



WAITM
CONNECTION
TATAI KI TE WAI

Year Two Report
2025

Acronyms used in this report:

A2E Access to Experts	MOU Memorandum of Understanding
ACE Aotearoa Catchment Extension Programme	MPI Ministry for Primary Industries
ACCG Ahuriri Catchment Collective Group	MTSCT Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust
AGM Annual General Meeting	MTSW Mountain to Sea Wellington
CBFM Community-based Freshwater Monitoring	MVP Minimum Viable Product
CBM Community-based Monitoring	NAH-FCS National Advisory Group on Freshwater Citizen Science
CCCV Catchment Context, Challenges and Values	NCC Nelson City Council
CHM Cultural Health Monitoring	NGO Non-government Organisation
DGV Default Guideline Value	NISP National Inanga Spawning Programme
DOC Department of Conservation	NIWA National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research
ECE Early Childhood Education	NPS-FM National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management
EFF Essential Freshwater Fund	NZARM New Zealand Association of Resource Management
EMR Experiencing Marine Reserves	NZLT New Zealand Landcare Trust
FCMS Focus Catchment Map Series	OCC Otago Catchment Communities
FEP Farm Environment Plan	PO Provider Organisation
FMU Freshwater Management Unit	QA Quality Assurance
FOM Friends of the Maitai	RAG Regional Advisory Group
FTE Full-time equivalent	RNA Regional Needs Assessment
FWFP Freshwater Farm Plan	SHMAK New Zealand Stream Health Monitoring & Assessment Kit
GDC Gisborne District Council	SLA Service Level Agreement
HAOTO He Awa Ora, He Tai Ora Trust	TBG Tasman Bay Guardians
H&S Health and Safety	TDC Tasman District Council
J4N Jobs for Nature	TEC Tairāwhiti Environment Centre
KMR Kaipara Moana Remediation	TET Tasman Environmental Trust
KPI Key Performance Indicator	TPoS Tailored Package of Support
LAWA Land & Water Aotearoa	UWEN Upper Waitematā Ecology Network
LRR Love RimuRimu	WBC Whitebait Connection
MCC Motueka Catchment Collective	WCC Wairarapa Catchment Collective
MDC Marlborough District Council	WFT Wild for Taranaki
MFE Ministry for the Environment	

Disclaimer

The information in this document is intended to provide readers with a summary and overview of Year Two of the 'Wai Connection' project.

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1

Executive Summary

Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust's Vision for Resilient, Healthy New Zealand Ecosystems and Communities

For over two decades, Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust has been guided by intergenerational wisdom which recognises that communities hold the solutions to the environmental challenges that we face today, and that if we look after the water from the mountains to the sea, it will look after us.

***"Whakamana te maunga,
Whakamana te wai,
He mauri o ngā tangata,
Ngā mea katoa he pai"***

Our whakataukī embodies our commitment to thriving freshwater and marine environments protected and restored by connected communities. Thanks to strategic investment by the Ministry for the Environment in 2023,

we launched the Wai Connection project to leverage 21 years of community-centred proven programmes, frameworks and community-led engagement to assist in the implementation of the Essential Freshwater (EF) reforms.

Wai Connection has supercharged our efforts towards creating resilient, healthy New Zealand ecosystems and communities by honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, empowering communities through experiential learning, and creating innovative tools that support both collaboration and restoration. Our approach centers on community-led conservation, recognising that when people are experientially connected to Te Taiao through hands-on engagement, scientific knowledge sharing, and collaborative action, they become powerful and resilient

agents of environmental change.

The Wai Connection project exemplifies our guiding principles in practice – fostering collaboration and open-source data sharing, maintaining integrity through evidence-based approaches, and ensuring that fun and passion drive sustainable environmental stewardship from the mountains to the sea.

Building Freshwater Champions Across Aotearoa New Zealand

The Wai Connection project represents a transformative approach to freshwater management, demonstrating that community-led action, supported by strategic investment, delivers measurable environmental and social outcomes. As this initiative completes its second year with a diverse network of regions at different stages of implementation, it provides compelling evidence that local catchment communities, when equipped with the right tools and knowledge, can create lasting impact for their waterways.

Remarkable Impact in only Two Years

The numbers tell a compelling story of community engagement and environmental action across regions:

- **82,733 engagements** across all regions through community events, education, monitoring, and restoration activities (61,367 in year two).
- **30,925 volunteer hours contributed by communities, representing significant in-kind investment** in freshwater health to the value of \$895,278.75 using the living wage rate of \$28.95/hour, potentially much more considering the actual rates of many of our partners (23,006 in year two).
- **350+ catchment groups currently**

supported across 13 regions, from formation through to independent action.

- **36% geographic coverage** spanning urban and rural catchments from Northland to Southland.

Notably, regions that joined in the project's first year demonstrate the full potential of sustained support, and the numbers are much larger in Year Two. Auckland alone facilitated more than twelve thousand engagements in 24/25 and even in regions with no major population centres like Tairāwhiti and Taranaki, engagements were over seven thousand across the year. Innovative programs like Mountains to Sea Wellington's "Awa After Dark" spotlighting events have created new pathways for citizens to connect with their local waterways. The Tasman region pioneered eDNA testing for every engaged catchment, setting new standards for community-based monitoring.

Meanwhile, regions that came on board during the project's second year are already showing promising early indicators of success, with community groups forming and beginning their skill-building journeys. In these regions, Wai Connection is helping to expand the reach and impact of existing catchment collectives, and to nurture and enable new groups to gain momentum through training and project funding.

A Proven Progression Model at Different Stages

Wai Connection's strength lies in its progression model, supporting groups from formation through to independent environmental stewardship. The staggered regional implementation provides valuable insights into this development pathway:

Established Regions (Two Years of Support)

Regions with two years of intensive support demonstrate remarkable success in building both individual capability and collective capacity. Groups have mastered community-based freshwater monitoring, with many now confidently using Quality Assurance/Quality Control field tools and contributing valuable data to regional understanding. Breakthrough discoveries, including the discovery of 11 new īnanga (whitebait) spawning sites in Taranaki, the first community detection of lymphocystis in bullies, and juvenile piharau populations in unexpected locations, showcase the scientific value of well-trained community groups.

Emerging Regions (One Year of Support)

Regions that joined in the project's second year are demonstrating rapid uptake of the proven models developed elsewhere. These communities are progressing through their foundation-building phase, establishing monitoring routines, building local partnerships, and beginning to see the benefits of the broader Wai Connection network. Their early successes validate the transferability of the approach while highlighting the value of connecting to an established network of practice.

Network Effect Multiplying Impact

The staggered implementation has created a powerful mentoring dynamic, where established regions provide guidance and inspiration to emerging ones. This network effect multiplies impact beyond what any single region could achieve independently, creating a knowledge-sharing ecosystem that accelerates learning and adaptation.

Strategic Partnership Success Across

Implementation Phases

Wai Connection demonstrates exceptional return on investment through strategic partnerships that adapt to regional contexts and implementation stages. The project has fostered collaboration with over 48 different organisations across regions, from regional councils to educational institutions, iwi partners, and community trusts.

Established regions show how these partnerships mature over time, with community knowledge now directly informing formal planning processes including Whaitua development and regional freshwater plans. Emerging regions are building these foundational relationships, benefiting from templates and approaches proven in earlier implementations.

Evidence for Sustained Impact Across Implementation Stages

Our formal evaluation reveals differentiated but consistently positive outcomes across regions at different stages:

Mature Regions demonstrate the full spectrum of intended impacts: expanded community reach, enhanced group capacity, improved technical capability, and renewed energy for environmental action. Many groups are transitioning to independent operation while maintaining network connections.

Developing Regions show strong early indicators across all impact areas, with rapid skill development, growing community engagement, and increasing collaboration with local partners. These regions are positioned to achieve similar outcomes to established regions with continued support.

Consistent Success Factors show that regardless of implementation stage, success correlates with adequate coordination resourcing, alignment with community readiness, and integration with existing regional initiatives.

A Platform for Sustained Growth - The Wai Connection evaluation provides compelling evidence that strategic investment in community-led environmental action delivers

lasting change, with outcomes strengthening over time and benefiting from network connections. The staggered implementation demonstrates both the replicability of the approach and the value of sustained support.



2

Introduction and Overview

Introduction

Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust has specialised in community engagement events and experiential environmental learning for over twenty years. This has brought a unique set of capabilities to catchment groups through Wai Connection. Feedback tells us those capabilities were keenly needed by the groups identified for support. When combined with the team at EOS Ecology, Wai Connection has provided tailored support to catchment groups that reflects the huge variation in catchment group needs, while capitalising on efficiencies gained by commonalities. Wai Connection has allowed us to combine proven programmes with high quality needs-based training and apply consistency through national level project management and scientific support. We are proud to report the progress of Year Two of the project here.

Wai Connection has provided 'boots on the ground' to facilitate connections between landowners, councils, iwi/hapū, the many organisations who work in catchment management and importantly the broader catchment communities. In doing so, it has facilitated both connection between people and connection of people to their catchments, reaching an impressive **61,367 engagements in Year Two** (up from 20,603

for 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024).

In Year Two the project has hit its stride, with established regions seeing more co-funded and collaborative activity than ever, and newer regions seeing the fruits of investing time and resources to establish strong relationships with catchment groups and other regional stakeholders. **We hit 400 catchment groups supported in 13 regions at the beginning of 2025 - 300% more than we had initially planned.** The project has built a strong national social and professional network, supported by tailored scientific and community engagement resources, ongoing needs-based education and training, and a shared passion for understanding and restoring our waterways from the Mountains to the Sea.

Our supported groups have developed **capacity and capability in freshwater restoration** at their own pace. Communities and individuals increasingly demonstrate a strong commitment to using science to understand their waterways and learn from successful interventions in other catchments addressing similar challenges. By design, the project has facilitated connection to nature and local waterways, and progressed via connection to other groups, specialists, and interested community members.

The Essential Freshwater Fund (EFF)

was fundamental to the creation of the Wai Connection project and critical to delivering meaningful freshwater outcomes across New Zealand. It has funded a suite of capacity and capability-building activities by a range of organisations, delivered in a condensed timeframe. The funding enabled Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust to leverage 23 years of experience working with communities, developing our offering and extending our reach to support any region seeking assistance with catchment conservation and restoration efforts.

The flexible funding model of Wai Connection has been crucial for conducting needs assessments at regional and sub-regional levels. This ensures our programmes, resources, and support are tailored to each group's specific requirements - recognising that every catchment group faces unique challenges and opportunities.

Working with our many partners, we have **achieved significant efficiencies** by providing integrated project management, national level science support, and nationwide training opportunities and knowledge sharing across catchments and regions. This approach allows us to build capacity and capability even for remote communities and time-constrained volunteers.

Catchment groups, partners, and stakeholders will continue to use

resources created by our national science delivery partner EOS Ecology to build understanding of catchment management and freshwater ecology. Our train-the-trainer frameworks extend our reach far beyond those we directly support, creating lasting impact beyond the project timeframe. The outputs that we measure in this report (such as the number of catchment coordinators providing support, training hours delivered and activity attendees) are not the outcomes themselves, but the pathway to those outcomes. The long-term impact of informed and engaged communities is sustained environmental benefits for New Zealand's freshwater systems.

Year Two saw the completion of our programme evaluation, which showed that the Wai Connection teams are doing a fantastic job of not just supporting individual groups, but building vibrant cross catchment networks of stakeholders supporting action on the ground. As one stakeholder describes, Wai Connection team members are, *"...a willing member of the community who will put their hand up to ensure things happen."*

While some high-level results are highlighted in this report, the project has a lot of regional nuance and the full evaluation and supplementary data pack are recommended reading.

One complaint that came through

repeatedly from all cohorts was not about the value of the programme or the efficacy of its implementation, but the fit of project-based funding for long term and large scale outcomes: *“I cannot fault the programme as we have experienced it, but sustainable long-term funding would be the one change I would make if it were up to me.”*

The success of Wai Connection lies in the capacity to enable collaboration and partnerships at the catchment group level. Connecting landowners, farmers, city

residents, councils, iwi/hāpu, scientists, local contractors and local communities around the common goal of improving our catchment ecosystems is critical. It is just the beginning, but catchment groups are showing that community led initiatives can contribute significantly to the long term outcomes that New Zealand both wants and needs for its waterways.

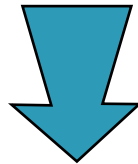


Overview - project structure

‘Wai Connection’ is regionally focused, but delivered at a national scale. Our national team works hand in hand with the POs, providing the necessary support for them to successfully deliver the project in their regions.



Our ‘Wai Connection’ National Project Support Team is responsible for wraparound support – providing key resources, specialist skills, and overall project management to regional POs. This allows them to get out alongside their catchment groups to effect positive change. By pairing our POs with the project’s National Technical Support Team, we combine the power of local ‘boots on the ground’ and local connections/relationships with the nationwide specialist knowledge of our science, GIS, and science interpretation/design experts.



REGIONAL DELIVERY done by PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS (usually one per region)

‘Wai Connection’ uses the MTSCT existing (and future) affiliated regional POs to provide the following ‘Wai Connection’ positions on the ground:

- **Regional Coordinators** – Work predominantly to bridge communication gaps between council and catchment groups and arrange regional hui to share best practice guidance. Manage ‘Wai Connection’ Catchment Coordinators, Catchment Connectors, and National Inanga Spawning Programme (NISP) Coordinators. They report back to MTSCT.
- **Catchment Coordinators** – Provide direct support to up to 5 catchment groups through facilitation, restoration planning, advice, and administration. They also provide on-the-ground support for groups, delivery of CBFM training, and inanga spawning surveys.
- **Catchment Connectors** – Provide wider engagement and training to community catchment groups/landowners at the water’s edge.
- **NISP Coordinators** – Deliver the NISP by providing training and support with survey work and ensuring the team follows current best practices when undertaking fieldwork.

