

15 Mahuru 2025

Resource Policy
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
PO Box 1473
Wellington 6140
BY EMAIL: resourcesfeedback@mbie.govt.nz

RE: Submission on a Crown Geothermal Strategy

Tēnā koutou e te rōpū hanga rautaki ahī tāmou o Te Manatū Hīkina Whakatutuki,

Ngā kōrero whakatakinga | Introduction

The Wairākei Ahī Tāmou Rōpū (WATR) is a collective of Wairākei hapū, represented by Nukuhau Pa, Te Rangīita Marae, and Te Kapa o Te Rangīita Marae. As kaitiaki and mana whenua of Wairākei te ahi tamau (geothermal taonga), they formed the Wairākei Ahī Tāmou (Wairākei Hapū Collective), which consists of two mandated representatives from each marae. This collective engages with Contact Energy regarding the GeoFuture consent applications and all activities regarding the Wairākei Geothermal field.

WATR maintain customary rights to the Wairākei geothermal field through whakapapa and both mana whakahaere and kaitiakitanga.

WATR manage the relationship with Contact Energy and provide advice as mana whenua and kaitiaki on resource management matters in the Wairākei area.

This submission supports the submission on Te Kōtahitanga o Tūwharetoa our iwi level, Post Settlement Governance Entity (PSGE) which administers our 2017 Deed of settlement of Historical Claims on behalf of ngā hapū o Ngāti Tūwharetoa.

The energy sector celebrates the creation of the Wairākei Power station in 1958 being the only the second in the world to be opened at that time. This, however, came at the cost of degrading Te Ahī Tāmou and its mauri, both as a taonga and a resource. Further, the degradation of the relationship with tangata whenua has also been significantly impacted. This relationship was specifically impacted by Acts of the Crown such as the Public Works Act and Geothermal Springs Act which sought to place the exclusive right to manage and harvest geothermal energy and the land it sits on with the Crown removing what was an already existing property from tangata whenua. Despite the removal of the property right and erosion of our kaitiakitanga and mana whakahaere, we maintain our customary rights have never been extinguished.

Te Rautaki ahī tāmou o Kaunga | The Crown Geothermal Strategy

At the principled level WATR is supportive of a holistic intergenerational approach to the management of our geothermal taonga. The approach should enable the reestablishment of the connection of tangata whenua with their taonga and a conversation around the specific cultural values for each ahī tāmou resource around the motu to be used as a framework for setting standards of sustainable use.

Geothermal energy is touted as sustainable energy. However, from the cultural perspective of WATR, an activity cannot be considered sustainable if it leads to the overall cost and demise of the resource and its mauri. This comment is in direct reference to the loss of surface level geothermal features and the habitat it supported around the Wairākei and Taupō region.

The Taupō landscape changed considerably with the construction of the Wairākei power station in the 1950s. As tangata whenua and kaitikai of this taonga we would seek the lessons of the past be heeded and not repeated with the future policy and strategic planning of geothermal resources in Aotearoa. Therefore, in combination with current technology advancements we seek environmental baselines also be integrated with cultural baselines incorporating mauri as lived experience of tangata whenua (mātauranga) in determining what are considered sustainable environmental limits.

With regard to the goal of doubling the geothermal energy used by 2040 this must only be within the limits of what the geothermal output can sustain without the loss of further ahī tāmou mauri. A goal to double the energy output must also be coupled with the commitment to doubling the efforts and energies to protecting the holistic health of the taonga as a whole and our tangata whenua relationship to it.

The tangata whenua relationship to te ahī tāmou includes kai, tourism, living, heating, bathing and interactions as determined by local iwi and hapū, values, tikanga and mātauranga which were developed at the place of each of these taonga.

Ngā Uara tarāwaho o Wairākei Ahī Tāmou | Values Framework of Wairākei Hapū

For the Wairākei Geothermal field our cultural have been articulated as:

Overarching key values	Definition & application
Rangatiratanga	Tino Rangatiratanga is absolute sovereignty, independence, and self determination to exercise the relationship of Tangata Whenua with their lands, waters, culture and traditions. Rangatiratanga must be respected and considered at every stage of planning, the implementation of any mitigation package, and on-going operations. Consideration of the opportunities to recognise self-determination for the Wairakei Hapū should be at the fore. A Co-design approach that is adopted across all levels and at all stages (including ongoing operations) is minimum requirement. This requires commitment, time, and resourcing and should recognise and centralize mana whenua and Mātauranga Māori. Elevating Mana Whenua in their decision-making role within the decision-making framework would also provide for a Treaty partnership model moving into the future.
<u>Remember:</u> Taonga Tuku Iho - Whakapapa	<i>Taonga Tuku Iho</i> The rohe of Ngāti Tūwharetoa contains numerous taonga in many forms. There are several taonga including native plant species, wetland areas, riparian margins, and geothermally active areas that provide vital ecosystem services to the hapū by providing rongoā, kai, kōkōwai, and other cultural materials as well as forming important cultural sites of significance. The gifts of Ngātoroirangi provide a rich and unique landscape of geothermal treasures that have created habitats for geothermal tolerant species endemic to this area. It is through

