

Te Mauri o ngā Wai Ariki Highlight Story

Te Tai Tokerau, May 2026



Group Overview

Ko Ngunguru, Horahora, Pātāua, Taiharuru ngā Awa tawhito o ngā Hapū o Te Waiariki, Ngāti Kororā, Ngāti Takapari. Ko ēnei ngā awa hohonū ngā awa rongonui o tō mātou nei tūpuna.

Te Mauri o ngā Wai Ariki is a hapū-led freshwater monitoring initiative dedicated to protecting and understanding the mauri (life force) of our Awa across our tribal whenua. The project was initiated in 2024.

The kaupapa was facilitated by the Te Waiariki, Ngāti Kororā, Ngāti Takapari Hapū Iwi Trust and was driven by our commitment to kaitiakitanga (guardianship), weaving together Mātauranga Māori and Western science to monitor and assess the mauri and well-being of our awa (waterways) for future generations. The maramataka was used to assist in the mātauranga Māori monitoring. Haukāinga monitors were trained to apply observations and tiroiro and to the use of the maramataka (Māori lunar calendar) to guide monitoring based on lunar phases, ecological rhythms, and tikanga.

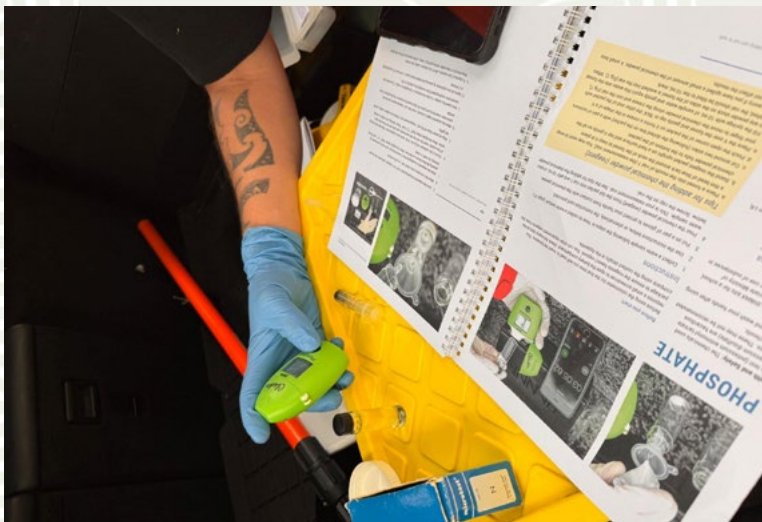
The purpose of the project is to:

1. Research kōrero tuku iho and mātauranga practices specific to Te Waiariki, Ngāti Kororā, Ngāti Takapari Hapū that relate to the sustainable management of the awa through kaitiakitanga.
2. Undertake freshwater assessment to monitor the mauri (life-supporting) capacity of the awa, this includes all the taonga within the awa such as, biodiversity, ecology and natural habitats.
3. Develop an understanding of the awa in our rohe to inform all future monitoring and reporting by applying the use of mātauranga Māori and Western scientific methods.
4. Nurture and foster kaitiakitanga of our four awa within the hapū of Te Waiariki, Ngāti Kororā, Ngāti Takapari.
5. Gain an understanding of all the factors that pose a threat to the awa within our rohe.



Map: the tribal boundaries of the Te Waiariki, Ngāti Kororā, Ngāti Takapari hapū

6. Establish pou whenua at the four ancestral awa of Te Waiariki, Ngāti Kororā, Ngāti Takapari to physically demonstrate the significance of the awa in the physical environment.



Mahi on the ground

The project has been supported by Wai Connection – Tata Ki Te Wai, and the Mountains to Sea team who deliver it. We have enjoyed working with the Catchment Co-ordinator. This support has been valuable and assisted the hapū to train whanau and develop their hapū capacity to conduct water quality monitoring.

In addition the support has created a strong skill set for the hapū as well as supporting kaimahi to undertake macroinvertebrate assessments, īnanga monitoring and identification, fish surveys, mudfish monitoring, habitat assessments, night spotlighting.

Whānaungatanga - engagements and collaborations

The project has prioritised hapū engagement through hui, wānanga, and hands-on environmental activities. Haukāinga (locals) have played an active role in the monitoring strategy, participating in fieldwork, and leading kōrero tuku iho (intergenerational knowledge sharing).

Kaitiakitanga – Caretakers of our taonga and wai

For our hapū it is important that we can build our hapū capacity by training and upskilling our whanau to be kaimahi to protect our taonga and ensure our water is clean and can provide kai for our hapū.

eDNA surveys and CBFM monitoring

Through the Wai Connection freshwater monitoring programme, eDNA sampling has been undertaken across the local awa to detect biodiversity and better understand both native and introduced species. These scientific results will be analyzed alongside traditional hapū observations to feed into a long-term species database. The initiative has successfully trained ten haukāinga in SHMAK tools, established online systems to compile data for analysis, and involved thirty whānau and haukāinga members in freshwater monitoring education. Together, these efforts have expanded active monitoring across four catchments—covering twenty-eight awa—and have enabled targeted mudfish surveys to be carried out directly on hapū whenua.

Next steps

To restore and protect their freshwater systems, the hapū of Te Waiariki, Ngāti Kororā, and Ngāti Takapari are launching a unified catchment initiative. The project will hopefully employ a full-time catchment coordinator to build hapū capability and deepen the collective understanding of all ancestral awa across tribal boundaries. Local haukāinga monitors will be stationed across each catchment to run freshwater testing and manage a robust monitoring program for native mudfish populations. To physically heal and honor the land, the hapū will develop a native plant nursery for riparian restoration while erecting pou whenua at their four ancestral rivers to proudly signal their cultural significance.