Overview - regional rollout structure

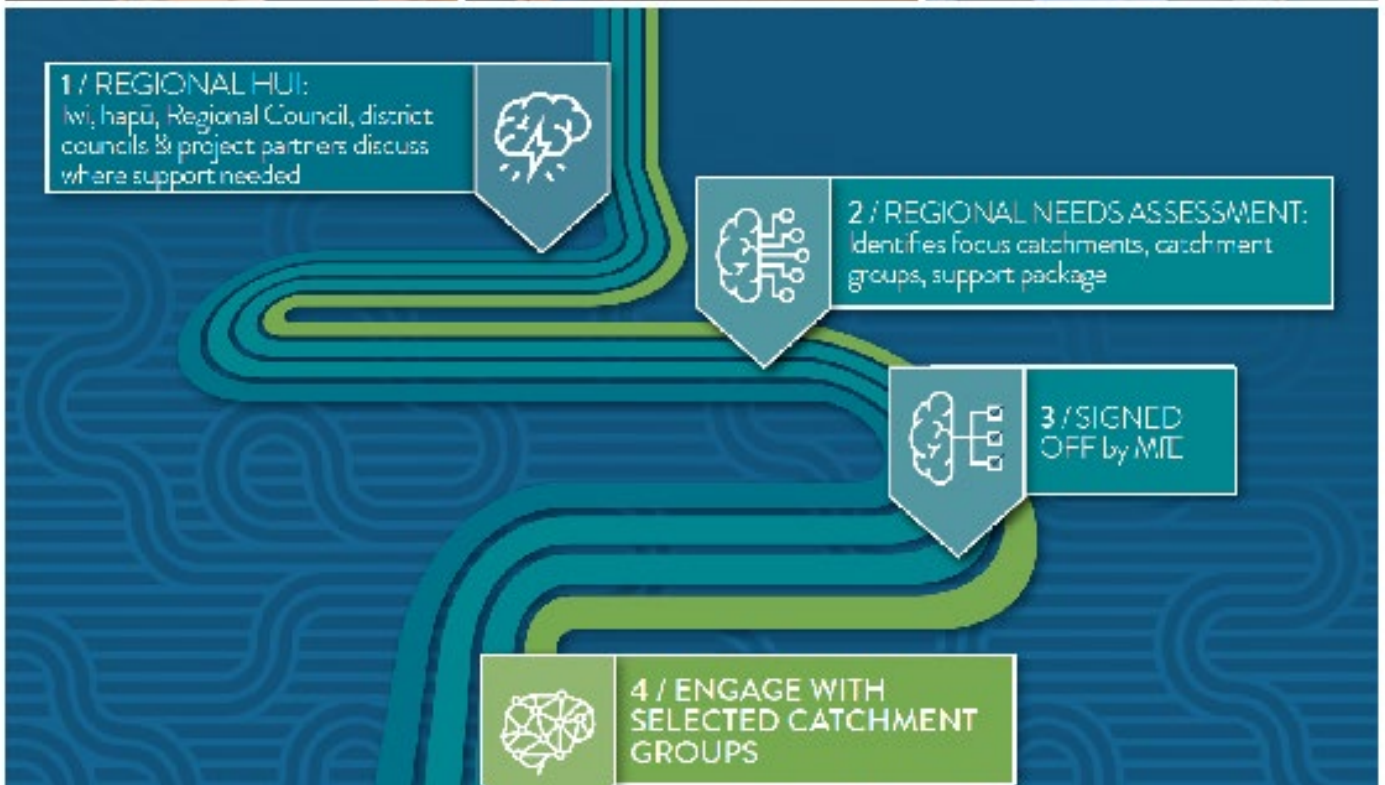
The 'Wai Connection' process required each region to first build a general understanding of the current state of catchment groups within their region through presentations, kōrero, face-to-face hui, and desktop research and desktop research. This helped to determine trends and patterns of gaps in support, and which parts of the region are already well supported.

This foundational work was explored further at regional hui, designed to bring together key organisations (including statutory bodies, NGOs, industry support bodies, iwi and catchment collectives) supporting groups at a regional level. Having so many stakeholders involved in these workshops meant that POs could confirm the gaps and opportunities identified and work collaboratively on a set of locally relevant criteria

to prioritise 'Wai Connection' support where need outstripped available resources.

Following the regional hui, each region produced a Regional Needs Assessment (RNA) and Tailored Package of Support (TPoS), which summarised their regional needs and what groups they'd collectively identified for support.

As part of this process, most regions also established a Regional Advisory Group (RAG) designed to provide oversight of the delivery of 'Wai Connection' into each region and ensure organisation-level collaboration. Once the RNA and TPoS were approved by MfE, the region engaged and supported catchment groups identified in their RNA.





National Technical Support Team: Year 2 summary

EOS Ecology is the 'Wai Connection' National Technical Support Team provider. Based in Ōtautahi/Christchurch, their team of scientists, GIS specialists, science interpreters and designers helped support the MTSCT National Project Team and the Provider Organisations (POs) in their delivery of the 'Wai Connection' project. The following is a summary of all support provided over the first two years of the 'Wai Connection' project, through to June 2025.

Design & programme support:

- » Programme development.
- » Brand development & implementation.
- » Programme summary documents and outputs.
- » 'Wai Connection' posters, banners, and other materials.
- » Fund sourcing assistance.

Project website:

- » Development and maintaining of the 'Wai Connection' project website.
- » Online surveys and forms.
- » Provider portal login area.

General science-related support:

- » Science handout about the use of Default Guideline Values for water quality data interpretation.
- » Science handout about water clarity.
- » Science handout about visual clarity data interpretation.
- » Science posters about catchment function, nitrogen cycle, springs, lake trophic level index, urban vs natural stream catchments.
- » eDNA sampling and use guidance.
- » *Essential Freshwater* summary document.
- » Training assistance at multiple 'Wai Connection' wānanga around community-based monitoring.
- » Delivery of 47 science workshops hosted by a specialist scientist from EOS Ecology. The workshops were 2–3 hours long and took the attendees through the Focus Catchment

Map Series (FCMS), highlighting key findings, and answering questions from the participants.

- » Engagement with 81 organisations (including 'Wai Connection' POs, regional councils and unitary authorities, iwi, catchment groups, and the wider community) across eight regions as part of the FCMS science workshops.
- » Collaboration and engagement with eight regional councils as part of the production of the FCMS outputs.
- » Development of supporting documentation to aid in understanding of FCMS resources, including:
 - Powerpoint presentations and video about the FCMS
 - FCMS overview
 - FCMS frequently asked questions.

Community-based Freshwater Monitoring (CBFM):

- » Development of the CBFM scoping document (Year 1).
- » Presentations and meetings for the CBFM website.
- » Support of the Investment Ready Business Case.

Specific science interpretation & graphic design support for 'Wai Connection' regional POs on request:

- » 27 'catchment group story' publications.
- » Event-based resources.
- » Group-related summary outputs, posters, and maps.
- » Summary reports and presentations for monitoring.
- » Social media posts.
- » Powerpoint presentations.
- » Competition materials for public events...and more...

"We were impressed by EOS's depth of knowledge and the professional yet relatable resources they produce."

Sarah Elliot
PRODUCTIVE & SUSTAINABLE LAND USE PROJECT MANAGER
HAKATARAMEA SUSTAINABILITY COLLECTIVE, WAITAHA/CANTERBURY

"Thank you so much for producing such awesome resources for our catchment groups – can't wait to print them off! 🍷"

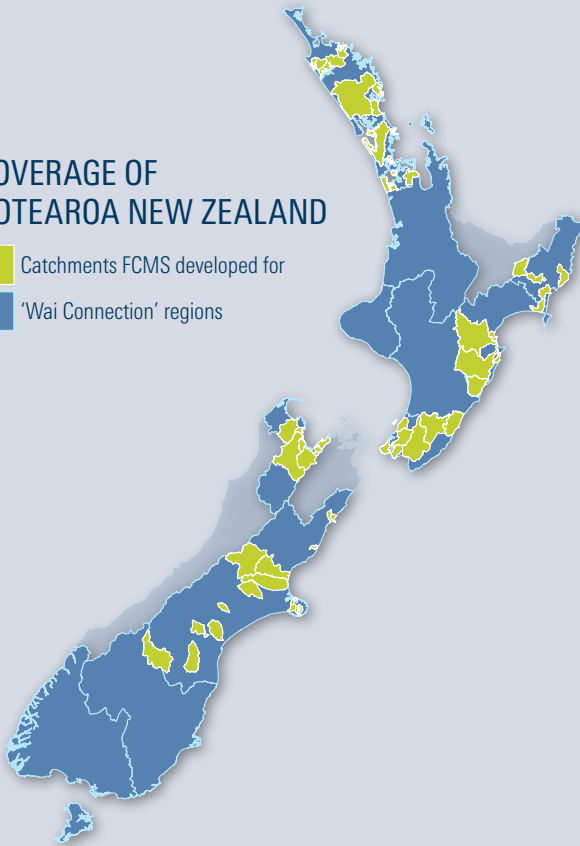
Amy Sadler
CATCHMENT COORDINATOR
'WAI CONNECTION', TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU/AUCKLAND

Delivery of the Focus Catchment Map Series (FCMS)

A science publication that provides an overview of the known state of a focus catchment based on national and regional datasets, and presented in an easy-to-understand A3 pdf and printed format. Produced by EOS Ecology's science, GIS, science interpretation and design teams.

COVERAGE OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

-  Catchments FCMS developed for
-  'Wai Connection' regions



"Wow, these Focus Catchment Maps are a very valuable tool to have. They have already provided our Waingōngoro Awa restoration team with a better picture of our overall catchment and provided a more in depth understanding of how our catchment has evolved, providing soil, water and ecological data."

Sharon Walker
PROJECT MANAGER
RESTORATION WAINGŌNGORO AWA, TE MATAU-A-MĀUI/HAWKES BAY

"I am very excited to see the Focus Catchment Map Series (FCMS) pull together so many aspects of river health and connection with the coast in a much more integrated way than has been reported in the past. We have long wanted to achieve something like this off our own bat, but have been limited by staff capacity and budgets. So, in a way it is an 'answer to my dreams'."

Trevor James
PRINCIPAL SCIENTIST – FRESHWATER & ESTUARINE ECOLOGY
TASMAN DISTRICT COUNCIL, TE TAI O AORERE/TASMAN



Highlights 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025



Number of Catchment Groups being Supported: this live count reached **400** at the beginning of 2025, though the number of groups being supported at the end of June was 353.



Participant engagements: **61,223** (up from 20,603 for 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024)



Hours Volunteered: **23,006** (up from 8,401 for 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024)



Activities delivered: **2171** (up from 829 for July 1 2023 - 30 June 2024)



Mana whenua engagement: 31.1% of activities (up from 6.7% for July 1 2023 - 30 June 2024)

Increased profile of the project and improved impact reporting

Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust have promoted the project, our funders and our provider organisations through national stakeholder engagement, communications, and marketing including:

- Sponsoring the national NZARM and NZFSS conferences, supporting Balance Farm Environment Awards.
- Coordinating and commissioning national level communications and marketing activities.
- Mystery Creek Field Day
- Radio and Television interviews
- Increased frequency, reach and engagement across all social media channels year on year.

SPECIALISED TRAINING COORDINATED WITH REGIONAL PROVIDERS REACHING 438 PARTICIPANTS

- ✓ **Two National Training Wānanga** (Whananaki/Ngunguru - Northland, Hawke's Bay)
- ✓ **Seven Regional Training Wānanga** (Southland, Nelson/Tasman, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Waikato, Taranaki, Otago)
- ✓ **Two traditional Wānanga** (Wellington and Onuku - Canterbury).
Details: <https://www.mountaintosea.org.nz/wananga>
- ✓ **Multiple online webinars and training** on topics such as community based freshwater monitoring, inanga, fundraising, communications plans, and content creation.
Details: <https://www.youtube.com/@mountains-to-sea>
- ✓ **National Governance Training:** 4 x 2 hour online sessions delivered by LEAD Centre for Nonprofit Leadership, to 83 participants.
- ✓ **Catchment Management Workshops,** 3 x 1 day in person for regional catchment communities and stakeholders (Nelson/Tasman, Northland, Auckland).
- ✓ **Facilitating Effective Catchment Groups,** 2 day in-person wananga style workshop (Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Otago delivered by Facilitate Aotearoa.
- ✓ **Facilitation Essentials,** 1 Day In Person skills training, (Hawke's Bay, Waikato) delivered by Facilitate Aotearoa.

Provider organisations and number of catchment groups supported (accurate as of 31 April, 2025)

PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS





3

Year Two Highlights

Objective and milestone progress for 24/25

Co Funding Requirement

A requirement rather than an objective or milestone, it is worth noting co-funding in this report, in as much as it serves as a proxy indicator for support from other stakeholders for the project. Wai Connection's Co funding target for the whole project through to June 2025 was \$2,065,831.85. Encouragingly, our hardworking teams and partners were able to contribute a total of **\$2,699,406.11**

ACHIEVED

Objective 1

By June 2025, engage with existing and two new regional partners to formalise working relationships, identify new provider organisations in expansion regions, and determine regional needs and priorities for capability and capacity.

COMPLETE

Objective 2

By June 2025, build capacity and capability as per the needs assessment in the existing Mountains to Sea Provider network, including a pilot in two 'new' regions, building regional support for catchment communities.

COMPLETE

Objective 3

By June 2025, expand the Mountains to Sea Provider network as per the needs assessment building regional support for catchment communities.

COMPLETE

Objective 4

By June 2025, assist NIWA and the National Advisory Group for Freshwater Citizen Science (NAGFCS) in developing a National QA framework for freshwater community-based monitoring (CBM) and have a fully functioning CBM website with a plan of how to maintain and manage it into the future.

