



Waikato Catchment
Ecological Enhancement Trust

Strategic Plan

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1.0 BACKGROUND

Mighty River Power, the owner and operator of the Waikato Hydro Scheme applied under the Resource Management Act (RMA) to replace the expiring resource consents that authorise the operation of the Hydro Scheme. Those organisations who are parties to this Trust worked together to develop an appropriate response in RMA terms to those applications. They recognised that there are a variety of ecological changes occurring in Lake Taupo, the Waikato River and hydro lake environments as a result of natural processes, other activities in the catchment and the operation of the Hydro Scheme.

In response to these changes the parties considered it desirable to develop a practical means of achieving:

- an acceptable response to the ongoing ecological changes occurring throughout the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments;
- an acceptable response to changes associated with the operation of the Waikato hydro system; and
- wider ecological benefits.

Accordingly the parties who are the first Trustees in the Trust Deed worked together to develop a response to these matters. This resulted in an agreement titled “Mighty River Power Ecological Interests Group Future Directions - Memorandum of Understanding, 15 October 2002” (“the Memorandum of Understanding”). The outcomes of that agreement expected by the parties were:

- The means to appropriately respond in a RMA context to Mighty River Power’s resource consents proposals is defined, funded and resourced with ecological experts.
- An acknowledgement that the process, including the response package, constitutes the best means currently available to all the parties to maximise their collective contribution to positive ecological outcomes in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments while giving effect to each parties other separate responsibilities.
- Organisations and groups with common interests will work together in partnership to achieve common ecological objectives in a constructive manner.

- The sustainable management of ecological resources in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments.

The Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Charitable Trust (“Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust”) was established to implement commitments agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

The purpose of this strategic plan is to provide the framework within which the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Charitable Trust will operate in its first years of operation. The Memorandum of Understanding and the Trust Deed indicate the scope and purpose of the Trust’s activities, including that the Trust will develop a process to prioritise those activities that it will support and/or undertake. This plan starts this process by setting out policies to guide the Trust’s operations in the first years in relation to prioritising allocation of funds, its approach to assessment and monitoring of projects, and its investment and communication strategies.

The Trust will review this strategic plan annually. The Trust recognises that its activities need to be guided by principles that provide certainty but also provide flexibility. The Trust will evaluate and re-evaluate its policies in order:

- to determine the best means of achieving the purpose set out in the Trust Deed;
- to integrate Trust activities with the monitoring and operation of the Hydro Scheme;
- and to respond to new information arising from activities undertaken to implement the Memorandum of Understanding.

3.0 TRUST PURPOSE

The Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust was established for the following charitable purposes:

- 3.1 To foster and enhance the sustainable management of the ecological resources in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments;
- 3.2 To mitigate adverse effects of the operation of the Hydro Scheme on the ecological environments in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments;

- 3.3 To maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity, the sports fishery and game bird populations in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments through appropriate and sustainable species and habitat management by:
- (i) identifying important habitats and/or species;
 - (ii) identifying risks and threats to those identified habitats and/or species;
 - (iii) identifying most practicable means to ameliorate or resolve risks and threats to habitats and species in the catchment;
 - (iv) identifying practical means to enhance important habitats and/or species;
 - (v) establishing an enduring and beneficial working partnership between Mighty River Power and the Trust.
- 3.4 To receive monitoring reports on key ecological indicators in order to:
- (a) identify ecological changes, their causes and implications (including determining the extent of Mighty River Power's influence on these changes);
 - (b) identify whether ecological changes are in accordance with Mighty River Power's predictions of ecological changes associated with its operations as set out in the Assessment of Environmental Effects (Taupo Waikato Resource Consents Application and Assessment of Environmental Effects, March 2001, Section 7.7, and its supporting documents).

4.0 TRUST OBJECTIVES

1. Enhancement of wetland values in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments.
2. Enhancement of indigenous biodiversity in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments.
3. Enhancement of the sports fishery and game bird population in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments.
4. Mitigation of any adverse effects of the operation of the Waikato Hydro System on the ecological environments in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments.

5.0 TRUST POLICIES

Policy 1: Trust Purposes and Objectives

The Trust will fund projects which achieve its purposes and objectives.

Policy 2: Trust Priorities for Funding

The Trust will generally give priority to funding projects which:

- are cost effective
- focus on ecological deliverables
- have a high degree of community support
- are sustainable over time
- are not fully funded by the Trust (i.e. have separate sources of resources, which could include “in kind” actions)
- raise environmental awareness and/or increase environmental knowledge

Notes:

1. In the event that a project requires immediate action to ensure a specific opportunity is not to be lost, the Trust will take into account the urgency of the situation.
2. It is desirable that projects funded by the Trust result in:
 - long and short term actions.
 - a geographical spread of works.
3. The Trust will seek to achieve a balance in delivering on its objectives.

Policy 3: Activities the Trust will not support

The Trust will generally not fund:

- activities which the Trust considers are priority responsibilities or obligations of other agencies
- overseas travel
- administration expenses
- completed or retrospective projects
- repayment of loans or meeting loan repayments

- activities which are outside the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments

Policy 4: Monitoring Policy

The Trust will receive monitoring reports on key ecological indicators in order to:

- a) identify ecological changes, their causes and implications (including determining the extent of Mighty River Power's influence on these changes).
- b) identify whether ecological changes are in accordance with Mighty River Power's predictions of ecological changes associated with its operations as set out in the Assessment of Ecological effects (Taupo Waikato Resource Consents Application and Assessment of Environmental Effects, March 2001, Section 7.7 and supporting documents).

Policy 5: Trust Performance Monitoring

The Trust will determine the degree to which its objectives are being achieved by:

1. Receiving (as a requirement of receiving funding) reports on the achievements of projects that are funded by the Trust.
2. Utilising monitoring and reporting on the state of the Lake Taupo and Waikato River environments from agencies with responsibilities in these areas (including Mighty River Power, Environment Waikato, Department of Conservation, Fish and Game Councils, Territorial Authorities, Iwi Authorities and other resource users).

Policy 6: Prioritisation of Trust Actions

In order to better establish priorities for Trust actions, the Trust will, prior to 30 June 2004, establish a process to:

- a) identify important habitat and/or species in the Lake Taupo and Waikato River catchments;

- b) identify risks and threats to those habitats and/or species in the catchments;
- c) identify the most practical means of ameliorating or resolving the threats and risks to habitats and/or species in the catchments;
- d) identify practical means to enhance important habitats and/or species in the catchments;
- e) monitor and assess the effectiveness of Trust funded works (and similar works undertaken by others where appropriate).

Policy 7: Communications

The Trust will establish a means to best communicate its activities which may include development of:

- a promotional strategy
- a web based presence
- brochures

Policy 8: Investment Policy

The Trust will invest the first \$300,000 payment with a trading bank term deposit seeking maximum return with flexibility to withdraw at appropriate intervals. Specialist fund management advice will be sought by the Trust in preparation for the receipt of its \$2,000,000 payment.

Policy 9: Administration Policy

The Trust will:

- prepare an operational plan annually
- report annually as required by the Charitable Trusts Act and the Memorandum of Understanding
- keep records of its meetings
- have its accounts audited annually
- keep records of activities, documents and contacts

Policy 10: Interested Parties Policy

Where the Trust's activities have relevance to other parties the Trust will communicate appropriately with them.