



Where next for catchment groups?

Lifting ambition and gearing up for the long game - a summary¹

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Restoring health to freshwater bodies often requires sustained effort and coordinating the actions of individual land users. Catchment groups are increasingly seen, by the farming community and central and local government, as an important part of addressing freshwater challenges in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For the farming community, catchment groups can strengthen relationships within and beyond the catchment and build community resilience. For tangata whenua, working with catchment groups can be a way to exercise kaitiakitanga. For agencies, working with groups can be more effective and efficient than working with individuals.

The growing attention on catchment groups comes with increased pressure to improve freshwater outcomes.

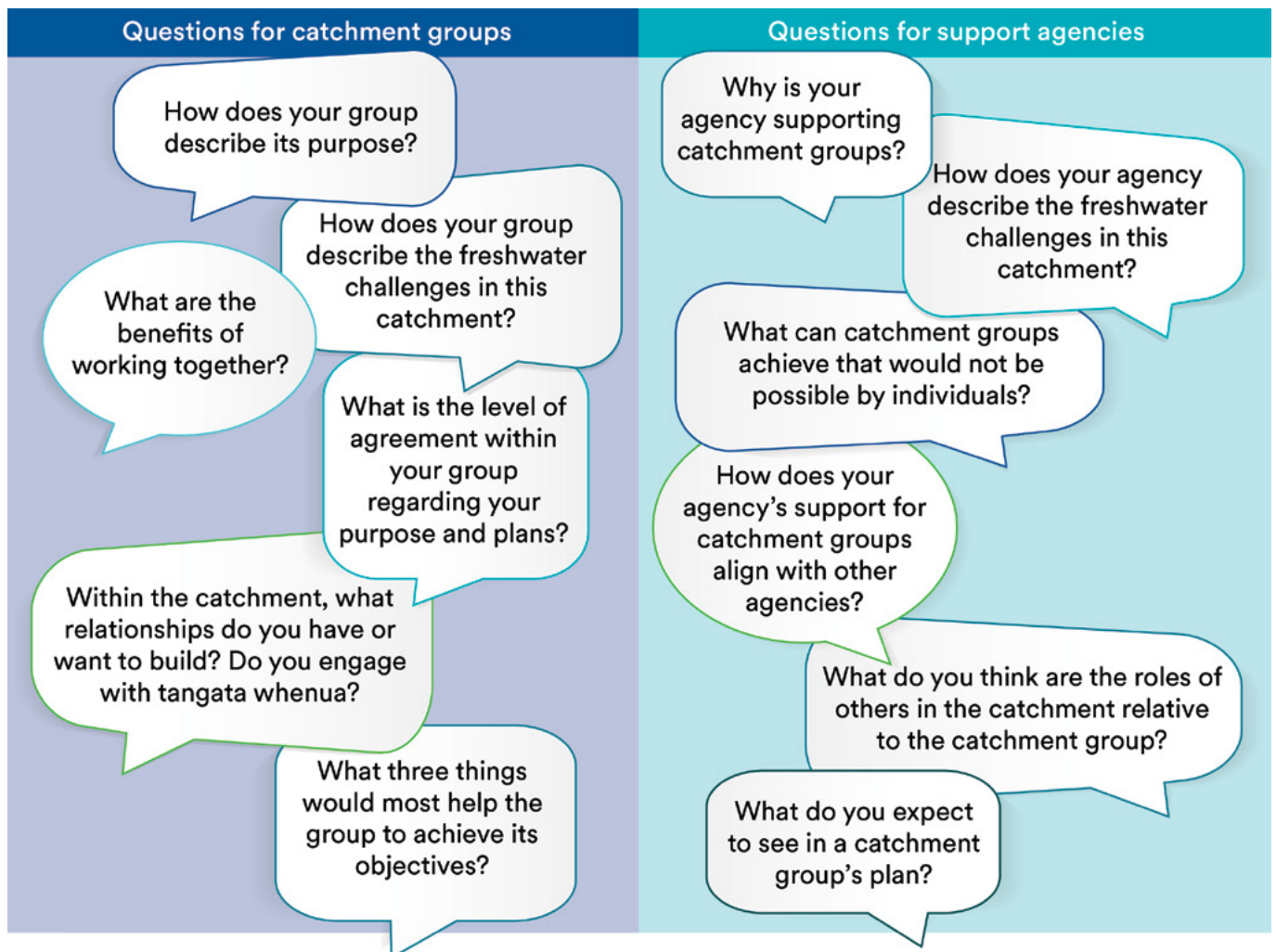
There are many different expectations about what catchment groups can and should do. This creates a risk of misunderstanding and misalignment.

Agencies need to better understand catchment groups, so that policy and support packages will meet groups' needs. Equally, catchment groups' goals and activities need to be aligned with outcomes expected by agencies and communities to avoid disappointment. And both agencies and groups need to enable meaningful involvement by tangata whenua, lest a significant opportunity be missed.

A failure to deliver expected improvements could lead to more regulation of specific farming practices.

Our recommendations aim to bridge the different perspectives of the groups involved.

Are you ready for the long game?



