

Tangonge: He taonga tuku iho A strategic direction

What is Tangonge?

- Tangonge is part of the identity of the hapu and Iwi.
- It is a historically important area that was a food bowl for the people.
- It is whenua, a lake and wetland and an important part of the wider catchment, ki uta ki tai.
- Tangonge; a living pepeha.
- It has been marginalised over the last 100 years.

Vision

- Bringing Tangonge back to life
- Whai puawaitanga – to put the life back into Tangonge as part of a healthy catchment ki uta ki tai.
- Te Puawaitanga o Tangonge
- Ko Te Uru Mauri O Tangonge
- Ko Te Waharoa Puawaitanga

Background:

The history and traditions of Te Rarawa iwi are inextricably bound with Tangonge. Tāngonge was once a lake and wetland area that supported a large population. It was historically one of the most important mahinga kai of Te Rarawa and Ngai Takoto iwi. A number of hapū, including Te Uri o Hina, Tahawai, and Ngati Te Ao, have maintained ahika and used the fresh water fishery, bird life, gardens and other natural resources. Historically, Rivers draining catchments from Takahue, Okahu and other places converge in Kaitaia and flow in to the Tangonge wetland system and on to the Rangaunu Harbour through the Awanui River. The whole area provided abundant food resources in former times and was managed as one of the largest swamp gardens in the country covering an area of about 15 k². Tāngonge made a huge contribution to the health and wellbeing of local hapū as the area supported large numbers of Te Rarawa people in former times.

Land loss

The lands were the subject of the Old Land Claims Commission where several pre-treaty land transactions including Awanui, Okiore, Ohutu and Pukepoto were investigated. The extent to which shared use arrangements for Maori had been written into the deeds was a feature that was ignored by the Commission. Any lands found to be surplus were to be returned to the relevant chiefs. However nearly 16000 acres was wrongly taken from Te Rarawa as surplus lands for the Crown. This included a significant part of the land that made up the Tangonge wetlands. Subsequently the lands were drained and only a small reserve has remained in Maori ownership. Colonisation and land loss systematically destroyed this once remarkable and productive eco-system. The people were removed and areas drained and modified in a major government drainage scheme in the 1940s to make way for pakeha settlement. This meant that rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga practices have been undermined for generations, and species have disappeared.

Sites of significance

There are a number of important sites in the Tangonge area including nohoanga, pa, battle sites, mahinga kai, and wahi tapu. The Kaitaia Lintel was unearthed by Te Rarawa whanau

in the 1920's and has become established as the earliest example of East Polynesian style carving in New Zealand giving it international archaeological significance.

He Taonga tuku iho

Tangonge lands are important to Te Rarawa spiritually, intellectually and physically. The area has always been a source of sustenance supporting large numbers of Te Rarawa people. The Tangonge area is considered a taonga and was a vast resource.

Mauri

Over the last 160 years the area has been degraded and the food resources diminished to the point of near destruction. The wetlands have been drained to provide land for farming. The Tangonge area is frequently deluged as part of the flood protection plan for the more elevated lands around Kaitaia. The waterways of the area have been interfered with and manipulated and there are many exposed sections of former river beds. The mauri of the whenua has been severely diminished. To restore the mauri of the area it is important to ensure the wetlands are restored and that the adjoining lands are used and managed in a way that does not detract from this.

Current situation

An area of nearly 700 acres of what was the lake bed was reserved in the 1930s and ownership was vested in the Pukepoto whanau alongside Iwi interests for Te Rarawa and Te Aupouri whanui. This land is vested in trustees but the trust has been inactive for a number of years.

As part of Te Rarawa's Treaty settlement nearly 1000 acres of Tangonge is being returned to Te Rarawa and Ngai Takoto. (refer to map) This includes the following Doc and former Landcorp lands:

- Tangonge Site: 125 ha of wetlands at Tangonge, currently part of Sweetwater farms, to vest in fee simple in Te Rarawa and Ngai Takoto equally as tenants in common subject to a conservation covenant.
- Lake Tangonge Site A: 31 ha of wetlands at Tangonge, currently part of the conservation estate, to vest in fee simple in Te Rarawa and Ngai Takoto equally as tenants in common subject to a conservation covenant.
- Tangonge Site B: 25 ha of wetlands at Tangonge, currently part of the conservation estate, to vest in fee simple in Te Rarawa subject to a conservation covenant.
- Awanui River Site: 1.72 ha site at Tangonge on the Awanui River to vest in Te Rarawa in fee simple as a scenic reserve.
- Tangonge block: 200 ha of land that is currently part of the Sweetwater farm running from the former lake to the outskirts of Kaitaia. Part of this area was formerly lakebed as is being returned to Te Rarawa as commercial redress.

Te Rarawa now needs to reach agreement with the Pukepoto hapu, the Lake trustees and Ngai Takoto as to the future ownership and governance of these areas. The return of the land will provide an opportunity for the hapu to restore and conserve aspects of this taonga to ensure the community thrives again. It requires a balance between restoration, economic development and environmental sustainability.

Key issues

The impact of environmental manipulation

Tangonge was a unique natural environment. The manipulation of the Tangonge environment has led to the degradation and created huge changes for whanau and the whenua. Many of the physical changes will be irreversible.

The role of Tangonge within a large catchment ki uta ki tai

Tangonge is part of a huge catchment including the Awanui River, the Whangatane Spillway,

through to the Rangaunu Harbour. Any restoration and development of Tangonge needs to be done taking the whole catchment into account.

What can be restored?

The river and wetlands system of Tangonge and surrounding areas has been irrevocably altered to the point of near destruction by drainage, settlement and farming practices over the last 100 years. There is a will to restore Tangonge but focus needs to be on the best strategic approach and what can be realistically achieved.