	<p>the interaction between the various layers of the taiao that the whakapapa between all living things can be seen. It is important that the interconnections between these taonga are acknowledged, understood, and enhanced and that the relationships between ecosystems are not disturbed in such a way as to create flow-on impacts on other ecosystems and the vital services (cultural, spiritual, environmental, and social) that they provide. (Page 51)</p> <p><i>Whakapapa</i> The whakapapa of geothermal activity in Wairākei connects Wairākei Hapū places and its people to Ngātoroirangi. The importance of whakapapa and intergenerational responsibility is a key cultural value for hapū. The whakapapa of the hapū provides both an enduring legacy and intergenerational responsibility from their tūpuna for their mokopuna. Whakapapa is not simply genealogy but rather is a network of relational responsibilities that expand the concept of accountability across a much longer timescale than what corporate organisations tend to consider.</p> <p>By envisioning a future for Wairākei, Hapū discussed what has been lost to date and what the landscape may have looked like if there had been no interference in the geothermal system. Seeking solutions to future issues for tangata whenua involves turning to the past to create a baseline for decision making. While it is acknowledged that there is a level of irreparable damage, Wairākei Hapū state that it should not hinder the ability to dream, plan and work towards a better future.</p> <p>The ability to express kaitiakitanga over their ancestral taonga within their rohe and protect it from further decline is a collective responsibility that the descendants of Ngātoroirangi all share as his ancestral footsteps confirm the interconnection between him and other eponymous ancestors.</p>
Restore: Kaitiakitanga	<p><i>Kaitiakitanga</i> To enable kaitiakitanga, mana whenua transcends beyond time and space to acknowledge the whakapapa of the taonga or place and the sacred realms which give it life -turning to the events, experiences, learnings, feats, memories, and narratives of their tupuna to help guide them in leadership and decision making as mana whenua kaitiaki. Kaitiakitanga is unwavering, and despite the impacts of political and legislative change, mana whenua continues to express their rangatiratanga through active involvement in the guardianship of their natural, physical, and spiritual resources, whether the resources are in Māori ownership or not.</p> <p>Wairākei hapū stress that mitigation is a minimum requirement but that the goal should be to aspire to recover and restore. To</p>

	<p>create an environment that can thrive and provide for the well-being of the hapū for generations to come. Mitigation limits the work to simply ‘offset’ damages that may be caused, but there is an inherited responsibility to do more, to restore what has been lost and to ensure protections moving forward.</p>
--	--

Through years of advocacy and environmental stewardship Wairākei have articulated their positions and reconciled with geothermal users within our rohe to better protect and understand our taonga. This has not only led to better outcomes for our taonga but also the commercial operators and the environmental decision making and outcomes.

On this basis we would expect any regulatory reforms mentioned with the geothermal strategy, its goals and environmental baseline settings to undertake a thorough engagement process with all tangata whenua groups. For the Wairākei geothermal field this our Wairākei Ahī Tāmou rōpū.

Ngā Kōrero whakakapīnga | Concluding comments

Wairākei Ahī Tāmou Rōpū (WATR) asserts that the Crown and its partners must work with WATR and our relevant iwi authorities for any policy and legislative settings related to the Wairākei Geothermal field.

Specifically, to honour Section 8 (41) in the Ngāti Tūwharetoa Ngāti Tūwharetoa Claims Settlement Act 2018:

Crown acknowledged that “the geothermal resource is a taonga of immeasurable spiritual and cultural importance to Ngāti Tūwharetoa” ...The Crown also acknowledged that “particular iwi/hapū have rights and interests in specific water and geothermal resources in their rohe” and that the process of reform then underway included discussions with Ngāti Tūwharetoa.

WATR as a Hapū collective of Ngāti Tūwharetoa Iwi, we have capability and technical frameworks to provide to advice and support to the Crown/Central Government within regard to the honouring its Treaty obligations. Being kaitiaki of our taonga to protect it’s mauri and mana for future generations is an ethic which originates from tangata whenua but benefits all of Aotearoa.

We encourage the Crown to embrace Te Tiriti and integrate Mātauranga Māori into geothermal planning frameworks through meaningful relationships and partnerships with tangata whenua.

Nā to rourou, nā te rouou o te iwi ka ora ai ahi tipua i o mātou tupuna.

Nakū noa,

Privacy of natural persons

On behalf of Te Rōpū Ahī Tāmou o Wairākei