



The First to See the Light
Waipapu River, Mt. Hikurangi: Agnes Arnold

TE AWAROA

1000 Rivers Challenge

TE AWAROA – 1000 Rivers by 2050

Idea

Take care of New Zealand's rivers and waterways by planting bush buffers beside them

Benefits

- *Brand:* 100% Pure New Zealand with integrity. 'Our mask is slipping'
- *Safeguard world markets:* Environmentally and socially responsible production
- *Innovation:* A viral, science-based project for enhancing our environment
- *Water quality:* Restore life to rivers, waterways and the ocean
- *Soil conservation:* Protect river banks from erosion and sedimentation
- *Health:* Reduce illnesses caused by contaminated water
- *Communities:* Bring people together to take care of their rivers and streams
- *Education:* Science projects in schools, science wananga, on-line resources
- *Recreation:* Swimming, fishing, kayaking, paddling, rowing, surfing and surf life-saving all benefit
- *Biodiversity:* Wildlife corridors for rare and endangered species
- *The Transit of Venus:* work alongside the 'Pest-Free New Zealand' campaign to care for indigenous plants and animals.

Why Do It?

Many New Zealanders, tourists and migrants place high value on the beauty of our bush, rivers and beaches, and their recreational values. These are magnets for 'a place where talent wants to live.'

At the same time, world markets for New Zealand's products are sensitive to environmental pressures. Increasingly, buyers demand proof that goods are sustainably produced.

New Zealand gains great economic and social benefits from its 100% Pure New Zealand brand. At present, that brand is at risk.

Rivers and streams across New Zealand are being degraded by pollution from industry, agriculture and residential uses, and erosion caused by subdivision, farming and plantation forests. Pollution, sediment and forestry slash are being washed into waterways, and onto beaches, reefs and lagoons.

Shellfish beds and fisheries are being damaged, and water-based recreation – swimming, kayaking, paddling, rowing, surfing, surf life-saving, fishing and diving. Many communities experience severe health risks from water-borne pollution.

New Zealand's biodiversity is also in danger. Of 179 nations in a recent study, NZ had the highest proportion of indigenous species of plants and animals under threat of extinction. Many of these species inhabit fresh water streams, rivers and riverside bush.

Te Awaroa would

- with Pest-free New Zealand, underpin the 100% Pure New Zealand brand
- foster socially and environmentally clever production
- provide habitats for many rare and endangered species
- bring communities together, inspiring innovation as kai-tiaki.
- bring science into our schools, and the hearts of our communities

Project

I. Science-based: Restoration of riverside bush based on, and responsive to the findings of conservation biology and freshwater ecology. This would take research on a wide range of topics into schools and communities, making scientific methods and insights widely accessible.

II. Environmentally clever production: A step towards socially and environmentally responsible production in industry, forestry, agriculture, horticulture etc. by planting bush buffers, fostering innovation in strategies and ideas. Iwi innovation.

III. 'Mucking In': Bring people together – town and country, different generations; scientists and the wider community – to take care of our rivers. Reconnect people with their rivers, learn to take care of them

IV. Visionary: Use cutting edge communication techniques to transmit a kai-tiaki vision, ideas, findings, tool kits; to recruit support and investment of time and resources.

V. Viral: An idea that spreads across New Zealand, engaging people in new and innovative ways of caring for native plants and animals, rivers and the ocean, based on cutting edge science and ideas of guardianship.

Draft Strategic Plan

Vision

By 2050, Aotearoa New Zealand's 1000+ rivers and their catchments will be healthy, supporting a full range of aquatic and terrestrial indigenous biodiversity and meeting the cultural, social and economic needs of all New Zealanders.

A wide range of New Zealand's rivers will be among the most pristine in the world, and New Zealanders will take pride in their role as stewards/kaitiaki of freshwater resources.

Project Goals

- To inspire landowners, local government, businesses, iwi and community groups with the need to protect and restore New Zealand's rivers – the 1000 Rivers Challenge
- To work with scientists and communities to understand particular rivers, identify key risks to their well-being, and the measures needed to restore them

- To empower communities by learning from their ideas and insights into local rivers, and providing them with the knowledge, skills and tools to protect and restore these rivers and their catchments
- To instil pride in New Zealand's rivers and to promote local stewardship of our rivers and their catchments

Strategies and Actions for Achieving Goals

- Engage with the science community (NIWA, Landcare Research, Universities etc.) to develop optimal evidence-based solutions for river restoration
- Work with local communities in trial projects to restore rivers in particular parts of the country, learning from their knowledge and insights
- Create links with global Rivers groups such as International Rivers or the International River Foundation to create synergies, and link to global issues
- Develop a compelling evidence-based business case justifying the protection and restoration of New Zealand's rivers, and showing how this will increase national prosperity and wellbeing.
- Develop a high quality, evidence-based business plan for delivering the project
- Develop a Community Outreach package on the values of rivers and waterways, threats to their well-being and measures to restore them
- Identify a number of high-profile ambassadors (sports people, celebrities, community leaders, academics, business leaders) to promote the 1000 Rivers Challenge
- Identify key rivers/catchments with the highest natural &/or cultural values and the main threats to these rivers to set priorities
- With communities, work out practical programmes to restore these rivers – every river is different.
- Identify good practice case-studies to inspire communities by promoting existing success stories (Whaingaroa harbour, Raglan, Aorere Catchment, Golden Bay etc.)
- Develop web site, and web based GIS software to allow visual monitoring and recording of progress and projects, and facilitate exchange of ideas/lessons through discussion forums
- Identify one or two or three high profile regions/catchments as pilots (East Coast, Northland and Canterbury?) to launch the programme
- Develop and disseminate a toolkit for communities to monitor the health of rivers and to assist in restoration projects (plant lists, monitoring tools, etc.)
- Develop an open-source “brand package” that local groups can use to promote their local projects) including info packs, press releases, logo, interpretative signage etc.) “Te Awaroa - The [Whanganui] River Challenge” etc.
- Put up a “challenge” for local communities/geographical regions to join the 1000 Rivers Challenge to protect and restore their local stream/river/estuary/wetland (this could range from a local school restoring a local urban stream to a whole integrated catchment approach to an iconic river/waterway)
- Accept that the challenge will result in a great diversity of approaches. They could be Regional Council led, iwi led, landowner led, community led - build on local strengths, increase ownership and allow for evaluation of different strategies

- Engage a broad range of stakeholders; farmers, recreational river users, power companies, conservation groups, iwi and hapu etc.
- Tap into and excite young people by developing interactive tools and using the power of social media to connect and engage people - make it fun!