

Webinar Q&A responses.

Where next for catchment groups? Raising ambition and gearing up for the long game. Webinar held on 19 April 2023

Full Cawthron report and a 4-page summary can be found here: <https://www.cawthron.org.nz/our-news/catchment-group-recommendations/>

Q#	Question	Response <i>(a timestamp in square brackets indicates that the question was answered during the webinar; key points are summarised here.)</i>
9	I work with a national voluntary organisation promoting biochar in NZ. It seems to me that catchment groups are an ideal education target and partner for local biochar production & water quality improvement projects. Kilns could be shared within a group and biochar production days and environmental projects organised within. We don't currently have the resources to support this 'idea'. Could this type of initiative be supported from within the national catchment organisation?	[26:20] A lot of catchment groups are bringing in experts to help their members understand opportunities and new technologies. This is an important role and to be encouraged. NZ Landcare Trust can help to provide contacts for these experts. I'd encourage groups to think about what expertise they need; don't just invite an expert because they've got an interesting idea. Seek out those who can help your group achieve its objectives.
10	What is the role of industry in supporting catchment groups and farming communities to achieve their social licence and to meet regulatory requirements?	[28:15] In some ways, this is a question for the sector groups themselves. But they can certainly help groups access expertise. I'd encourage them to support groups in their relationship-building and in developing catchment plans with clear objectives that the groups can then pursue. Sector agencies should then support the groups to implement those plans. These might be somewhat different than the sector body's objectives, and that's ok. We should recognise that CGs are autonomous and may want to do their own thing. We do recommend that they clearly show how they are achieving outcomes that resonate with the wider community/public - often expressed in RMA plans. During our research, we saw sector groups starting to clarify their role and what they can offer CGs, especially given that CGs are from community and often have members from various sectors.

- 14 Have you any suggestions for urban catchment groups with many thousands of people living in a catchment. [30:00] One of the things we found is that every CG is different, so much so that it is hard to even define what a CG is. We didn't work with any urban groups in our research. I'd expect them to have a different look and feel, and a different way of operating. There is a lot of scope for urban groups - there are big challenges in the urban environment. This is an area for more research.
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- 15 There is a lot of discussion on catchment action plans but no comment on any integrated adaptive catchment management plans. Namely are the catchment groups following a sky to sea catchment management plan so people at the bottom know what is happening at the top? [31:12] Scale is always a tricky issue. In a big catchment, if the plan covers everything top to bottom, individuals may not get a sense that they have an important role to play. In the Rangitikei, a collective entity supports a number of CGs in subcatchments. That makes a lot of sense. A mountains-to-sea perspective is important, so you can see how things are connected, while the sub-catchments can identify what is locally important. Sometimes you can start with the smaller groups and then, once they get some momentum, they are ready for a larger conversation about the wider catchment.
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- 16 Do many catchment groups have catchment plans? Do they follow them/where is the value for the group? Comments on that appreciated [33:45] Our survey in 2021 found that not many groups had action plans with specific objectives. The benefit to the group is to be able to show the wider community that you actually have a plan, that you are focused on the problem, know how you're going to address it, and are going to monitor and report on progress. If the community doesn't see this happening, and if policymakers and politicians don't see clear plans for how you're going to address the problem, then they won't have confidence in catchment groups, and they cycle of more regulation and more pushback will continue.
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- 17 How do you keep the momentum going? [37:43] Having a plan helps to keep things going, because you can see the progression of your actions. The actions don't need to be the big solution, they can be small steps, but the plan helps you to see the bigger picture, what to do next etc. Do things that are achievable - get the small wins. Forming relationships also helps, e.g. with the local marae. You help to keep each other accountable and support each other in doing the mahi. Having a coordinator also really helps to maintain momentum. And having some self-funding to pay that coordinator helps keep things going when the funding ends.
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- 18 What are the best qualities/skills for a catchment group facilitator to ensure success and group ownership? [35:30] First, facilitation is not necessarily the same skillset as a coordinator. The coordinator is someone who is well organised and can make sure that things get done on time, etc, whereas a facilitator is someone who can run a good meeting and make sure that everyone's voices are heard and that the group can reach constructive decisions. NZ Landcare Trust has staff with these skills and can perhaps provide advice about what kind of skills are needed. NZ Assoc of Resource Management also has people with skills in this area.
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- 19 Kia ora, as part of resources as well as this report, anyone have any handy examples of action plans that catchment groups can pick up (this is relevant to the rec for agencies) Our report includes a suggested format for a catchment plan. The Waitangi Catchment Group has a pretty good plan (available online). It was led by the regional council and doesn't seem to have widespread buy-in from farmers. That underlines a key point - a plan is just a plan unless you are actually implementing it and monitoring your progress against objectives. We'd be interested in seeing what plans CGs have developed.
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20 How is this all to be funded?

