



WILD FOR TARANAKI

Tō Tātou Taiao – Maranga Papatūānuku

WAI
CONNECTION
TATAI KI TE WAI

**MOUNTAINS
TO SEA
CONSERVATION
TRUST**

Building Regional Capability for Fish Passage in Taranaki Highlight Story

May 2026



Improving the health of our freshwater ecosystems is a collective effort, and in Taranaki that often begins with building capability within our communities. Over the past few months, a powerful train-the-trainer journey has unfolded — one that is already strengthening knowledge, skills, collaboration and leadership across the rohe.

Upskilling with NIWA (now Earth Sciences): Fish Passage Assessment Training

The journey began with Earth Sciences and the Taranaki Catchment Communities (TCC) team hosting a two-day Fish Passage Assessment Training course. Supported through Wai Connection — for which Wild for Taranaki is the regional provider — we enabled several of our Wai Coordinators attending the workshop, which blended classroom learning with hands-on fieldwork using the nationally recognised Fish Passage Assessment Tool (FPAT).

Participants deepened their understanding of native fish biology, migration patterns, and the barriers that prevent species like īnanga and tuna from completing their life cycles. They also gained practical experience assessing culverts and other instream structures and learned how to record data into the national database to help prioritise future remediation work.

This training laid the foundation for a train-the-trainer model — ensuring that the knowledge gained could be shared widely across the region.



Mahi on the ground

Taking the Training to local Iwi Te Kāhui o Taranaki

At the end of January, one of our Wai Coordinators co-led a dedicated day of fish passage assessment training to one of our catchment groups, Te Kāhui o Taranaki (TKOT), alongside the Taranaki Regional Council. The session wove together fish identification, migration behaviour, and practical use of the FPAT app.

The group visited three sites in Ōpūnake, applying their new skills in real time. By the end of the day, the TKOT team had the capability and confidence to begin assessing and improving fish passage within their own rohe — a significant step toward restoring connectivity for native migratory species.

Next Steps: Fish ID Training and Community Learning

Building on this momentum, two Fish ID training days are planned for 1 May and 18 June, delivered by Taranaki Regional Council Freshwater Scientist Tyler Keyzen and supported by the Wai Connection team. This session will bring together Ngāti Te Whiti, Ngāti Mutunga and other partners to deepen understanding of species present in local waterways and how to recognise them in the field.

Sharing Knowledge with the Wider Community

All of this work was showcased in a Speakers Evening on 19 May at Te Whare Hononga in Ngāmotu / New Plymouth — a chance for the wider community to learn more about migratory fish, fish passage barriers, and the innovative mahi happening across the motu.

The evening featured four speakers:

- Tyler Keyzen (TRC) — sharing insights into the council's fish passage programme
- Ari & Hana Carrington (Patuharakeke Hapū) — presenting their weaving-based fish passage remediation work at Pukekauri Dam
- Timoti King (Te Kāhui o Taranaki) — speaking about their inanga-focused mahi

A Growing Network of Capability

This sequence of receiving knowledge and immediately seeking to pass it on while seizing opportunities to deepen understanding reflects the strength of Taranaki's catchment groups and iwi-led initiatives. By sharing knowledge and building skills locally, we're creating a network of people who can assess, prioritise, and improve fish passage across the region — supporting the long-term health of our native freshwater species and the ecosystems they depend on.

Continuing the Conversation: Changing Waters Workshop

Building on this momentum, the Changing Waters workshop held on 28 May brought together organisations across Taranaki working to improve freshwater health - including those active in fish passage mahi. Facilitated by Miranda Cassidy-O'Connell from the Centre for Social Impact and supported by Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust, the workshop focused on strengthening collaboration and clarifying who is doing what across the region.

One of the key outcomes was a shared commitment to deepen connection in the fish passage space. Participants agreed to explore establishing a regularly meeting interest group dedicated to fish passage — a forum for sharing updates, aligning projects, and maximising collective impact for the health of Taranaki's waterways.

This next step reflects the region's growing network of capability and collaboration — ensuring that the knowledge, relationships, and energy generated continues to flow toward coordinated, practical action for freshwater regeneration.