PARTIALLY COMPLETE - IN DEVELOPMENT

Jobs for nature and progress indicators

Table 1.1

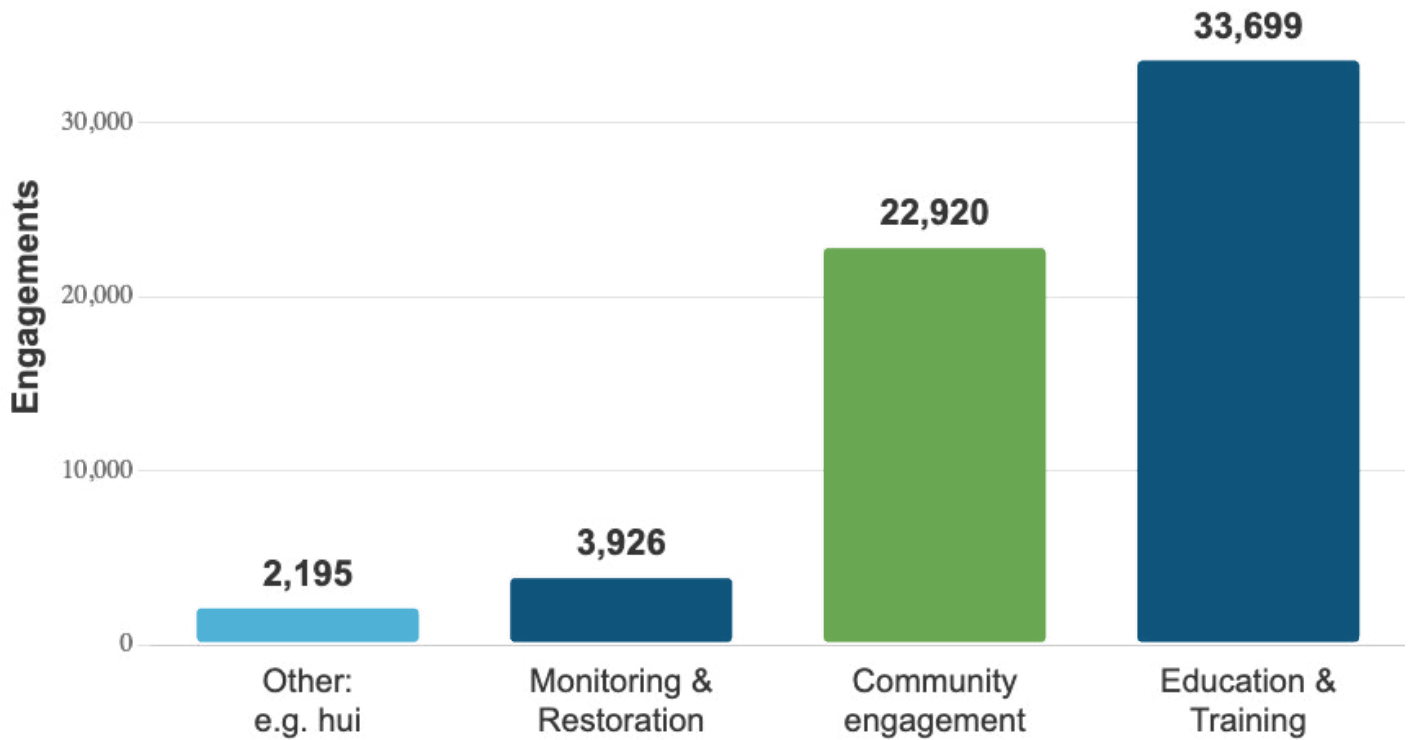
		Jobs for Nature Indicators - 2024/25 Actuals				
Focus Area	Metric	Quarter 1 Jul-Sept 24	Quarter 2 Oct-Dec 24	Quarter 3 Jan-Mar 25	Quarter 4 April-June 25	Year 2
Nature-based employment	Funding attributed to nature-based employment	1,702,526	1,924,455	1,977,963	2,186,333	7,791,278
	Number of people-hours worked in each project year	31,702	37,007	40,028	41,354	150,092
	Number of people in formal training this quarter	45	75	74	50	244
	Number of people completing formal training in this quarter. (People in formal training will also be counted here if they have completed the training in this quarter)	35	62	62	53	212
	Number of people currently employed on the final day of reporting period	120	147	169	168	168
	Number of employment starts in each reporting period	17	29	34	16	96
	Number of Catchment Groups Supported or Created	342	398	368	353	
	Number of Wānanga	158	194	214	262	828

Table 1.2

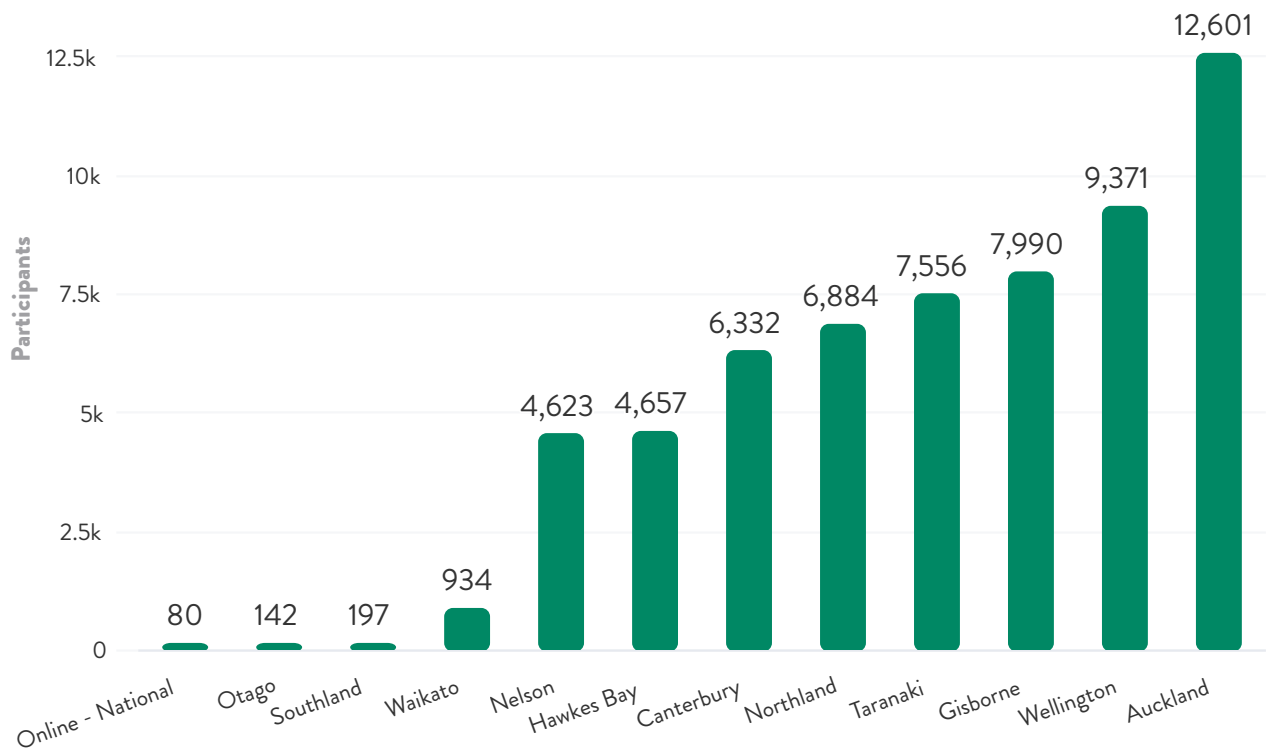
		Project Indicators - 2024/25 Actuals				
Focus Area	Metric	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Year 2
Unique Project Indicators	Number of new catchment groups supported in each project year	39	24	10	13	86
	Number of monitoring plans created	19	20	24	26	89
	Number of restoration plans created	3	6	8	11	28
	Number of people receiving informal training (on-the-job) per project year	85	145	82	381	693
	Number of Catchment Coordinators trained	10	16	11	18	55
	Number of regions covered	12	13	13	13	13
	% catchment group coverage (Geospatial cumulative count) - what land area (GIS)	23%	33%	36%	na	
	Number of mana whenua groups supported in each project year.	53	73	67	62	

FCMS Indicators	Number of regions covered (EOS support)	9	9	8	12	
	Number of FCMS being worked on	14	18	22	35	
	Number of FCMS completed	4	13	16	15	48
	% catchment group coverage (Geospatial cumulative count) - what land area (GIS). NOTE: Coverage of completed FCMS only.	352,422	771,952	918,421	1,056,822	3,099,617

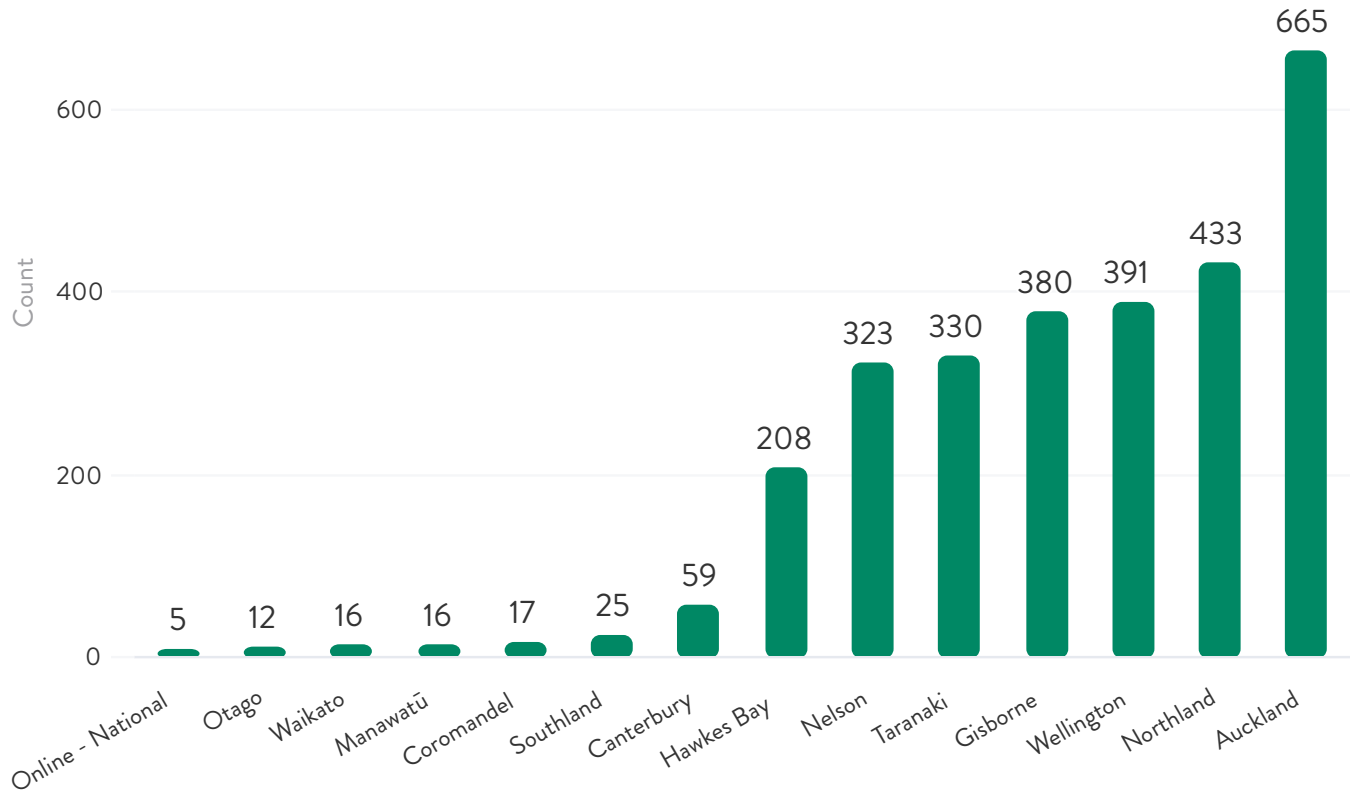
Year two activity by type



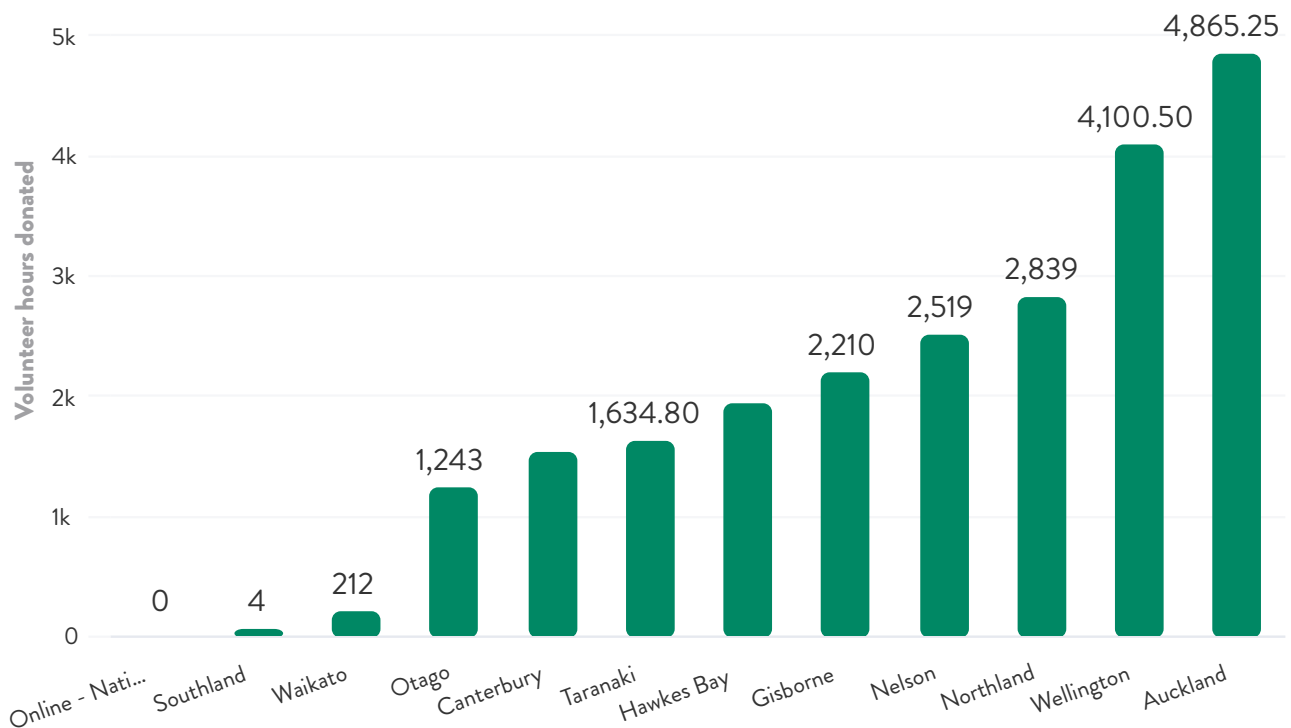
Year two engagements by region



Year Two Activity Count by Region



Volunteer Hours Donated - Regional Training Only



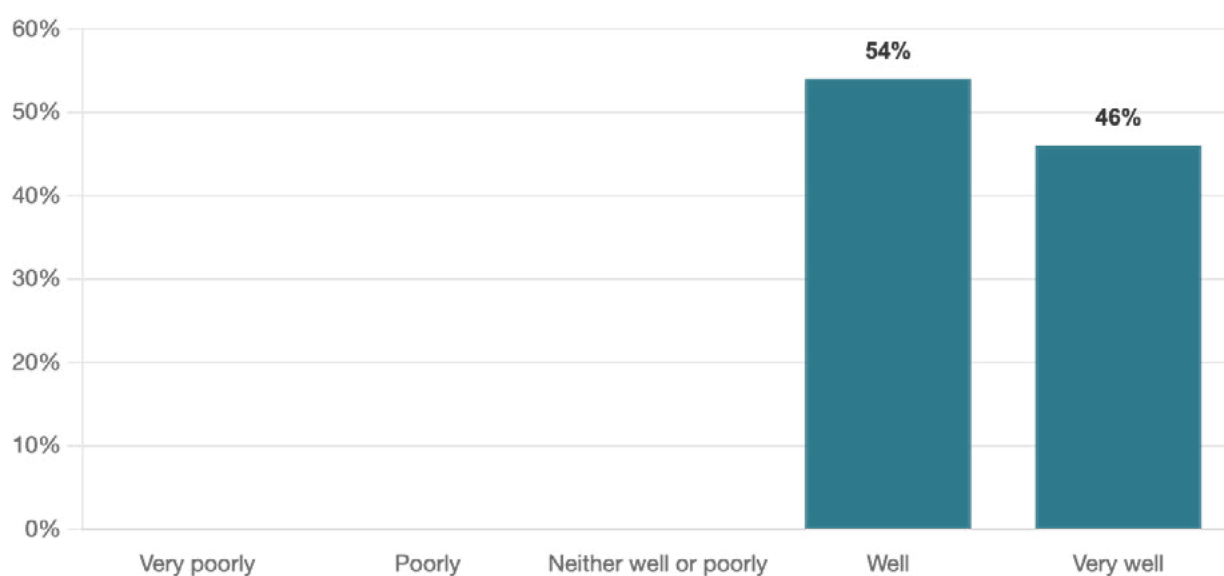
Monitoring and evaluation results

Year two saw the data collection and evaluation of the project by our evaluation partner Versus Research. This independent evaluation provided clear indication of the conditions needed for successful implementation at the catchment level, specifically identifying that strong community engagement, active leadership, and established partnerships were essential enablers, while also highlighting areas for improvement including the need for longer funding timeframes and enhanced early regional socialisation.