[39:00] Inevitably, a lot of the work will fall to the CGs to fund themselves, though there is support from MPI and MFE and councils, depending on government priorities at any point in time. Groups should be careful not to get too dependent on government funding, which comes and goes. Groups should think about whether they can self-fund some of the core functions of their group e.g. contributing \$200 each to fund a part-time coordinator.

21 In your experience (all - J, C and C) do you think there remains an attitude or assumption that environmental degradation is just a necessary evil of "progress" and that restoration is prohibitively difficult? I've seen really motivating change in relatively short periods of time (10 to 20 years) but it sometimes feels like there is a sense that real restoration is kind of impossible so we're just doing nice aesthetic stuff ... Or is there a real sense that "Yes, we can do this" (obviously the scale of the challenge being different in different places).

[40:55] Great question, and we don't know the answer yet. Trying to develop an action plan is a good place to start, it helps the group identify whether it has the capacity to address the issues in the catchment. If big changes are needed, the community is the best place to have conversations about transitioning to a different future. If a group can develop enough trust amongst its members, it might be able to discuss how to address the issue, though these are delicate issues and it could take years to develop this level of trust. It may be that government will need to step in and buy out some farms, or that some people will leave because the regulation gets too tough. But we'd like to think that CGs are places where communities can work these things out themselves and support those who need it.