The need for a shared vision

There is a need to shift attitudes of farmers, the community and Iwi members alike. Tangonge is often viewed as a swamp or a problem rather than a taonga. A shared vision of the big picture will be required for the long term restoration of Tangonge to become a reality.

Governance

An existing trust is in place on the former lake bed representing whanau and Iwi interests. Several areas of land are being returned through the Te Rarawa and Ngai Takoto settlements. Decisions need to be made about how the land will be vested, the governance of the whole area, and how to best integrate the various land areas into an effective governance group.

Flooding

Tangonge is used to protect Kaitaia from flooding and the whole area is deluged from time to time when there is flooding. Flood waters can lie for weeks at a time and have a detrimental impact on the area.

Sewerage

The Kaitaia sewerage system has been built on Tangonge and this can be impacted upon by flooding. The sewerage system in Kaitaia and surrounding areas can be inundated during flooding events with negative impacts on the Tangonge catchment.

Research opportunities

A number of research opportunities have been identified that will support the development and restoration of Tangonge. These need to be aligned with a vision and direction for Tangonge.

Five year goals

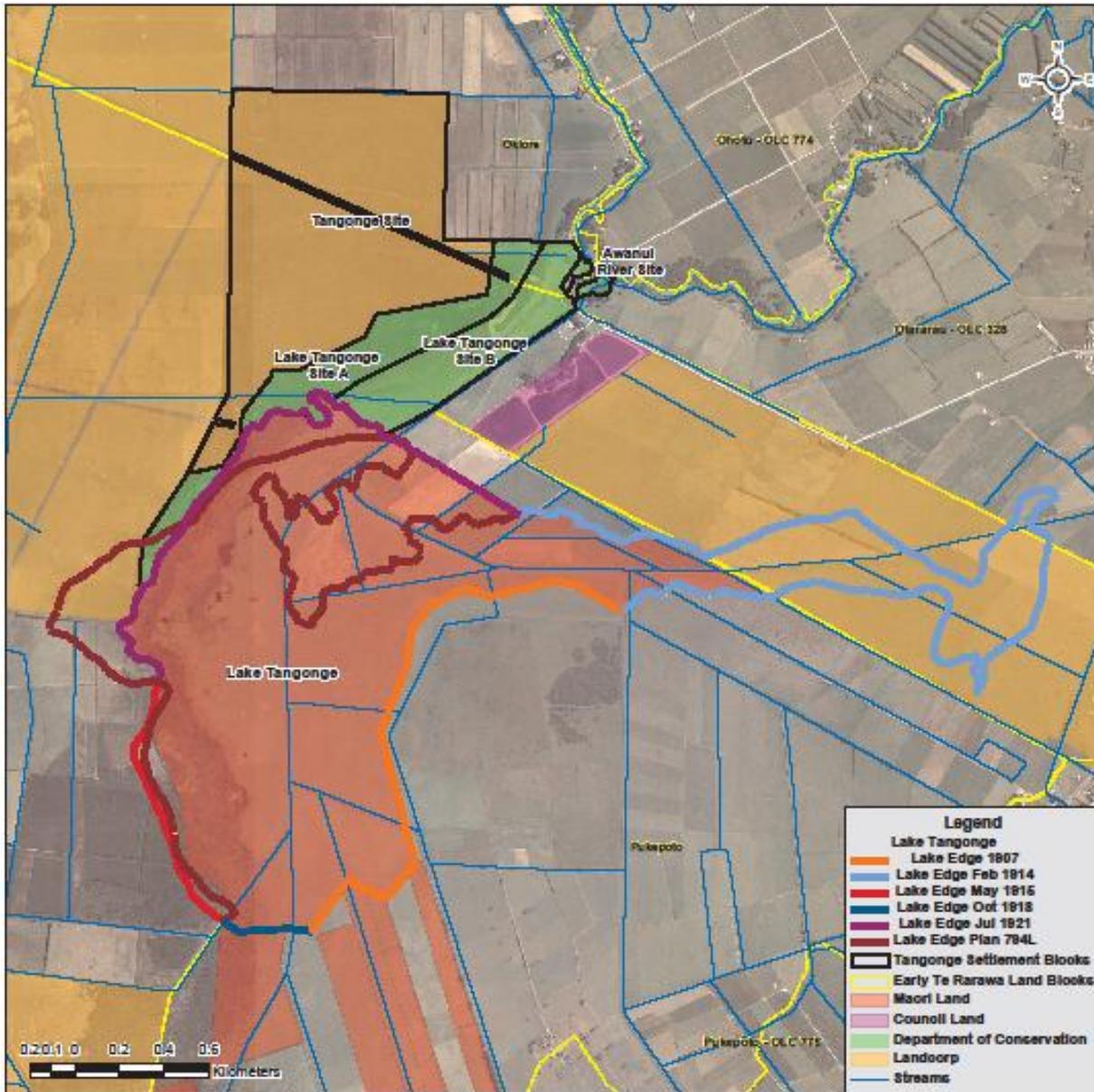
- Determine the best approach to restoring Tangonge.
- Develop effective governance over Tangonge.
- Develop relationships with key stakeholders.
- Whanau, hapu, and Iwi involvement in bringing Tangonge back to life.

Priority actions

- Involve whanau and hapu in the development of a future vision for Tangonge.
- Work with Te Rarawa to develop ownership and governance options for Tangonge lands to be returned.
- Meet with key stakeholders including FNDC, NRC and the Awanui River Liaison Committee.
- Assess research opportunities and draft up research proposals for funding.
- Investigate other sources of funding to advance priority areas.

Lake Tangonge

(Land being returned: orange Landcorp lands, green DoC lands)



Sweetwater Farm