha
Lapwood Rd (Tuakau)	2.4 ha
Te Awamutu WWTP	1.43 ha
Te Tahi WTP	0.38 ha
Gateway Project (SH1 Meremere)	1.0 ha

Community Involvement

Community engagement is central to our mission and values. It's not just a tick box; it's a commitment to building meaningful relationships with those we work with and for. Our engagement initiatives include joining other groups on clean-up days along the Waikato River and partnering with organisations and iwi groups such as Pou Ltd, Nga Muka Development Trust, Waahi Whaanui Trust, Taupiri Marae, and Te Riu O Waikato Limited.

This interaction is more than just broadcasting our message; it's about listening, learning, and co-creating solutions. By actively involving the community in our decision-making processes, we ensure our actions are informed by diverse perspectives and responsive to real needs. This approach strengthens trust and loyalty while fostering a sense of ownership and pride among community members.

We are extremely fortunate to have a core group of community supporters and are grateful for the project support from landowners, their families, and friends, as well as the technical advice received from individuals and groups. Our Executive Committee members regularly volunteer their time for RiverCare. Without their support, we could not operate or achieve the outcomes needed to protect and enhance our awa and the communities in its catchment.

Future Plans

Waikato RiverCare continues to work closely with our engagement contractor, Te Hira Consultant Ltd, on formalising a relationship with an MOU with our iwi partner POU Ltd. Trust Waikato's support of this initiative is greatly appreciated, with all parties keen to see deliverables achieved going forward.

RiverCare's focus over the next 12 months will be in the following key areas:

- Build and support iwi capacity through our partnership with POU.
- Maintain compliance with all recent changes to Incorporated Societies legislation.
- Continue to develop a 'pipeline' of new project opportunities and alliances with project co-funders.
- Continue to deliver outcomes for our project partners, funders and communities.
- Continue to provide industry leading advice and support that encourages community-wide participation and buy-in for restoration plantings.

How You Can Help

- Let us know if you or your organisation would like to sponsor one of our projects.
- You can donate to our Give a Little page [here](#)
- ‘Come and join us.’ Our meetings are open to the public; we’re always looking for new members to become part of the RiverCare team.
- Like and follow our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.
- We’re always interested in new project ideas, big or small.
- Tell others about the work that we are doing!
- Email us at info@waikatorivercare.co.nz.
- RiverCare acknowledges and thanks our generous sponsors, funders, and donors whose generosity makes our mahi possible. Ka mau te pai.