- 22 Do you think Industry good bodies could undermine the benefits of catchment groups where they reject and sometimes demonise regulation?
- [43:35] This is always a risk, but equally they can support catchment groups. Regulation comes in different flavours. Some regulation is really specific and tries to impose a one-size-fits-all approach, and its fair enough for sector groups to point out when that isn't workable. But regulation that says 'these are the outcomes that we expect as a community, and we'll support you to devise local solutions', that's a different thing, and that's the kind of regulation that we'd like to see. The challenges for CGs, then, is to come up with a plan that shows how you'll solve the problem, how you will improve the health of waterways, and hopefully that will get the policymakers backing off and saying, 'Right, if you do that, we'll exempt you from some of the more specific regulation and support you in your efforts'.
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- 25 Hi guys another great piece of work from you all. How might we connect catchment management professionals, like those found in nzarm, with the community better to help with catchment prioritisation of action, planning monitoring and support for coordinators? thanks Matt Highway
- The biggest challenge for NZARM members and other professionals might be letting CGs know you're available to help. The land management staff at regional councils and Landcare Trust staff are often in contact with CGs, so make sure they know what expertise is available and at what cost.
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- 26 Have you seen examples where industry bodies or councils have shown to be adaptive/responsive in their resourcing and support to local catchment groups? I know a group who realised any riparian planting would be undermined with[out] doing pest control first, so that became their focus for the first few years.
- This is a great example of the need for funders to have an open mind about what might be needed in any particular catchment. It seems more common to see funding that is fixed rather than flexible.
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- 27 What's your sense of how many catchment groups are working well with mana whenua? [45:12] A lot of CGs say they have contact with marae, hapū and/or iwi, but it is hard to say what that actually involves. My sense is that there is a lot of scope for much deeper involvement that everyone would benefit from. There may be anxiety on both sides. Farmers and tangata whenua have a lot more in common than you might think, starting with a strong attachment to place. If you need to know where to start, ask your regional council for a contact with the local marae, and go and have a cup of tea.
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- 28 I work with a lot of catchment groups and one of the common questions I have experienced is on catchment groups boundaries - is watershed or community the most important way to define boundaries?? It depends on the CG's goals. Community is obviously important, but if you're trying to protect or restore a waterway, then you need to focus on the catchment for that waterway, and build a community of interest if it doesn't already exist. Refer to question 15 above, which is about scale.
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- 29 So much of the success is around effectively telling the story, what are the best tools or approaches that have been used. Media training is a start but there is a lot more, thoughts? Telling the story is important for connecting with, instilling pride in and motivating a CG's own members, and because changing community perceptions is a goal of many CGs. Our colleagues in another Our Land & Water programme have created some tools for telling CG stories - see <https://ourlandandwater.nz/news/the-power-of-storytelling-restoring-rivers-through-knowledge-sharing/>
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- 30 To what extent is there a tension between catchment plan objectives and broader national objectives reflected in regulatory rules.
- [48:30] I would expect CG plan objectives to be broader than objectives reflected in regulations, involving e.g. connecting with community, pest control, obtaining funding etc. Ideally, a CG plan should try to address what is coming through national policies and rules, which will be given effect through regional council plans. So a CG should engage with regional council staff to work out what those policies mean locally, and try to reflect that in the catchment plan. Have a discussion with council staff about what that might look like, and come up with some measureable objectives that you can report on. Ultimately, if a CG wants to regain community confidence, we think the CG plan should address the regulatory objectives, because those are an expression of the community's aspirations for the waterways.
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- 31 Did any of your groups operate in over-allocated catchments and if so, how did they tackle that issue where there is not enough to go around?
- One of the groups is in a catchment that is probably over-allocated but the group hasn't yet tackled that issue. There are no easy options in these cases. If a group can develop enough trust amongst its members, it might be able to discuss how to address the issue, though these are delicate issues and it could take years to develop this level of trust. The alternatives aren't great, though -- wait for regulation to impose an ill-fitted solution while the waterways slowly but surely decline.
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- 32 A lot of groups are developing integrated catchment management plans at the moment through funded projects, where as the smaller action plans are quite different and usually identify key issues and solutions that catchment groups can develop quite quickly and easily to get them moving
- Thanks for that observation. Large, integrated catchment plans can be great for connecting all the dots, but if they don't have buy-in by most of the landowners, progress is likely to be slow. Large-scale integrated plans should be implemented through sub-catchment scale plans that are developed with the landowners and managers in each area, and these sub-catchment plans should guide the individual farm environment plans so that everyone is aligned on priority issues and practices.
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- 33 Could the Group/Cawthron look at how Meaningful Productive Riparian Buffers would look on a catchment scale - where objectives are met and costs covered by best use of the riparian strip. Starting with (as we have seen) successful models such as kanuka/manuka for oil/tea, harakeke for weaving, plant types for stock-feed, production trees, access for kai
- Thanks for that observation. Riparian vegetation can make a big difference to the health of waterways and, as you point out, it doesn't have to mean taking land out of production. Revenue from riparian crops could more than cover the costs of establishing and maintaining the plants. If farmers and foresters don't want to manage these crops, maybe tangata whenua would be interested? A possible win-win for all concerned.
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- 34 Your presentation has a large focus on freshwater - fair enough as this is about catchment groups but should we be limiting the conversation to this? What about freshwater, GHG's, social wellbeing, sustainable land management, resilience?
- [47:10] CGs often have quite broad objectives across a range of topics. This reflects the different expectations and ideas about catchment groups, compared to, say, what a freshwater policy analyst in Wellington might be thinking. CGs can help address a wide range of challenges facing catchment communities. Many of these issues are related, as Cyclone Gabrielle made all too clear. Having a plan can help the group identify its different priorities and decide what it will do first and second, etc.
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- 35 Hello Christina. I missed Jims presentation but has the relationship between the FMUs, Rohe vs other catchment initiatives like that of Beef and Lamb been addressed. It would seem sensible to build single initiatives and avoid sector agendas. There are also often already community planting etc initiatives that could easily be disregarded in areas where volunteer effort is hard won.
- Government and sector groups are working together in some instances. Eg Beef+Lamb NZ has compiled some great resources and other groups quite happily refer people to those. There is always room for improvement, and some of our recommendations for agencies (including sector groups) is to be clear why they are engaging with CGs and to align with, rather than duplicate, what other agencies are doing.
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36 I work with a catchment group, we are looking for locations to restore. One of the locations is a rural private land that has been zoned as future residential. The landowners don't know what they will do with the land, they may subdivide it, but they don't want to accept restoration, as if they develop in the future, then they will run into issues around clearing the planting done to add access, for example. How do you navigate in this situation? Do you try to obtain bio-banking? So that is easier for the landowner in the resource consent application stage?

