24-Hour Zero Waste Challenge

Can you go a FULL DAY without creating waste? Let's test your sustainability game!

Your Mission:

- *No plastic waste — Bring your own bag, bottle & cup.*
- *No food waste — Plan meals & compost scraps.*
- *No energy waste — Unplug & switch off unused devices.*
- *No impulse shopping — Use what you already have.*

Going zero waste helps protect our awa by reducing the rubbish and pollution that can wash into waterways when we throw things away. When we choose to reuse, compost, and avoid single-use plastics, there is less waste ending up in drains, streams, and rivers. This keeps our awa cleaner and healthier, helping native fish, plants, and insects to thrive, and ensuring the river remains a source of life, connection, and wellbeing for our communities now and into the future.

Learning Points for Juniors

He aha ngā mea ka whakaparu i tō tātou awa?
(What pollutes our river?)

In Te Ao Māori, our awa is a taonga – a living treasure that looks after us, just as we must look after it (kaitiakitanga).

Things that can make our awa sick include:

- Rubbish and plastic – these don't belong in nature and can hurt fish and manu (birds).
- Dirty water from farms and towns – like animal poo, soaps, and chemicals that wash into drains and streams.
- Mud and dirt – when soil washes into the awa, it can cover the homes of tuna (eels) and insects.
- Oil and chemicals from roads – these can poison the water and the creatures who live there.

When we care for our awa by creating less waste, picking up rubbish, and being kind to Papatūānuku, we help keep the river clean, healthy, and full of life for everyone.

Learning Points for Seniors

He aha ngā mea ka whakaparu i tō tātou awa?
(What pollutes our river?)

In Te Ao Māori, our awa is a taonga – a living treasure that looks after us, just as we must look after it (kaitiakitanga). Common pollutants in awa (rivers and streams) often come from everyday human activities. Some of the most common include:

- Plastic and rubbish – bags, wrappers, microplastics and other litter that can harm fish and birds and break down into long-lasting pollution.
- Nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) – from fertilisers, animal waste, and sewage, which can cause algal blooms and reduce oxygen in the water.
- Sediment (mud and silt) – washed in from land clearing, forestry, farming, and construction, which can smother habitats and make water cloudy.
- Chemicals and toxins – such as pesticides, herbicides, oil, fuel, and household cleaning products entering waterways via drains and runoff.
- Pathogens (germs) – bacteria like E. coli from human or animal waste, making water unsafe for swimming and kai gathering.
- Heavy metals – including zinc, copper, and lead from roads, roofs, and old industrial sites.

Reducing waste, managing runoff, and caring for land and water helps keep our awa healthy and life-giving for all.