Drawing on anonymous survey data from 68 catchment groups, 30 delivery team members, 15 regional coordinators, and 31 stakeholders, evaluation findings demonstrated that catchment groups achieved consistent gains across all key areas, with **skill development rated as "always" successful**, leading to renewed confidence and passion among participants, while **knowledge growth was assessed as "almost always" achieved**, encompassing both general and environmental expertise alongside increased use of technical tools.

The evaluation data validates the programme's effectiveness with compelling evidence at the regional level: 100% of regional coordinators rating implementation as successful or very successful, while 87% of stakeholders provided positive assessments of programme outcomes. Noting, with respect, one grumpy stakeholder whose opinion differed.

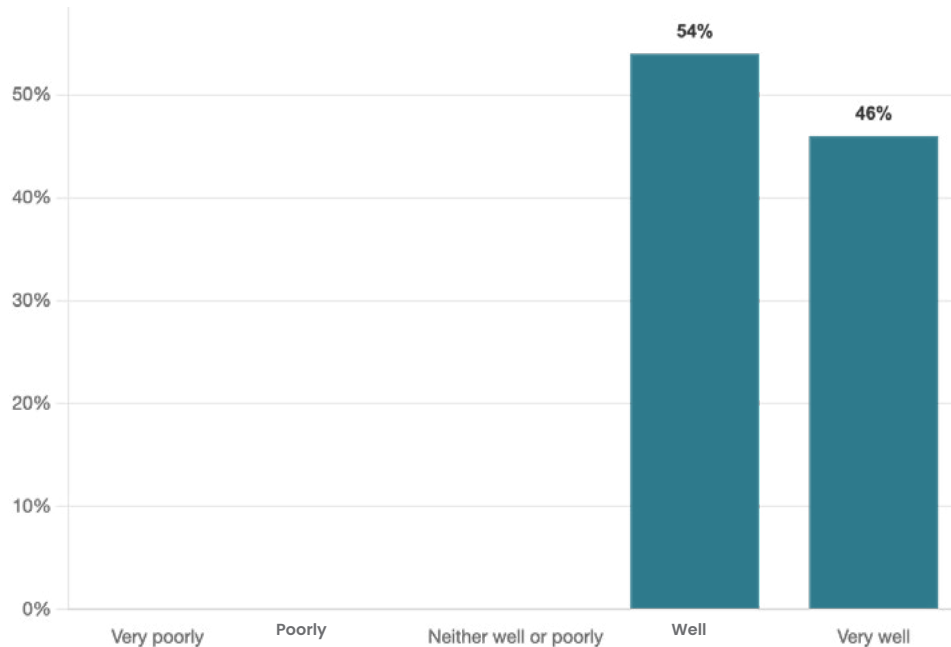
Overall, how well do you think the programme was implemented in your region?



Regional Coordinators' Perceptions of Implementation (N=13)

Stakeholder feedback

Overall, how well do you think the programme was implemented in your region?



Stakeholders' Perceptions of Implementation (N=30)

While education and training delivery has been a focus of the project, Wai Connection's positive impact was shown to be much more than just education:

"It has been brilliant; the education has reignited the passion and interest in this mahi for ourselves and our collective. It has been uplifting, supportive, and very reassuring." [Catchment Group Participant].

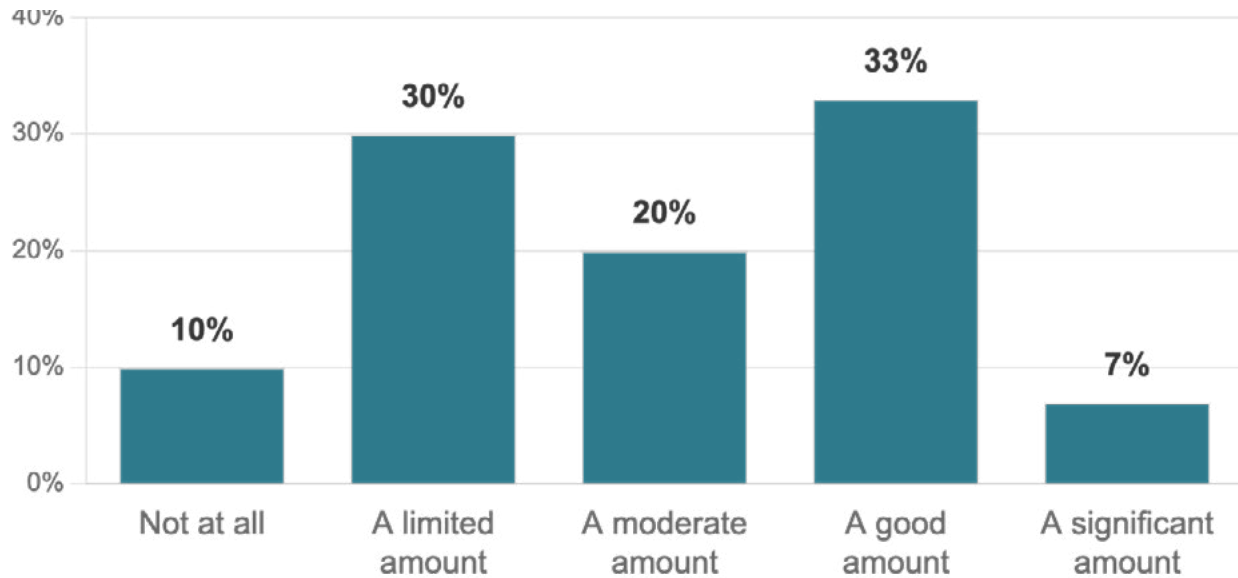
Regional coordinators echoed this success, with one noting:

"One of our biggest successes has been the time invested in building and developing relationships across the region. These relationships have strengthened connectivity with stakeholders, mana whenua, rural and urban communities, as well as regional and district councils. As a result, there has been minimal duplication of effort and greater capacity building across different entities" [Regional coordinator].

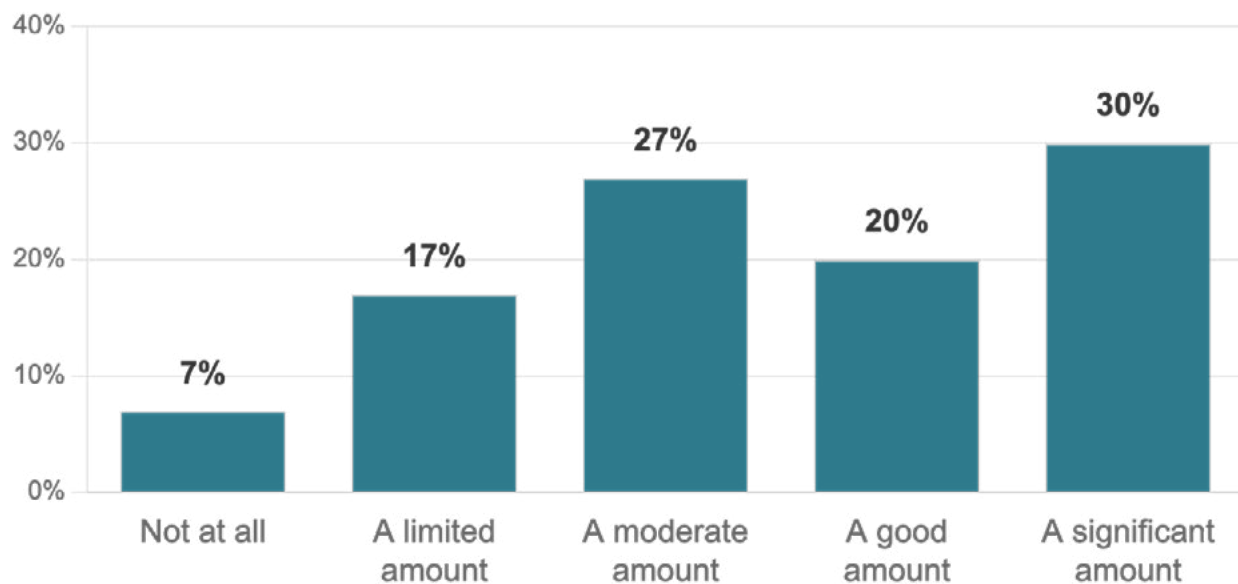
Additionally, around half of all delivery teams reported good or significant increases in catchment groups' practical capabilities and data-driven decision-making skills.

Delivery team feedback

Overall, to what extent has the Wai Connection programme improved the **CAPACITY** of the catchment group?



Overall, to what extent has the Wai Connection programme improved the **capability** of the catchment group?

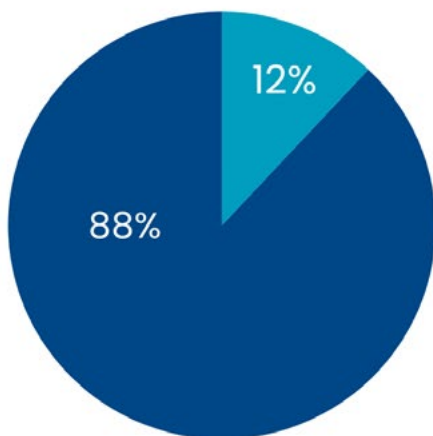


Delivery Teams' views on the impact that Wai Connection has had on Catchment Group capability (N=30)

Catchment group feedback

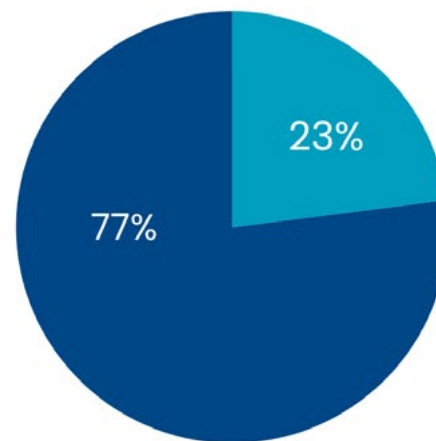
Has your catchment group connected with other groups or parties since Wai Connection has been involved?

● Yes ● No



Have more people in the community become involved in your catchment group since Wai Connection has been involved?

● Yes ● No



The programme's value to catchment groups is further substantiated by evidence of strengthened community connections and ***"increased efficiencies of resources, a strengthened sense of environmental stewardship, and brought parties together who may have previously been working in silos,"*** [Evaluation findings] with groups experiencing ***"a renewed sense of achievement and purpose through their involvement with this programme"*** [Evaluation findings] and enhanced cultural understanding of traditional restoration methods. Increased connections were evident in catchment group responses.

Collectively, this evaluation demonstrates that the community-led approach has effectively built the capacity and capability needed for sustainable freshwater stewardship across participating regions. At the same time, progress can only proceed at the pace of each group, and the capability and capacity gains cannot be maintained, nor built upon, without continued coordination and investment. Feedback consistently noted one crucial area for improvement was coordinated long term funding:

"Make the funding for a 5-year term. Programmes like this take 1-2 years to get up and running, resourced, and build the necessary relationships and trust to be highly effective. While we have delivered a lot in the time we have in the [region], we are essentially ceasing the programme when it is delivering at its most productive." [Regional Coordinator]



Key benefits for supported catchment groups



Confidence to Take Action

Funding has helped local groups feel more confident stepping into leadership. With support behind them, they're better able to plan, take action, and bring others along on the journey.



People in Place, Making Things Happen

Having dedicated coordinators or facilitators has been a game-changer. These roles keep the wheels turning — helping with communication, organising events, and building relationships within the community and with agencies.



Access to specialist knowledge = sound science, sound advice

Having technical specialists in freshwater ecology and catchment management as part of our delivery team (as well as through the national technical support team) has allowed us to provide advice that is grounded in sound science.



Improving knowledge of catchment condition

The Focus Catchment Map Series has allowed groups to better understand their catchment and to plan for action at a catchment level, leading to a greater chance of future success around freshwater improvements.



More Monitoring, More Momentum

Groups are being trained to monitor their streams and catchments regularly. This local data is building a clearer picture of change over time and helping guide decisions on what to do next.



Better Connections with Councils and Agencies

The programme has created more open conversations between communities and agencies. For many, it's the first time they've felt truly heard or part of the decision-making process.

Benefits for the wider catchment community



Learning from Each Other

As funded groups build experience, they're sharing ideas and offering support to other groups just starting out. This peer learning is lifting everyone's confidence and helping grow the network from the ground up.



Raising the Profile of Community-Led Action

Having dedicated coordinators or facilitators has been a game-changer. These roles keep the There's a growing recognition that communities have a vital role to play in looking after freshwater. The stories, data, and success from funded groups are helping show what's possible when locals lead the way.



Stronger National Connections

Being part of a national programme has helped groups see they're not working in isolation. It's created a sense of collective purpose — and a chance to learn from what's working elsewhere.



