

Priority Biodiversity Sites Programme

Waikato Regional Council's Priority Biodiversity Sites Programme supports landowners and community groups to restore and protect biodiversity on private land throughout the Waikato region.

Background

In 2015, Waikato Regional Council used existing mapped data to undertake a desktop prioritisation process to rank native biodiversity on private land across the region. This process identified the best representative examples (the top 35 per cent) of each ecosystem type – more than 300 sites in total – as potential priority biodiversity sites. These potential sites require further verification, preferably by site visit, to be considered for protection and restoration under the council's Priority Biodiversity Sites Programme. However, we also know there are unrecorded sites that support biodiversity and which could be considered under the programme.



What qualifies as a Priority Biodiversity Site?

Naturally uncommon ecosystems

These ecosystems typically arise due to unusual environmental conditions, are mostly small (<1ha to 100ha) and non-forested, and often support unique biodiversity. Examples include geothermal, coastal wetland (salt marsh) and karst (limestone) ecosystems.

Threatened ecosystems

Threatened ecosystems include those that were once widespread throughout the region but have been disproportionately destroyed or modified. Examples in the Waikato include lowland kahikatea forest (98.5 per cent of kahikatea forest has been lost) and coastal dunes (98 per cent lost) and wetlands (75 per cent lost).

Other considerations

We also consider whether a site has original or old growth vegetation present, high species diversity, and whether ecological niches are occupied by native species. A site must be large enough, or connected to other areas of native vegetation, to support sustainable populations of threatened species. More than 300 native plant and animal species in the Waikato are threatened with extinction, including at least 10 species that are endemic to this region.

How we can help

If you have a natural area on your property (for example, a native bush remnant or wetland) that you suspect may meet the above criteria, and you want to protect or restore it, feel free to give our Biodiversity team a call.

We can assess your site to see it qualifies as a Priority Biodiversity Site, discuss your plans with you, and advise whether we're able to provide support or funding.

We may be able to give support and funding for:

- fencing to exclude stock
- weed and pest animal control
- native replanting
- ecological surveys
- preparation of site management plans
- assistance with covenanting and monitoring.

Contact us

Phone 0800 800 401 and ask to speak to someone from the Biodiversity team.