



Wai Whakaata (Lake Hayes) 2025 Strategy – Scoping and Operations Plan

QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

1. Introduction and Background

Wai Whakaata (Lake Hayes) is a treasured water body of ecological, cultural, and recreational importance. The 2025 Strategy was developed collaboratively by Strategy Partners including the Otago Regional Council (ORC), Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC), Ngāi Tahu, the Department of Conservation (DOC), and Friends of Lake Hayes (FOLH).

The revised strategy includes ten core objectives aimed at restoring mauri (life force) and achieving long-term resilience and sustainability. This document outlines the operational plan to implement the strategy through targeted actions aligned with each objective.

2. Strategy Objectives and Operational Actions

01. Utu / Reciprocity

“Toitu te marae o Tāne, Toitu te marae o Tangaroa, Toitu te Iwi Toito”

– Care for the land and water, and the people will be sustained.

INSIGHT:

This objective speaks to balance. True reciprocity is achieved once all other objectives are meaningfully advanced.

ACTION FOCUS:

- Use this as a guiding principle and measure it through community consultation.
- Develop a framework to assess reciprocity outcomes.

02. Wai / Water

The mauri of Wai Whakaata is restored; the water reflects the essence of the lake’s name.

ACTION:

- Continue biophysical monitoring to track water clarity, nutrient levels, and sediment load.
- Maintain annual nutrient and sediment balance reporting.

03. Ki Uta Ki Tai

Enhance mauri with minimal intervention.

Context: The catchment has undergone significant modification. Existing interventions focus on sediment removal and riparian planting, but the ultimate goal is a self-sustaining system.

KEY ACTIONS:

- Upper Catchment Plan: Scope and design a restoration plan.
- Sediment Management: Formalise a maintenance plan and secure funding.
- Landowner Collaboration: Partner with developers for sediment systems.

04. Mahinga Kai

Enable thriving indigenous biodiversity and cultural food gathering practices.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS:

- Manage Mill Creek zones separately (above/below waterfall).
- Reintroduce tuna and restore native habitats.
- Conduct biodiversity audits and collaborate with Ngāi Tahu.

05. Matching Use, Capability and Mauri

Ensure land use aligns with environmental limits.

ACTIONS:

- Use QLDC DP policies to guide consent processes.
- Cap nitrogen and monitor fertiliser use.
- Develop consent flowcharts and track sediment/turbidity.

06. Kaupapa Māori & Science Monitoring

Co-design and monitor indicators using multiple knowledge systems.

ACTIONS:

- ORC and FOLH to define data usage and indicators.
- Publish visual data formats and annual ecological summaries.

07. Informed Restoration

Data-driven restoration to pre-nutrient-load equilibrium.

ACTIONS:

- Guide sediment removal with scientific monitoring.
- Secure long-term funding and integrate traps into consents.

08. Whakawhanaungatanga: Collaborative Action

Foster ownership and collective responsibility.

ACTIONS:

- Create a Catchment Group of landowners and FOLH.
- Launch educational and engagement programs.

09. Te Ōhanga / Socio-Economics

Align economic activity with ecological health.

IDEAS:

- Develop birdwatching trails and eco-tourism.
- Promote interactive science and educational tourism.

10. Capability, Capacity & Knowledge Systems

Build collective skills and understanding.

ACTIONS:

- Host workshops combining traditional and scientific knowledge.
- Train volunteers and support academic partnerships.

3. Additional Sections

Community Engagement and Education

- Launch a 'Restore Wai Whakaata' initiative with branding and education collateral.
- Involve schools and community groups in planting and monitoring.

Long-Term Vision and Sustainability

- Vision Document: Define what Wai Whakaata will look like in 50 years.
- Sustainability Fund: Explore mixed funding models.

4. Appendices

- A. Summary of Current Projects
- B. Map of Catchment Zones
- C. Policy & Consent Guidelines Extract
- D. Monitoring Dashboard Template
- E. Proposed Governance & Reporting Framework
- F. Future Project ideas

5. Conclusion

The Wai Whakaata 2025 Strategy provides a robust framework for environmental restoration rooted in cultural integrity, scientific evidence, and shared community purpose. This Operational Plan aims to transform strategy into action, ensuring the long-term health and mauri of Wai Whakaata.

Appendix A: Summary of Current Projects

1. Millbrook sediment extraction
2. Arrow augmentation project
3. QLDC District Plan consenting guidelines
4. QLDC stormwater mapping in the catchment
5. ORC Land and Water Plan changes review – needs reference to new Strategy
6. Catchment-wide sediment extraction plan
7. ORC/FOLH agreement on regular analysis/measures/targets from current scientific data
8. Review operations plan bi-annually using data from multiple knowledge systems
9. FOLH-sponsored MSc study on effect of willows on lake health
10. DOC project to raise level of trail at the south end of the lake
11. Project Tohu – 'Recloaking Coronet Peak' run by Te Tapu-o-Tāne

Appendix F: Future Project Ideas

1. Erosion management and reinstate existing sediment ponds as below fish trap in Mill Creek
2. Review and update vision project
3. Upper catchment long term restoration plan
4. Create a "Catchment Group" of key landowners and Life style block rep(s)
5. Reintroduce Tuna (eels) into the lake
6. Plan to restore catchment above the waterfall back into native species only
7. Bird watching business case
8. Business case for Enviro-tourism venture – extend "The Future is Wild @ thehillocks concept to WaiWhaka ata and catchment
9. QLDC / DOC Draw/map long-term view on the landscape around Wai Whaka ata as something to manage change on way forward