Building the Case for Long-Term Support

The early wins and lessons from this programme are helping show that community-led freshwater work is not just valuable — it's essential. There's now stronger momentum for long-term, stable investment in grassroots action.



A National Programme but Delivered Locally

The support of a national programme (with national programme support and technical specialist support teams) to provide consistency in information and outputs, but the ability to then deliver locally in a way that will meet the needs of the groups.



Making Connections and Forging Relationships

Connecting and collaborating with others working within the catchment group support space helps minimise double-ups and maximise benefits for groups.

4

Regional Summaries





Tāmaki Makaurau | Auckland

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust

TPOS Approval Date: 14 November 2023

Regional Coordinator: Briar Broad

Team: 7 (plus pool of 8) (9 FTE)

Carla Fonseca Paris - Deputy Regional Manager

Rhiannon Leddra - Catchment Connector

Anastasia Zaleta - Catchment Coordinator

Sarah Dimitrijevic - Catchment Coordinator

Hana Aickin - Catchment Coordinator

Amy Sadler - Catchment Coordinator and Connector

Simone Bahr - Communications Coordinator

Janey Taylor - Social Media and Volunteer Coordinator

Supported by other trained MTSCT team members as needed.

Catchment groups supported

Araparera

Araparera Community
Catchment Group
Mataia Restoration Project
Awhitu
Ngaati Te Ata
Aawhitu Landcare

Harania

Māngere East Family Services
Te Ararata Stream Team

O Te Ha

Te Hōnonga a Iwi
Upper Waitematā Ecology
Network
Tauhinu Scouts
Friends of Oratau Reserve
Greenhithe Community Trust
A Rocha

Restore The Landing
Ngāti Whātua O Kaipara

Pāhurehure

Whangapouri Landowner
(Stychinsky Whānau)
Whangapouri Landowner
(Napier Whānau)
Beautification Trust
Papakura Marae
CVNZ

Rangitopuni

Pest Free Coatesville
Pest Free Dairy Flat
Riverhead Scouts Group
Riverhead Landowners
(Wilding Whānau)

South Head

South Kaipara Landcare

South Kaipara Marae

Puatahi Marae
Whiti te rā o Reweti Marae
Ōtakanini Haranui Marae
Te Aroha Pa Marae

Te Kohuroa

Te Kohuroa Rewilding Initiative
Whangateau Harbour Care
Leigh Harbour Valley Society

Wai Manawa

Wai Manawa Catchment
Coalition
Restoring Takarunga Hauraki

Wairoa

Friends of Te Wairoa
Clevedon Landowners

Whau

Te Whau Pathway Project

Tamaki

Otara Lakes and Waterways
Trust

Wairaki

Friends of Wairaki Stream

Mauku

Whakaupoko Landcare
CREST

Regional Advisory Group:

Membership includes representatives from Department of Conservation, Auckland Council Healthy Waters, Auckland Council Environmental Services, Auckland Council Sustainable Schools, Ministry of Primary Industries, Kaipara Moana Remediation and an independent ecologist. Formed in 2023 as part of the RNA, updated monthly, meets quarterly.

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Community group facilitation
- Community engagement events
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- Environmental programme delivery (Whitebait Connection, EMR)
- Science communication
- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring training and support
- Stakeholder engagement
- Fish passage assessment
- Inanga habitat assessment and restoration
- Freshwater ecology
- Environmental management
- Wetland ecology
- Restoration ecology
- GIS
- Tangata whenua engagement
- First Aid

Training to date through Wai Connection

- Te Tiriti training
- ACE training
- First Aid training
- Dog safety workshop
- Invertebrate ID workshop
- VHF training
- Constructed wetlands masterclass
- Project management course
- Kayak safety training
- Estuarine monitoring training
- Integrated catchment management planning
- NZFSS conference

Catchment Group members

- CBFM training
- NISP training
- Wai Care training
- Integrated catchment management planning



4740.25
volunteer hours
donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 49%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

7439



Education and
Training

4166



Community
engagement activities

651



Monitoring and
restoration

148



Hui

2024-2025 Auckland Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Across Auckland, communities have continued working together to care for their local streams, rivers, and estuaries through the Wai Connection project. From school students and whānau to landowners, marae, and conservation groups, thousands of people have taken action to learn about and protect our waterways. Here's what we achieved together in Year 2 of this amazing collaborative journey.

1. Year 2 Highlights – Communities in Action

This past year, communities across the region rolled up their sleeves, planted thousands of native trees, explored their local waterways by kayak, and discovered native fish such as īnanga, tuna and banded kōkopu living in both urban and rural streams.

Small and large planting events took place from Arapārerā to Whangapouri, with **schools, scouts, landowners, and community members planting over 4300 trees** for cleaner, healthier streams.

Over 160 fun and educational community events like spotlighting nights, kayak surveys, and night snorkelling trips brought people up close with freshwater and marine life.

Over **5000 students from 37 schools** across the region got involved in hands-on water testing, stream investigations, and more.

Marae-based wānanga led by haukāinga, and collaborations

with iwi such as Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara, Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki and Ngāti Te Ata, combined cultural knowledge and western science to enhance freshwater kaitiakitanga.

2. Learning About Our Local Waterways

Wai Connection helped people see their streams in new ways—as living, dynamic places full of life.

SHMAK training and support has enabled groups to learn how to test water clarity, temperature, and find freshwater bugs that indicate stream health. Groups also engaged in salinity testing, eDNA sampling, fish surveys, and spotlighting to widen their knowledge and data collection.

Across 10 catchments, locals helped to search for īnanga spawning zones with some finding successful spawning sites, providing evidence that their restoration work is making a difference.

Marae, community groups, schools, and preschools explored their streams, **learning how to care for tuna, control pests, and understand how things like sediment and pollution affect waterways.**

Focus catchment maps were created to help groups see where their stream flows, what pressures it faces, and where to take action. These maps provided visual and data-based insight into catchment health to support their next steps.

3. Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

One of Wai Connection's biggest successes has been helping groups gain the skills and confidence to undertake long-term monitoring to help inform action.

Multiple schools and landcare groups now have their own monitoring kits, and many are running regular testing and restoration events.

New leaders have emerged—including student groups, trained stream facilitators, and passionate landowners stepping up to coordinate mahi. Tipene School, Drury Christian, and Northcote College integrated catchment action into curriculum, combining monitoring, planting, and science learning.

Groups like ME Family Services, Friend of Te Wairoa, Awhitu Peninsula Landcare, and Te Kohuroa Rewilding are **now equipped to lead freshwater monitoring and habitat protection in their areas.**

School programmes have resulted in real-world action projects—like new stream signage, riparian planting projects, and **stream and beach clean-ups removing more than 4000 litres of rubbish.**

4. Working Together for Our Waterways

The success of Wai Connection lies in its partnerships. Across the region, we've helped connect the dots between schools, landowners, iwi, councils, and community groups.

Local iwi and marae like Te Aroha Pa Marae, Te Kia Ora Marae, Ōtakanini Haranui Marae, Pūatahi Marae, Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki and Ngāti Te Ata have **led cultural education events and restoration planning.**

Community groups like Te Kohuroa Rewilding, Friends of Le Roys Bush, Te Hōnonga a Iwi, Urban Ark, and UWEN worked alongside schools and residents to **deliver joint events and share knowledge.**

Government and council teams supported mahi through funding, plants, and training, and collaborations with Kaipara Moana Remediation, Beautification Trust, CVNZ, Forest Bridge Trust, and Urban Ark added capacity and technical input.

Schools partnered with local groups for planting, monitoring and action—creating long-lasting relationships that benefit both the environment and education.

5. Lessons Learned and Challenges

Consistent themes across catchments were identified:

Relationships take time. Trust and connection grow slowly and meaningfully when space is made to listen and understand. **Building meaningful relationships, especially with iwi and marae takes sustained time and trust.**

In some catchments, especially urban ones, it was hard to get consistent engagement and communication. **Busy lives and small volunteer numbers mean we need to keep finding new ways to connect people.**

Weather and natural processes disrupted some planting plans, and sometimes, **limited funding or capacity made it hard to follow through on great ideas.**

Some efforts to connect with mana whenua, like Papakura Marae or Te Awataha Marae, didn't progress this year, but we will continue to work on these relationships in 2025-2026.

These challenges have helped us learn how to better communicate, plan with flexibility, and widen our support networks to bring more people into this mahi.

6. What's Next?

With Wai Connection winding down in some areas, the next phase includes consolidation, handover, and targeted support:

Many schools will keep their freshwater programmes going, with teachers trained and equipment in place.

Groups like Te Kohuroa Rewilding Initiative, Āwhitu Landcare, Te Hōnonga a Iwi, Friends of Te Wairoa, and Drury Church are **working on their own monitoring and restoration plans** with support from MTSCT and partners.

Restoration planting, predator control, and fish surveys will continue with MTSCT support in Arapārerā, Te Kohuroa, Otūwairoa, South Kaipara, Wairoa and Āwhitu.

New community events are being planned around inanga spawning, local clean-ups, and freshwater engagement.

With support from Foundation North and local board funding **we can keep the support flowing to places like Harania/Māngere and O Te Ha**, where there's strong interest in integrated catchment management.

Iwi and community partnerships will continue to grow, focusing on local values, mātauranga Māori, and protecting the life force of our rivers and streams.

"We have been so fortunate to work with the Mountains To Sea / Wai Connection team. They are all knowledgeable and experienced, and very gracious with their support. We would have faced significant capability barriers to freshwater monitoring and inanga spawning mahi without their help."

- Anon. participant of Awhitu SHMAK training



Canterbury | Waitaha

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: EOS Ecology

TPOS Approval Date: 10 November 2023

Regional Coordinator: Jessica Halsey

Team: 19 (6.35 FTEs)

Briar Inwood - Catchment Coordinator

Courtney Bosse - Catchment Coordinator

Helena Quilter - Catchment Coordinator

Hana Aickin - Catchment Coordinator

EOS Ecology's freshwater and estuary technical team delivered Wai Connector roles, while technical specialist and admin/management roles were filled by other EOS team members based on the skills and experience required.

Catchment groups supported

Kaikōura Water Zone Committee
Jed River Catchment Project
Waimakariri Landcare Trust
Upper Waimakariri Pastoral Catchment Group
Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust
Wairewa Mahinga kai Catchment Group
Le Bons Bay Environmental Trust
Ōnuku Rūnanga

Community Waterways Partnership (59 Groups)

Upper Waikirikiri Catchment Collective Inc
Hekeao Hinds Hill Country Catchment Group
Ahuriri Catchment Community Group
Burkes Pass Heritage Trust
Hakataramea Sustainability Collective
Te Moana Catchment Group
Barkers Creek Catchment Group
Arowhenua Native Nursery

Regional Advisory Group:

Membership includes representatives from MPI, NZ Landcare Trust, Environment Canterbury & EOS Ecology (Wai Connection). The group has been collaborating since the regional hui in September 2023, formally meeting as a group every two to three months, with additional catch-ups with members as needed.

Co funded, in-kind support, and collaborative programmes with:

- Rātā foundation
- Environment Canterbury
- Ministry of Primary Industries
- Christchurch City Council
- Bathurst Resources Ltd
- Ministry of Education
- New Zealand Land Care Trust
- Access 2 Experts
- Department of Conservation
- Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust
- Dairy NZ
- Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu
- Ōnuku Rūnanga
- Te Ngāi Tūahuriri Rūnanga
- Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua
- Fonterra
- Irricon
- Lincoln Agritech
- Living Landscapes South Canterbury
- Mid-Canterbury Catchment Collective
- Selwyn District Council
- Hurunui Landcare Group

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Strategic direction & business modelling
- Team, project & field operations management
- Systems, processes & office coordination
- Freshwater, estuary & coastal ecology
- Fish & macroinvertebrate ecology
- Wetlands, terrestrial ecology & restoration
- Surface water quality, erosion & sediment
- Invasion ecology, ecotoxicology & community ecology
- Catchment planning & resource management
- Environmental assessments (EIAs/AEEs)
- GIS process design & spatial analysis
- ArcGIS, FME, remote sensing & UAVs
- Automation, cartography & data management
- Python & Agile methodology
- Science interpretation & communication
- Written, visual & graphic content development
- Audience engagement & brand design
- Community & school engagement
- Community-based monitoring & training
- Event coordination & facilitation

Training to date through Wai Connection

- EMR – MTSCT in house training
- First Aid
- Outdoor First Aid
- Fire extinguisher training
- 4WD training
- Wader & water safety training
- Child protection
- Te Reo Māori – Level 1 & 2
- FME course
- PADI online
- HR training
- Road inspector
- Plant ID (NMIT)
- Electrofishing
- UAV training
- Advance road safety training
- Hydric Soils Tool for Wetland Delineation
- Landuse capability training
- Catchment solutions project masterclass
- eDNA conference
- Hydrosoc conference
- NZARM conference
- NZFSS conference
- Outdoor Education NZ weather course
- Surveys around railways course
- Positive youth training in Aotearoa
- ACE Training
- Facilitation
- Wai Connection wānanga



4349 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 30%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

633



Education and
Training

6605



Community
engagement activities

256



Monitoring and
restoration

90



Hui

2024-2025 Canterbury Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Year 2 Highlights – Communities in Action

Canterbury's Wai Connection programme has supported diverse catchment groups with a fitting diversity of services in Year two. From community engagement and group facilitation, through to data interpretation and scientific expertise, and sometimes all at once.

Delivered by the EOS Ecology Engagement team and a range of specialists from across the company, the programme has built capacity for long-term waterway stewardship across northern, central, and southern sub-regions and met each group's needs with consistently positive feedback.

Learning About our Local Waterways

Focus Catchment Map Series (FCMS) across multiple catchments has provided catchment communities with access to synthesised scientific data. This technical resource has proved invaluable for groups like the Hakataramea Sustainability Collective, who distributed 40 copies to all landowners in their valley, with one landowner concluding "that putting in a proposed sediment trap would be inefficient" based on her newfound understanding of the FCMS. The Ahuriri Catchment Community Group noted it was "the first time the group has seen all the regional council data for their catchment presented in one place," enabling them to advocate for the Willowburn wetland restoration project.

Community-based freshwater monitoring has developed across the region, with SHMAK training delivered and monitoring frameworks established with multiple groups. The development of a catchment-

wide monitoring plan for the Wairewa Mahinga Kai Catchment Group using the Community-Based Monitoring quality assurance framework, including training of the group and implementation of the group's own sampling from January 2025. Environment Canterbury is now considering the Barkers Creek Catchment Group's monitoring project as a pilot to test whether community-based monitoring can meet rigorous standards required to sit alongside the regional council's state of the environment monitoring data.