I'm not sure what you mean by bio-banking. This situation is outside our research scope. Whether biobanking would make it easier in a future consent application is likely to depend on the rules in the district or regional plan. If restoration on that parcel is an important step in restoring the waterway, then you'd have to ask whether future development is a good idea. Is there a chance of getting funding (e.g. from the Native Forest Restoration Trust) to purchase or covenant the land?

37 Do you have any views on how catchment groups can collectively contribute to policy development? Or, how councils can best work with catchment groups, e.g.: on developing visions under NPSFM?

[49:40] Our research focused mainly on policy implementation, but there is scope to contribute to policy development. As CGs get stronger and get a track record, they will have an increasing ability to be involved in policy settings. For example, as they gain experience in trying to achieve water quality standards, a group will learn about what works and what doesn't and may have insights into what is possible. By working as a CG, not only will you have a unified voice, you'll also have more experience, and you can participate more effectively in these discussions over the next 5, 10 years. This conversation is going to continue for a number of years. Craig noted that some groups try to stay out of policy discussions, but in Otago they have made submissions on plans. It's an opportunity to get CG members into the same room, identify the commonalities, and try to steer the policy in a practical, pragmatic direction.

- 38 We are in a highly overallocated catchment, and in 3 years have been monitoring groundwater, springs, estuary and mahinga kai. We have had a strong, clear plan, but because the results from our monitoring is worse than expected, it has created tension with the regulatory agency. To be fair, the only solution to show progress is to be measuring load, and (ie N load) and showing a decline over time. (snatch samples of concentration, is not the real picture). Does anyone know of catchment groups monitoring the contaminant load to show progress?
- The Mangaone Catchment Group in Hawkes Bay has been monitoring load with equipment that measures concentrations every 15 minutes. When combined with flow data, loads can be calculated. Unfortunately, the monitoring equipment was lost in the floods from Cyclone Gabrielle, but this approach seems to have promise.
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- 40 Unlike overseas (SEPA), NZ does not have a Natural Intervention Plan which contains examples of river improvement works that are effective IN NZ. There is a large gap in knowledge of science and techniques available to catchment groups to actually reduce sediment, improve water quality and overall land stability. Is anyone working on techniques other than riparian plantings?
- Our Land and Water science challenge has information on techniques available to farmers. For examples see <https://ourlandandwater.nz/topic/mitigation/> . Also see The Register of Land Management Actions (<https://ourlandandwater.nz/project/register-of-land-management-actions/>), which is designed to capture information on intervention practices so that we can match this with monitoring data to determine what intervention practices work in NZ.
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- 41 What further research is needed to improve the effectiveness of managing collective improvement of waterway health?
- In many ways, NZ's journey with catchment groups is just starting. We need to continue research to understand how CGs are responding to new ideas and new challenges, including the internal dynamics of groups. It's easy to assume that CGs are pretty much all alike and that all the members are on board. In reality, there is huge variation in their goals, how they are set up, what they are doing, the degree of buy-in, etc. Research to follow changing perceptions and approaches in government and councils would also be useful - are we actually encouraging and enabling catchment groups by how we design and implement policy?