

# Waikato Biodiversity Forum-Linking Biodiversity and People Across Waikato Landscapes

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The Waikato Biodiversity Forum was established in 2002 to coordinate regional efforts and follow a “bioregional” approach to biodiversity management. The Forum includes representatives from the agencies that have a role in promoting the restoration and enhancement of the region’s biodiversity, as well as community groups, individual landowners and iwi (Māori) representation.

The Forum aims to increase indigenous biodiversity in the Waikato region through collaborative action between agencies and the community, act as a voice for biodiversity and provide support to agencies and community groups. To achieve this aim the Forum advocates for biodiversity in policies and plans, runs biannual Forum events in different locations around the region, organises workshops for community groups, operates of an Advisory and Referral Service, networks to share biodiversity information between agencies and groups and assists community groups with funding applications.

While it is challenging to quantify how the Forum is making a difference to on-the-ground efforts, members value the benefits from better networking. It saves them time, keeps them in the big picture, reduces isolation, gives them access to information about and support for biodiversity management and allows projects and strategies to be aligned. The presentation will discuss the role of the Forum including the political context of its work plus the its advantages, challenges and future directions.