Community engagement events have built local support for freshwater stewardship. The Jed River Catchment Project's "Get to Know the Jed" event combined scientific presentations with hands-on activities, while the Mudfish Celebration Day organised with Waimakariri Landcare Trust brought together diverse stakeholders around conservation goals. The Ahuriri Catchment Community Group's Fish Celebration Day, celebrating the endangered Waitaki subspecies of lowland longjaw galaxias, brought together farmers, DOC, Environment Canterbury, Fish & Game, and university researchers.

Regional collaboration has developed through sub-regional networks, particularly the "Four Peaks Foothills" community in South Canterbury, where the Te Moana, Barkers Creek, and Waihi catchment groups are working toward shared goals. The Community Waterways Partnership in Christchurch has coordinated 59 diverse partners, delivering events like World Rivers Day that connect communities with urban waterways.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

Technical capabilities have expanded across catchment groups, with communities now able to undertake water quality monitoring, habitat

"I love the collaborative approach and views from the team, bringing in an outside perspective to things. The resources and information this brings is fantastic..."

- Canterbury Stakeholder (anonymous survey response)

assessment, and data interpretation. The Hekeao Hinds Hill Country Catchment Group demonstrates this development, moving from basic water quality monitoring to understanding "how water quality affects aquatic life" through ecology days combining electrofishing, invertebrate sampling, and eDNA analysis with their long-term water quality data.

Organisational capacity has developed through support for group development and strategic planning. The Te Moana Catchment Group shows substantial progress from "a single curious landowner to a passionate and committed catchment group" with established committees and dedicated monitoring teams. The Upper Waikirikiri Catchment Collective has developed monitoring plans aligned with national standards, collaborating with Central Plains Water to avoid duplication and enhance regional data coverage.

Communication and engagement capabilities have strengthened, with groups becoming more confident in public outreach and advocacy. Members of The Jed River Catchment Project "proudly spoke with the wider community about the health of their local waterways" at the Cheviot Agricultural and Pastoral Show, while the chair of Barkers Creek Catchment Group presented at the national Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust wānanga.

Cultural capacity has been enhanced through partnerships with Māori organisations, particularly Arowhenua Native Nursery, whose restoration team now offers freshwater monitoring alongside their planting work thanks to training from EOS Ecology. As evaluation feedback demonstrates, "the education has reignited the passion and interest in this mahi for ourselves and our collective. It has been uplifting, supportive, and very reassuring."

Working Together for Our Waterways

The programme has facilitated meaningful and practical cross-sector collaboration throughout Canterbury. Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust has grown in confidence and now leads catchment engagement through partnerships with Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, and Ōnuku Rūnanga. EOS Ecology's involvement in Ōnuku Rūnanga's Te Kori a te Kō climate adaptation project reflects a productive bicultural partnership.

Educational partnerships have strengthened, with EOS Ecology's Nature Agents programme delivering freshwater-focused STEM learning from Cheviot Area School in the north to Ōmarama School in the south. The collaboration between Arowhenua Native Nursery and Ōpihi College represents a particularly meaningful partnership, where the nursery is providing technical and cultural advice for a previously stalled wetland restoration project, supported by three team members participating in Nature Agents programme delivery.

Scientific partnerships have enhanced programme technical capacity. Collaboration between EOS Ecology and regional agencies has enabled habitat stream assessments, macroinvertebrate monitoring, and eDNA sampling to be carried out alongside community groups. In the Ahuriri Catchment, this support helped the group to secure EPA funding for additional eDNA kits. The integration of braided river UAV surveys and monitoring support, wetland restoration and catchment management

planning expertise, and inanga spawning habitat mapping surveys have provided communities with additional specialist support and understanding.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

Geographic scale across Canterbury has presented coordination challenges, with the region spanning from coastal environments to high country catchments requiring different technical approaches and engagement strategies. The team noted that distance - "a half day drive away" - made short-notice planning difficult with the Ahuriri Catchment Community Group, highlighting the importance of early relationship building and strategic prioritisation.

Technical complexity has required careful balance between scientific rigor and community accessibility. The Hakataramea Sustainability Collective's experience demonstrated that highly organised groups with existing technical support required different engagement approaches, leading to successful adaptation toward science and GIS team support rather than facilitation assistance.

Community readiness has varied significantly, with some groups like the Wairewa Mahinga Kai Catchment Group requiring paced, relationship-based approaches, while others like the Community Waterways Partnership needed strategic and administrative support for their umbrella organisation structure. The key lesson has been the importance of adapting support to group needs rather than applying standardised approaches.

Funding sustainability remains a critical challenge, particularly for ongoing technical support and equipment replacement. The refocusing of access-to-experts funding criteria created disappointment for the Ahuriri Catchment Community Group, highlighting the need for diversified funding approaches and continued advocacy for community-led environmental work.

What's Next?

Building on the momentum of the past two years, regional priorities will focus on strengthening group capability, regional collaboration, and cultural partnerships.

Technical capacity will continue to grow, through enhanced ongoing science data interpretation support, and helping groups to continue to tell the story of their catchments in a meaningful and accessible way. Community-based monitoring will remain a priority, with local approaches grounded in science and responsive to community values.

Nature Agents will continue to provide a backbone of freshwater education in schools, supported by school-community partnerships. The integration of mātauranga Māori and scientific learning will continue to evolve, with the Arowhenua Native Nursery partnership providing a foundation for deeper bicultural education approaches.

Many groups have expressed a desire to build stronger relationships with mana whenua and engage more confidently in bicultural practice. Supporting these aspirations, through advice, facilitation, and cultural capability building, is an emerging priority across the region.

"The professionalism and relatable staff from EOS Ecology has been amazing, bringing the Jed River Catchment Project up to a high operating catchment group. Their communication and dedication has been second to none, helping us from the small things such as recording minutes from our meetings to the big things such as the Focus Catchment Map Series." - Jed River Catchment Group member-



Gisborne | Te Tai Rāwhiti

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Tairāwhiti Environment Centre
TPOS Approval Date: 30 Jan, 2024
Regional Coordinator: Dr Sarah Boyle
Team: 5
Anne-Marie Vigeant - Catchment Coordinator
Sam Gibson - Catchment Coordinator
Kirsty Gaddum - Inanga spawning programme coordinator
Amy Hardy - Catchment Connector
Hana Hardy - Catchment Connector

Catchment groups supported

Waimata Catchment Group
Whāngārā Catchment Group
Waipaoa FMU - Rongowhakaata Iwi Trust
Uawa Catchment Group
Eastern Whio Link (Waioeka Catchment)

Motu Catchment Group
Ruakituri Catchment Group
Wharekopae (Rere)
Ngatapa Catchment Group

Regional Advisory Group:

Tairāwhiti Wai Connection attends the regional catchment management group facilitated by the council integrated catchments team. The 28 members are representatives of Tairāwhiti Environment Centre, He Awa Ora, He Tai Ora, Healthy Rivers, Living Sea Trust, Gisborne District Council, Hawkes Bay Regional Council, MPI, Beef & Lamb NZ, DOC, Project Crimson, QE II National Trust, Mangapōike Ltd, and Eastern & Central Community Trust.

Co funded, in-kind support, and collaborative programmes with:

- Rural Support Trust
- DOC Hawke's Bay
- Gisborne District Council
- Tairāwhiti Catchment Communities (formerly East Coast Leading From The Land)
- Wilderlab
- Beef & Lamb NZ

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Trained educators (primary, secondary, enviroschools, outdoor instructor)
- Scientists (PhD/MSc/BSc Hons)
- Catchment group leader consultation, including tangata whenua engagement
- Community engagement events
- Volunteer recruitment and management (EMR)
- Environmental programme delivery (WBC, EMR, Community Based Freshwater Monitoring)
- Monitoring and restoration planning
- Inanga habitat assessment and restoration
- Wetland restoration
- First aid
- Catchment group facilitation

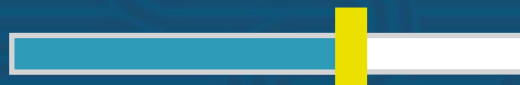
Training to date through Wai Connection

- Sea Kayaking Skills Course (Pacific Coast Kayaks)
- Workplace River Safety Course (Paul Eames, Te Mahi Ako ITO River Rescue unit assessor)
- Outdoor First Aid (Peak Safety)
- Facilitate Aotearoa - Facilitating Effective Catchment Groups 4 day course
- Strategic Grants Best Practice Workshop
- EMR Volunteer Training
- Wetland Restoration Wānanga (Waikōkopu Consulting)
- Whitebait Connection Programme Coordinator Training
- Environmental Programme Delivery (WBC, EMR, Community Based Freshwater Monitoring)
- NISP training



2210 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 65%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

4950



Education and
Training

2065



Community
engagement activities

665



Monitoring and
restoration

737



Hui

2024-2025 Tairāwhiti Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Year 2 Highlights – Communities in Action

In year two of the Wai Connection project in Tairāwhiti, collaboration and coordination from and with catchment groups has resulted in some fantastic momentum in the region. The Wai Connection team have been in the water, at meetings, and hard at work providing:

- Assistance with coordination and collaboration between key groups through regional steering groups and cross region relationships.
- Direct support to catchment groups in the form of training and expert advice, monitoring and pest control planning, assistance with direct requests such as mental health and wellbeing in rural communities, how to create and restore wetlands, etc.
- Efficiencies gained by sharing resources and coordinating activities, such as shared/co-funded training sessions across catchment groups and programmes.
- Employment to local and national specialists in the environmental sector.
- Increased awareness of catchment group activity through Wai Connection via social media, newspapers, TV, Radio, word of mouth.

Learning About our Local Waterways

Through Wai Connection support, Rere, Ngatapa, Waipaoa, Waimata & Whāngārā catchment groups have an increased knowledge of CBFM including how to conduct SHMAK tests and

analysis of results.

Monthly saltwater wedge mapping (June 2024–June 2025) has been conducted in the Whāngārā, Waimara and Waipaoa catchments with the results showing the extent of the īnanga spawning zones. MTSC's National Inanga Spawning Programme National Coordinator Nic Naysmith visited the region in May 2025 to provide advice on habitat restoration methods to optimise successful spawning.

eDNA tests were conducted with Waipaoa, Whāngārā, Eastern Whio Link and Waimata catchment groups increasing knowledge of local ecology. Eastern Whio Link has historically conducted eDNA monitoring to establish where high value invertebrates are as a proxy for whio home ranges. The group was supported by Wai Connection to expand their eDNA monitoring to include seven additional sites which has delivered a fairly comprehensive index of invertebrate species and their distribution throughout the catchment. This has further supported the prioritisation of trapping sites.

Increased understanding of wetland regeneration through practical workshops in Ruakituri, Waipaoa, and Whāngārā catchments. Dr. Rebecca Eivers, Wetland Ecologist of Wai Kōkopu Consulting was contracted to run a well-received wetlands wānanga, which included field visits to a number of wetlands in the Whāngārā Catchment. This initiative was suggested to us by Catchment group leads Sarah Williams and Steph Gardner, both local landowners within the catchment who are wanting to restore wetlands on their farms, as well as supporting other members of the catchment group who are wanting to do the same.

Through Wai Connection we assisted with creating a comprehensive

predator control plan in Motu (Whinray Eco Trust) focusing on whio and kiwi protection.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

The Rere and Ngatapa groups have connected, as well as with catchment group facilitators at the council, to form catchment groups.

In Motu, the Predator Control Plan developed through Wai Connection will inform their future strategy for restoration of habitat for terrestrial and freshwater native fauna species.

Baseline environmental monitoring carried out with Wai Connection in Ruakituri, Eastern Whio Link, Waimata and Waipaoa will be used to inform future strategy and action.

In Whāngārā, Waipaoa and Waimata catchments, coordinators highlighted increased motivation to pull all the environmental baseline monitoring carried out with Wai Connection to inform their future strategy and direction. They also noted intent to continue further workshops with the local hapū, farmers and foresters, interwoven with mātauranga maori principles.

Improved management of animal pests, restoration of habitat for terrestrial and freshwater native species, alongside restoration of īnanga spawning zones will all have long term benefits in Ruakituri, Eastern Whio Link, Uawa, Waimata, and Waipaoa.

Delivery of the EMR programme is likely to continue, increasing knowledge of marine environmental effects from upstream degradation, particularly in Uawa.

Working Together for Our Waterways

Social Media Skills Workshop run by Sam Gibson brought some of the catchment group leads together to gain skills for promoting the work of the catchment groups, as well as as evidence for sourcing funding.

Wai Connection in conjunction with Gisborne District Council organised and facilitated a regional stakeholder hui which enabled key stakeholders to come together and brainstorm how we can streamline resources and collaborate to help catchment groups more effectively. Representatives from Gisborne District Council, Hawke's Bay Regional Council, MPI, DOC, QEII Trust, Tairāwhiti Environment Centre, Eastland & Central Community Trust (ECCT), Project Crimson and other organisations attended.

The Strategic Grants workshop brought some of the catchment group leads together to gain skills for attracting funding for their catchment groups.

In the Waimata, Motu, Rere, Ngatapa, Whāngārā and Waipaoa catchments collaborations between landowners, hapū and schools (including Enviroschools) on planting days and freshwater investigations were achieved through delivery of the Whitebait Connection and EMR programmes.

Matt Brady, DOC Freshwater Fish Specialist (Hawke's Bay)

collaborated with the Gisborne WC Īnanga Spawning Project Coordinator, Kirsty Gaddum to undertake electric fish surveying & spotlighting events with Waimata, Waipaoa and Whāngārā catchment groups. Catchment group members were educated about various freshwater fish species and their habitat requirements.

Wai Connection in conjunction with Gisborne District Council and Tairāwhiti Catchment Communities (East Coast Leading from the Land (ECLFTL)) organised and facilitated a Catchment Group hui in May 2025 which enabled catchment leaders to come together and brainstorm their needs and successes.

The Wetland Wānanga mentioned above brought together forestry companies, Gisborne District Council, QEII Trust, Women's Native Tree Project, local farmers and hapū - this increased dialogue and knowledge of each other's work.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

Landowners are busy and often are working in the catchment group space in a voluntary capacity and are therefore time poor.

A learning is that catchment groups need a broad range of services including help with community engagement and volunteer recruitment, upskilling and expertise on very specific common issues in their region or catchment, as well as support to keep momentum going and come together to discuss challenges.

