

Maungataniwha ki Rangaunu Trust (MTKRT)

Highlight Story

Te Tai Tokerau, May 2026

Group Overview

Since its establishment in 2023, Maungataniwha ki Rangaunu Trust (MTKRT) has partnered with hapū and whānau to lead initiatives that strengthen community connection to waterways and support freshwater restoration within the Awanui river catchment. The catchment starts from the Maungataniwha range and flows through the town of Kaitiāia and out into the Rangaunu harbour. The main tributaries that feed into the Awanui are the Takahue, Mangataiore and Karemuahako rivers.

MTKRT co-founders Jaroz and Hone Popata continue to drive the Trust's work by leading several community-focused environmental projects. They host community native tree planting days in public spaces along the river in Kaitiāia township. These efforts help improve water quality and restore the riverbanks.

The Trust also runs workshops for hapū and community members to teach them how to monitor water health.

These sessions combine traditional mātauranga Māori knowledge with modern tools like eDNA testing. In schools, they lead science activities that get students excited about measuring tuna populations and learning how to spot a healthy stream. Finally, they support family and hapū-led projects by providing funding and native seedlings, which empowers local communities to reconnect with their waterways and bring them back to life.





Mahi on the ground

Īnanga restoration and monitoring

Maungataniwha ki Rangaunu Trust are interested in local Īnanga spawning restoration work along the Awanui river. An introductory workshop with members of Mountains to Sea providing the group with an overview around the current mahi being undertaken for Īnanga spawning across Te Tai Tokerau. Mountains to Sea has since provided hands-on training conducting salt water wedge surveys, Īnanga egg searches and habitat assessments to support the groups capability.

With support from Mountains to Sea, the group will continue its work in searching for and restoring Īnanga spawning habitats over the upcoming Īnanga spawning season, with a focus on tributaries feeding in to the Awanui river.

eDNA surveys

eDNA surveys were conducted within the upper and middle reaches of the Awanui catchment in collaboration with members of MTKRT and local hapū to help understand the freshwater life present within the catchment, build capability within the community around freshwater monitoring and to ground truth hapū kōrero around pest species like koi carp.

CBFM monitoring workshops

2 Community Based Freshwater Monitoring workshops have been led by Wai Connection to teach the group around the use of scientific tools to monitor indicators of water quality and in-stream biota. The group is interested in monitoring their riparian restoration sites and assessing impacts along the Awanui catchment. With help from Mountains to Sea via the Wai Connection project, the group is currently developing a freshwater monitoring utilizing citizen science tools to help gain a better understanding of these areas of interest in their catchment.

Next steps

The group will continue with its work planting riparian zones along the Awanui river, involving local schools in the Kaitia area on planting days and workshops around freshwater. The group also plans to hold a catchment action planning workshop with other stakeholders in the Awanui catchment in collaboration with Wai Connection. They plan to continue with finding and restoring Īnanga habitat on the Awanui river and its surrounding tidal tributaries.



“Working alongside Wai Connection has significantly strengthened our ability to monitor and understand the health of our waterways. Through hands-on training in SHMAK and eDNA, our team gained practical skills and the confidence to use water testing tools effectively. This partnership has empowered us to make informed decisions, build local capability, and continue advancing our freshwater restoration efforts with greater knowledge and self-determination.”

-Jaroz Popata - Co-Founder of Maungataniwha ki Rangaunu Trust