A more ambitious game plan

Catchment Groups:

- Develop a clear purpose and goals and communicate these to other parties (see above figure)
- Acknowledge other parties' perspectives, motivations, goals and constraints
- Seek a relationship with tangata whenua, recognising that this will take time
- Approach relationships with a willingness to learn about history and values
- Develop action plans that address RMA outcomes, tangata whenua goals, and the group's own objectives
- Plan for the long term, including succession
- Find meaningful indicators to track progress on environmental objectives, group development and key relationships
- Share progress reports regularly with tangata whenua and local community.

Agencies, including sector groups:

- Develop a clear purpose and goals and communicate these to other parties

- Acknowledge other parties' perspectives, motivations, goals and constraints
- Design freshwater policy to reward collective management
- Improve communication to catchment groups about RMA outcomes, agency roles and expectations, and long-term funding
- Support ongoing relationship work, e.g. fund catchment coordinators and kaitiaki and learning about Te Tiriti and local history
- Be realistic about what catchment groups can do and resource them appropriately
- Develop and track indicators based on actions, interim milestones and final goals
- Be open to using groups' own indicators.

Tangata whenua:

- Consider hosting a catchment group event at the marae
- Consider what shared outcomes could be achieved with the help of catchment groups.

1 For our full report, go to www.researchgate.net/publication/369366580

2 Learn more about these recommendations and other aspects of our research at ourlandandwater.nz/collectiveresponsibility

Indicative example of a catchment plan

Outcomes and Plans

Outcomes/key values	Mid-range objectives	Short-range objectives
Our waterways are healthy ecosystems	Mahinga kai (eel, flounder) is abundant and safe to eat	Improved passage of eels into spawning sites
The community is connected and celebrates its waterways.	It is safe to swim at the local swimming hole in summer	Reduced E. coli and sediment getting into waterways
		Good relationship with local marae; understanding Māori values in our catchment

Relationships

Organisation, entity or person	Role with catchment group
XX marae	Tangata whenua, long history in catchment, connection to taonga species
XX Regional Council	Land management advice, monitoring, planning rules
XX school	Classroom field trips, working bees, community support
Department of Conservation	Joint efforts to protect vulnerable native species
XX Catchment Collective	Assistance with group administration and funding

Actions

Description	Rationale	Where / by whom	By when
Invite local marae representatives to AGM, and provide minutes	Establish relationship with local marae	Committee chair	2023
Fund and hire a catchment co-ordinator	Improve internal and external communication	Committee	2024
Prevent all stock access to tributaries upstream of swimming hole	Address farming contribution to E. coli	Farmers in area with support from others	2025
Riparian planting in strategic areas	Stabilise banks; filter sediment, nutrients and bacteria; provide shade	North side of streams X and Y, all of stream Z; all landowners	8 km by 2025; done by 2030
No forestry harvest within 10 m of permanent waterways	Reduce sediment runoff	All forests in catchment	2028

Support

- Grant application \$150k
- Member contributions \$50k
- RC advice
- Two community planting days per year

Tracking Progress

What and where	By whom	Frequency	Notes
Facebook engagement (likes, comments, etc)	Catchment group coordinator	Quarterly	Reflects profile in community
Connections with local marae	Committee	Annually	Develop other indicators with marae
MCI at Site A	Catchment group	Monthly	Get training from X
MCI, e. coli at site X	Regional council	Monthly	RC monitoring site
Eel abundance	Tangata whenua	Quarterly	As agreed with X marae

Post quarterly results on Facebook. Annual summary each March.

Overview of plan contents

A catchment action plan should have: key outcomes or values; important relationships; measurable objectives; actions to be taken by specific dates; and a plan for monitoring and reporting results. A map showing waterways and land use is also useful.

Outcomes and plans

Values and outcomes are often stated in RMA plans; the regional council can help identify relevant outcomes. Discuss goals with tangata whenua and other community members.

Outline the group's objectives to show how it will contribute to the outcomes, reflecting the group's goals and the outcomes that matter to the wider community. Targets in an RMA plan may include macroinvertebrate indices, nutrient concentrations and E. coli levels.

Mid-range objectives focus on what can be achieved in 5–10 years to significantly contribute to the outcomes. Short-range objectives can be achieved in less time, e.g. 1–3 years.

Actions

List specific actions that members will take to achieve the objectives, including who and by when.

Tracking Progress

A monitoring plan can be developed with help from council staff and tangata whenua, who may be interested in assessing mahinga kai or other cultural indicators. Results could be reported on the group's Facebook page, for example.



Outcomes and plans

Catchment groups should develop plans that address policy outcomes and local goals, and policy should reward collective efforts to achieve these goals.



Tracking Progress

Efforts to improve catchment health will be more successful if catchment groups and agencies adopt measurable objectives and report regularly on progress.

What are our goals and how will we achieve them?

How will we know if our plan is working?

Who is in our group?
Who do we engage with?

How can others help us to achieve our goals?



Farmers & Foresters



Tangata Whenua



Local Community



Government Agencies



Local Councils



Sector Agencies



Relationships

Set relationship goals and priorities, then connect with a clear purpose and willingness to learn.



Support

Agencies should fund relationship work of groups, have clear objectives and be realistic about timeframes for achievement.