Iwi/hapū have limited project funding and also require resources to help regenerate their taiao spaces.

with existing technical support required different engagement approaches, leading to successful adaptation toward science and GIS team support rather than facilitation assistance.

Community readiness has varied significantly, with some groups like the Wairewa Mahinga Kai Catchment Group requiring paced, relationship-based approaches, while others like the Community Waterways Partnership needed strategic and administrative support for their umbrella organisation structure. The key lesson has been the importance of adapting support to group needs rather than applying standardised approaches.

Funding sustainability remains a critical challenge, particularly for ongoing technical support and equipment replacement. The refocusing of access-to-experts funding criteria created disappointment for the Ahuriri Catchment Community Group, highlighting the need for diversified funding approaches and continued advocacy for community-led environmental work.

What's Next?

Along with the extension of funding for Gisborne District Council Catchment Coordinators and the 4 year MPI funding for Tairāwhiti Catchment Communities, the extension of Wai Connection in the region will enable consistent support for focus catchments with the flexibility to deliver education and training, CBFM, facilitation, community engagement and action planning where the need is.

"It has been great working with Wai Connection - the wetlands workshop was excellent and engaged and inspired many of the group. The survey work with Paddy has been really important and given us amazing results and now we are very excited to restore the habitat for our native species."

- Whangara Catchment Group



Hawke's Bay | Te Matau-a-Māui

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Sustainable Hawke's Bay

TPOS Approval Date: 28 June, 2024

Regional Coordinator: Campbell Leckie

Team: 5 FTE

Jane Gardiner - Catchment Coordinator

Aimey Tahu - Catchment Coordinator

Jae Whelan - Catchment Connector

Sarah Knight - Catchment Connector

John Bell - Funding Manager

Michael Shand - Data Connector

Helen Joros - Volunteer Coordinator

Chris Scott - Communications Advisor

Sam Paterson - General Manager of SHB

Catchment groups supported

Pōrangahau Catchment Group
Between the Two Rivers
Ahuriri Tributaries Catchment Group
Waingōngoro Awa Restoration Trust

Tukituki Land Care
Karamu Catchment Collective
Nuhaka Catchment Group
Guardians of Tutira

Kaweka Catchment Collective
Te Taitimu Trust
Ngāti Pāhauwera Development Trust
Save the Dotterels

Regional Advisory Group:

The group includes representatives from Hawkes Bay Regional Council, NZ Landcare Trust, MPI and the Wai Connection team. The group meets quarterly to ensure we are supporting each other's work and not duplicating effort.

Co funded, in-kind support, and collaborative programmes with:

- Ahuriri Estuary Protection Society
- Beef and Lamb
- Biodiversity HB
- Cape Sanctuary
- Central Hawke's Bay District Council
- Department of Conservation
- EIT
- EnviroSchools
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Fish and Game Hawke's Bay
- Forest and Bird Hawke's Bay
- Garden to Table
- Has Green Academy
- Hastings District Council
- Hawke's Bay Regional Council
- Hirepool
- Hohepa
- Holcim Concrete
- Mana Ahuriri Trust
- Manaaki Whenua
- Massey University
- Ministry for Primary Industries
- Napier City Council
- Napier Port
- National Aquarium
- Ngāti Kahungunu
- Ngāti Pāhauwera Development Trust
- NZ Landcare Trust
- Piringa Hapu
- Radio NZ
- Save the Dotterels Hawke's Bay
- Stout Trust
- Sustainable Coastlines
- Te Mata Park
- Te Ngahere
- Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga
- Te Taiwhenua o te Whanganui a Ōrotu*
- The Nature Conservancy
- Trees for Survival
- TUMU Group
- University of Dundee
- Waipureku Predator Trapping
- Wairoa District Council

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Catchment group facilitation
- Community & school engagement
- Environmental programme delivery
- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring
- Stakeholder engagement
- Monitoring and restoration planning
- Inanga habitat assessment and restoration
- Freshwater & marine ecology
- Freshwater monitoring
- GIS mapping
- Tangata whenua engagement
- Predator control
- Educational resource creation
- Drone operation
- PADI free dive certification

Training to date through Wai Connection

- Facilitating Effective Catchment Groups with Facilitate Aotearoa
- ACE Training modules
- River safety training
- Comprehensive First Aid training
- Child Protection training
- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring training
- National Inanga Spawning Programme training
- PADI freediving course (MTS Northland Wānanga)
- Fish passage barrier assessments (with Hawkes Bay Regional Council)
- Spotlighting fish surveying training
- Principles of native planting
- Pest and weed management (Hawkes Bay Regional Council)
- Microplastics surveying online training (Ocean Diagnostic)



2210 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 39%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

3777



Education and
Training

660



Community
engagement activities

217



Monitoring and
restoration

114



Hui

2024-2025 Hawke's Bay Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Year 2 Highlights – Communities in Action

Hawke's Bay's inaugural year in the Wai Connection programme has demonstrated effective collaborative community-based freshwater stewardship across groups ranging from catchment collectives to small interest groups, successfully building technical capabilities, strengthening cultural partnerships, and establishing foundations for long-term waterway protection.

Learning About our Local Waterways

Highlights from the first year of Wai Connection delivery include:

- Educational outreach: The Whitebait Connection programme was delivered to six schools (Pukehamoamo, Omahu, Central Hawke's Bay College, Te Aute College, Otane, and Pukehau) engaging over 500 students.

Approximately 75% of these students come from rural communities, many being the future landowners, farmers, contractors, and mana whenua leaders who form the foundational fabric of our rural society.

- Community engagement: The Kaikōura Stream community event hosted in June 2025 brought together Mana Ahuriri and Ahuriri Tributaries Catchment Group for learning about whakaweku, history, and water quality monitoring.
- The "Our Catchment Our Future" meeting at Pōrangahau featured guest speakers Nadia Lim and Thompson Hokianga, demonstrating the programme's ability to attract high-profile advocates and increase community participation.
- Technical capacity: Water quality monitoring campaigns were completed at 31 sites across the Between the Two Rivers group and systematic CBFM training was delivered to Ahuriri

"Ladies, I cannot thank you enough for the magic that you each put into the day yesterday. It is such a milestone for our community to regather our thoughts and look forward again. I am so truly and deeply appreciative of the part each of you played. Ngā mihi nui, Hannah and Pōrangahau Catchment Committee

Tributaries coordinators.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

Wai Connection has built the skills and capacity of groups to continue long term monitoring and restoration.

The establishment of four shade houses at Otane and Pukehau Schools has provided dedicated spaces for native plant propagation, fostering ongoing school/community partnerships.

The Papanui catchment tour has been established as an annual model.

Upskilling local groups in CBFM has empowered them to independently monitor their waterways without ongoing assistance.

Water quality monitoring and habitat assessment proficiency across all groups has been enhanced by comprehensive GIS mapping.

Working Together for Our Waterways

Wai Connection has weaved together catchment groups, iwi, schools, regional councils, and community partners fostering powerful collaborations.

- Native planting workshops have drawn strong attendance and positive feedback, particularly regarding the Hawke's Bay Regional Council's pest management support. These gatherings have also served as valuable networking hubs—bringing together farmers, lifestyle block owners, and urban sectors.
- The involvement of local kaumātua in school field trips has strengthened relationships between Ngāti Kere and the Pōrangahau Catchment Group.
- Enhanced relationships between the Ahuriri Tributaries Catchment Group and Mana Ahuriri Trust is leading to collaborative events and joint monitoring planning.

- Joint Flemington & Pōrangahau School field trips have showcased Ed Mackie's wetland restoration project.

- Connections in the Tukituki catchment have been strengthened between schools, local kaumātua, and a monastery. This has resulted in ongoing commitments including annual field trips, Lake Whatuma restoration involvement, and participation in Hawke's Bay Regional Council's high school

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Time constraints have been challenging in organising multi-partner events and coordinating stakeholder schedules.
- Geographic distances between upper and lower catchment areas have limited whole catchment engagement.
- A key learning has been that there is a need for adequate lead times and sustained commitment when working across diverse community sectors.

What's Next?

Over the next year Wai Connection delivery in Hawke's Bay will focus on supporting groups with strong commitment to action and assisting groups to source project funding to achieve their goals. Key priorities will include:

- Continued water quality monitoring support and data collection across all groups.
- Expanded eDNA monitoring for enhanced biodiversity assessment.
- Inanga spawning protection initiatives.
- Scaled native planting workshop model.
- Ongoing Whitebait Connection and school restoration partnerships with catchment groups.
- Mapping support for conservation site identification and landowner engagement.

"I have received some wonderful feedback from the audience members, so you have all done a wonderful job of communicating the issues, solutions, science and techniques."

- Organisers of the regional biodiversity forum, 1 April 2025

Manawatū-Whanganui

Regional Summary

This region was in the last tranche, so after consultation with Horizons, MPI and NZ Landcare Trust, MTSCT were introduced to two catchment collectives that were mature enough to have completed their own needs analysis and prioritised those needs into a workable plan, but who would require additional funding to achieve their goals.



Provider Organisation 1: Whanganui Region Catchment Collective

TPOS Approval Date: 01 Nov, 2024

Regional Coordinator: None

Team:

Natasha Cave - Catchment Coordinator

Tarsh de Rose - Catchment Coordinator

Catchment groups supported

Natasha Cave:

Upper Ongarue
Matiere; Tuhua
Taumarunui West
Whakapapa
Retaruke

Tarsh de Rose:

Manganui o Te Ao
Whanganui West
Okioia
Tarorora

Regional Advisory Group:

Horizons ran a catchment advisory meeting in early April 2025 with the four catchment collectives and WRCC participated. More meetings are planned for the future.

Co funded, in-kind support, and collaborative programmes with:

Horizons, MPI (On Farm Support), Ngā Tangata Tiaki.

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Facilitation
- Freshwater monitoring
- Stakeholder engagement
- Farming systems background
- Farm operations

Training to date through Wai Connection

Non profit governance, catchment group facilitation and marketing and communNA testing are all scheduled for next quarter. ics training has been completed. Wetland construction and restoration, project management, and eDNA.

24/25 Highlights - Communities in Action

The WRCC work plan co funded by Wai Connection and MPI and supported with in kind hours from landowners has delivered:

- Catchment monitoring - MCI testing
- Catchment monitoring - Tritium and nitrogen isotope testing
- Catchment monitoring - Collection of water samples and physicochemical monitoring
- Website and communications support - showcasing projects
- Community engagement events - Field days and workshops
- Analysing and presenting existing tritium and nitrogen monitoring data
- Community/iwi support with water quality monitoring
- Sub catchment events, e.g. Whanganui West data presentation
- Overheads, finance and administration costs for the period of the funding
- Small grants to catchment groups for specific activities

Following on from our discovery of a spring with high nitrate in the catchment, WRCC contracted EOS Ecology to help us understand groundwater age data from our catchments and assist us to interpret the data from the testing that we have done so far. They will present a webinar to unpack this topic on 29th July 2025.

Challenges, Lessons Learned & What's Next

Many of the groups Natasha and Tarsh work with are newly formed and all are made up of farmer/landowners who volunteer their time. In the first year of Wai Connection, WRCC identified the following needs:

- More clarity and forward notice on funding - nothing can be planned without funding, nothing planned = nothing done.
- The same for regulation - more communication on what will be happening with policy affecting catchment groups and farming communities.
- Longer funding terms are required for job security and the ability to plan long term action.
- Structure of funding - more flexibility is required in milestone dates and funding deed end dates.
- Access to expertise and scientific research - one source of information that is always updated with the relevant information for catchment groups. There are currently too many sources of information and it is hard to know who to listen to when, for example, information on the council website, landcare trust, and ministry websites all say different things about the same topic.

WRCC have had their EFF funding through MPI extended and moved to MfE, making them ineligible for further support from Wai Connection. Wai Connection's deed extension has however allowed WRCC to roll over its underspend into the next quarter, so training and events can continue to be delivered at the catchment group's pace.



Provider Organisation 2: Puketoi to the Pacific Catchment Collective

TPOS Approval Date: 01 Nov, 2024

Regional Coordinator: June Mobley

Team:

Lynda Balfour - Catchment Coordinator

Catchment groups supported

PPCC Collective (4)
Upper Akitio
Lower Akitio

Oawhanga
Wainui

Catchment group coverage as a % of region: 39%



Wai Connection funded work, in conjunction with MPI

- Understand our Catchment mapping line (looking at options, supplier to be confirmed).
- Understand our Catchment mapping line - rollout including setup to landowners
- Fish Passage remediation surveys and planning, in collaboration with the physical works undertaken by the regional council
- Communication - website & social media
- Communication - Iwi engagement including agreed strategy
- Strategy day
- Launch - water hui
- Enviro school education x 2 schools set up
- Enviro school education x 2 schools programmes over 36 months
- Weed education and eradication (four mile bush, pub, creeks)

24/25 Highlights - Communities in Action

A major highlight for PPCC was receiving funding and being successful in forming four catchment groups. These catchment groups now have catchment leaders and are in full swing, with membership growing each month.

Our Ag Innovation event was an enormous success with 11 Innovation companies displaying their offering

and eight presenting to an attendance of 49 people. The afternoon covered a range of topics from new trapping technology and drone spray applications to satellite communications through Starlink and One New Zealand, and virtual fencing using Halter collars. There was also strong interest in the opportunities that artificial intelligence offers around mapping forests and carbon, alongside discussions on the potential for co-funded planting opportunities. Each presentation offered

valuable insights, and left attendees with fresh ideas for the future.

One great outcome is that PPCC have received members only deals which are detailed on our website.

This year Weber & Pongaroa school joined the Enviroschools programme. The Enviroschools programme is a nationwide initiative supported by the Toimata Foundation, encouraging early childhood centres and schools to embark on a long-term sustainability journey. Through this programme, tamariki and students connect with the environment, take action in their local communities, and collaborate on projects that promote sustainability.

The beach day consisted of four different stations in the morning then after lunch we did a full school beach clean-up. The stations were rocky shore, sand sculptures, a beach scavenger hunt, and running races. This was attended by 60 pupils and 20 adults.

The programme also included taking the student to the bush opposite the school for Bush studies and we are looking at how we can fix the bush, and let more natives grow as well as talking about track repairs new signage etc, how can we clean up the stream running alongside the bush and investigate what species exist in the stream. The students also designed their veggie gardens where they will learn to grow vegetables using the Māori method with the luna calendar and also plant veggies using the conventional calendar.

Weber School has just begun planning how we can restore the creek at the bottom of their school grounds.

Fish Passage – has seen the below remediations completed:

- Saltwater Weir - the removal was successful, although we were unable to preserve much of the structure, we were able to select quite a few pieces that would represent the structure in a community setting (Horizons Woodville office, Dannevirke Library, Weber and Pongaroa Community which is currently underway to be displayed).
- Upper Akitio catchment fish barrier – installed stainless steel fish ladders and flexi-baffles
- Coastal Ōwahanga fish barrier - the grassy area upstream is ideal spawning habitat for inanga - installed stainless steel fish ladders and flexi-baffles
- Kohiku Road barrier - installed stainless steel fish ladders and flexi-baffles

- Prior to the above remediation eDNA samples were taken upstream of the barriers and we will sample again next year to compare what species are getting upstream past the barrier pre- and post- remediation.

- Iwi engagement with Ngati Kahungunu and Rangitane have progressed well. Both Iwi showing interest in our Carbon Crop offering (see below for more information)

- Visit from Minister Hoggard was a huge success and attended by 20 farmers.

- Carbon Crop offering to members is going very well and the estimated unclaimed in our catchment collective is currently at \$957,330 at the end of May for 29 farms.

What's Next?

Seeking advice and support for Upper/Lower Akitio, Owahanga and Wainui rivers is a priority and urgent planting and fencing is required to protect our rivers.

Our plan is to bring together the below stakeholders:

Local iwi and hapū:

- Early and genuine engagement is essential.
- Partner on land-use decisions and cultural priorities for water protection.

Regional Council (e.g., Horizons or GWRC):

- Apply for environmental grants (e.g., Freshwater Improvement Fund, Regional Council Environmental Grants).
- Request technical support for fencing/planting.

Landowners and Farmers:

- Offer workshops to show practical benefits (erosion control, stock safety, compliance).

Government Agencies:

- MfE, MPI, and DOC often support waterway restoration.

Environmental NGOs:

- Collaborate with groups like Fish & Game, NZ Landcare Trust, Forest & Bird, or QEII Trust for expertise and support.

Local Schools and Volunteers:

Engage students and local groups in planting days to build community ownership.



Nelson | Whakatū

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Tasman Bay Guardians

TPOS Approval Date: 29 February, 2024

Regional Coordinator: Jude Heath

Team:

Rosalie Bennett - Catchment Coordinator (CBFM) & Catchment Connector

Mel McColgan - Catchment Coordinator Inanga/CBFM

Te Puoho Stephens - Catchment Coordinator Inanga/CBFM

Thalassa Kawachi - Catchment Connector

Caroline Chapman - Administrator

Catchment groups supported

Maitai FMU

Backyard Brook
Brook Sanctuary Catchment Group
Friends of Maitai
Friends of Haven

Wakapuaka FMU

Ngāti Tama Manawhenua Wakapuaka
Corder Park Community

Stoke FMU

Enner Glynn
Marsden Valley Catchment Group
Stoke Industrial

Roding FMU

Roding Catchment Group

Mana whenua Groups (all FMUs)

Ngāti Tama
Ngāti Kuia
Ngāti Apa
Te Atiawa

Regional Advisory Group:

Membership includes representatives from Tasman District Council, Nelson City Council, Marlborough District Council, Ministry for Primary Industries, Beef & Lamb NZ, Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, tangata whenua, Tasman Environmental Trust, Fish & Game, NZ Landcare Trust, Moutere, Motueka, Mohua, Waimea Inlet, Roding Catchment Group and community group representatives.

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Catchment group facilitation
- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring
- Mātauranga Māori
- Health & Safety
- Tangata whenua engagement
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- Stakeholder engagement
- Monitoring and restoration planning
- Freshwater ecology
- Freshwater monitoring
- Freshwater and marine community education events
- Inanga habitat assessment, monitoring and restoration and community engagement
- Estuary monitoring
- Seagrass and seaweed restoration and monitoring
- Integrated catchment management planning
- Environmental programme delivery - Whitebait Connection, Nurseries in School, National Inanga Spawning Programme, Experiencing Marine Reserves and Love Rimurimu

Cofunded and collaborative programmes with:

- Rātā foundation
- Sports Tasman
- Port Nelson
- Department of Conservation
- Brook Waimarama Sanctuary
- The Nature Conservancy
- Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance
- Ngāti Apa
- Ngāti Tama
- Ngāti Kuia
- Ngāti Koata
- Ngāti Tama ki Wakapuaka
- Cawthron Institute
- Tahuna Beach Holiday Camp
- Port Nelson
- DOC
- NMIT
- Fish and Game
- Project Jonah
- Nelson City Council
- Marine Matters
- Mountains to Sea Wellington
- Nelson Haven Group
- NZ Water Safety
- Sea Week

Training to date through Wai Connection

- ACE training
- Facilitating effective catchment groups
- Whitebait Connection programme delivery endorsement
- National Inanga Spawning Programme
- EMR delivery endorsement
- Wader training
- First Aid training
- NISP training
- Community engagement events
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- CBFM training
- Stakeholder engagement
- Monitoring and restoration planning
- Freshwater ecology
- GIS mapping
- Tangata whenua engagement
- Integrated catchment planning



1030 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 95%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

1002



Education and
Training

708



Community
engagement activities

96



Monitoring and
restoration

12



Hui

2024-2025 Nelson Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Year 2 Highlights – Communities in Action

In year two, Wai Connection continued building local freshwater restoration capability in Nelson by supporting catchment groups, community networks, iwi/hapū initiatives, schools, and businesses across multiple catchments.

Here are some of the highlights of what has been achieved.

Learning About our Local Waterways

- Spotlighting events, science workshops, Īnanga spawning workshops and a seagrass flower collection day engaged the community and schools in freshwater and marine ecology and restoration.
- Education programmes including Whitebait Connection and EMR were delivered to schools across the region inspiring school-led action. For example, schools in Hira supported Īnanga spawning habit restoration following Whitebait Connection

programme delivery at the Wakapuaka stream.

- Comprehensive eDNA tests and EOS Ecology Focus Catchment Map Series were delivered to catchment groups, including in Wakapuaka and Maitai enabling data-informed restoration planning

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

Catchment group and mana whenua capability was built through training in CBFM, eDNA, Īnanga spawning surveys, and technical monitoring frameworks.

Wai Connection enabled emerging groups like Marsden Valley with training and planning support and freshwater monitoring design.

Working Together for Our Waterways

Following a CBFM training, Wai Connection has facilitated collaboration between Tasman Bay Guardians, the Backyard Brook community group, The Brook Sanctuary, Nelson City Council, Cawthron Institute,

We learned the more appropriate and accurate method for extracting eDNA samples. We've also changed our method for measuring PH and updated other methods for river monitoring. Thalassa's presence at two of our monthly monitoring sessions helped us validate some of our practices and improve others. - Friends of the Maitai

Access to Experts and the Matai Catchment groups to establish community groups inside and outside the Brook Sanctuary to monitor waterways.

A new industrial partnership has formed in Stoke, bringing together Fulton Hogan, Nelson Airport, and Tasman Bay Guardians to restore īnanga spawning habitat along Jenkins Stream. At a community “adopt-a-spot” event hosted by Tasman Bay guardians, businesses learned to conduct īnanga egg surveys, installed temporary spawning habitat, released native plants, and cleared rubbish. These hands-on activities paved the way for a planned restoration plan for the lower Jenkins stream. Corporate interest is growing, with other industrial players expressing eagerness to join longer-term restoration efforts.

Tasman Bay Guardians has delivered Whitebait Connection and EMR educational programmes to Stoke schools bringing in mātauranga Māori and pūrākau through collaboration with Ngāti Apa and a focus on protecting tuna in the local waterways.

In Wakapuaka the facilitation of two stream health monitoring facilitation events, connected groups from the wider catchment together.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Regional steering groups are required to enhance coordination among catchment groups and stakeholders
- Ongoing funding is essential for maintaining SHMAK kits, consumables and monitoring tools. Without this, groups lack the resources to continue core activities.
- Groups require ongoing help for data analysis, restoration and monitoring plan development, expert advice on topics like sediment control, and shared or co-funded training.
- Collaboration is key - groups with funding sharing training and skills with new or unfunded groups is both efficient and meaningful for all parties. A network actively connecting these activities is needed.

What's Next?

Our coordinators are keenly aware of catchment group needs both at the regional and group level, and will work to prioritise those needs in light of the reduced funding. Year three of Wai Connection in Nelson will focus on:

General needs:

- More assistance with coordination and collaboration between key groups through regional steering groups - to get the most out of every activity.
- All groups need ongoing support with analysing data, restoration and monitoring plans and advice.
- As a follow on, where TBG and partners do not have capacity, we will look to assist with funding applications.
- All groups want support with presenting data, sharing resources and coordinating activities, such as shared/co-funded training sessions across catchment groups and programmes, sharing of expert advice on topics such as sediment control, etc.
- Assist with recruiting new members to Catchment Groups by helping to run Community River Day and follow up communications.
- All groups need supplies to update SHMAK kits, calibration of equipment and replacement equipment

Group-specific needs:

- Brook Sanctuary Catchment Group needs more support to become self-sustaining in their citizen science monitoring and support on restoration plans and community engagement, as well as more support with macro invertebrate monitoring. They are wanting to gather monitoring data for at least five years.
- Matai Catchment Group needs financial support for purchasing and processing more eDNA tests.
- Marsden Valley Group is not ready to start and will miss out on all funding opportunities. Ongoing support for the group and connection to other groups will help them gain confidence and clarify their objectives.

The Wai Connection team has been very creative, designing a variety of activities throughout the morning, afternoon, and evening to engage different target audiences.

- Spotlighting Event Collaborator / Stakeholder



Tai Tokerau | Northland

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust

TPOS Approval Date: 14 November 2023

Regional Coordinator: Andrea Booth

Team: (11 people, approximately 7 FTE)

Andrea Booth - Regional Coordinator

Patricia Hawkins - Catchment Coordinator

Alexandria Going - Catchment Coordinator

Tema'uonukuhiva Te'ikitekahioho-Wolff (Tema'u)

- Catchment Coordinator

Greer Morgan - Catchment Coordinator/Catchment Connector

Rosie Palmer - Catchment Connector

Tracey Phillip - Catchment Connector

Ray Downing - Catchment Connector

Raewyn Turner - Catchment Connector

Adam Hughes - Cadet

Roxanne Pene - Cadet

Catchment groups supported

Tinopai Resource Management Unit
Te Uri O Hau
Hakaru River Catchment Group
Koareare River Project
Kaitiaki Whangaroa
Me He Wai (Te Rarawa)
Hokianga Harbour Care
Maungataniwha Ki Rangaunu Trust
Waimamaku Taiao Group
Ngāti Kahu
Ngāti Rangī

Waimahana Marae
Te Waiariki Hapū Collective
Whananaki Marae
Kohinui Landcare Group
Piroa Conservation Trust
Ngā Tirairaka O Ngāti Hine
Ramarama Catchment Group
Parapara Marae
Utakura
Ngāti Kura
Ngāti Manu

Haititaimarangai Marae
Rangitane Conservation Volunteers
Ngātiwai
Te Uri O Hua Hapū
Te Parawhau/Rewarewa Whānau
Doubtless Bay Catchment Group

Previously supported

Tangowahine Catchment Group
Ngāti Taka
Te Roroa

Regional Advisory Group:

Membership includes representatives from Wai Connection, Northland Regional Council, NZ Landcare Trust, Whangārei District Council, MPI & Reconnecting Northland.

Cofunded and collaborative programmes with:

- Kaipara Moana Remediation
- Enviroschools Northland
- NZ Landcare Trust
- Me He Wai
- Department of Conservation

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Catchment group facilitation - vision, goals, practical plans
- Community engagement events
- Wānanga planning and delivery
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- Environmental programme delivery (Whitebait Connection, EMR)
- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring training
- Stakeholder engagement
- Monitoring and restoration planning
- Īnanga habitat assessment and restoration
- Freshwater ecology
- Freshwater monitoring
- GIS and basic catchment mapping
- Tangata whenua engagement
- Environmental education programme and project development
- Educational resource creation
- Funding and fundraising

Training to date through Wai Connection

- BFM training
- Grant-seeking training
- GIS training (WC co-funded training)
- First Aid training
- Animal pest control (WC did not fund training)
- ACE training (WC did not fund training)
- Pest plant management (WC did not fund training)
- Underwater camera training

- Capturing content on a phone
- NZFSS Conference
- Te Tiriti training

Catchment Group members

- CBFM training
- NISP training
- Grant-seeking training
- GIS training (WC co-funded training)



2839 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 54%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

5411



Education and
Training

1302



Community
engagement activities

299



Monitoring and
restoration

129



Hui

2024-2025 Northland Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

In year 2, the Wai Connection Northland team continued building regional freshwater restoration capability through their work with catchment groups and communities. Over the year, the team supported 28 catchment groups, of which 19 were led by whānau, hapū, or iwi initiatives.

Year 2 Highlights

Here are some of the highlights of what has been achieved in year 2 of Wai Connection:

23 community events were delivered including spotlighting, kayak & snorkelling days, participation at Northland field days, and events with Northland Pasifika communities.

Mountains to Sea **education programmes were delivered to 53 schools, home school groups, or other education providers** across Te Tai Tokerau. Two successful school holiday programmes were also delivered.

Learning About Our Local Waterways

Wai Connection has helped catchment groups and communities learn more information about their local catchments.

In Year 2 of Wai Connection there was an increase in interest in inanga spawning site protection and management, with many groups adopting guidance based on the National Inanga Spawning Programme (NISP). **NISP training and support was delivered to 8 catchment groups across the region** and artificial spawning habitats were installed in areas identified as poor inanga spawning habitat.

Support continued around embedding Community Based Freshwater Monitoring (CBFM) standards, helping groups develop strategic and operational plans, monitoring protocols, and robust funding applications to underpin implementation. These efforts have strengthened technical capability and preparedness at grassroots level.

SHMAK training has been delivered to 8 hapū or iwi led groups, as well as co-delivered to 7 marae with Me He Wai

"Wai Connection came in with a different approach. We initially were going down the path of removing fallen trees without understanding the wider impacts of this. Wai Connection will help with research into what aquatic life is present, which will be our baseline for future monitoring and restoration."

- Northland region catchment group

(Te Rohe o Te Rarawa). This has provided groups with skills to monitor and assess the health of their waterways, and identify impacts. Other CBFM training and support has included freshwater fish and invertebrate identification, as well as collection of eDNA samples. Groups have been supported to develop and implement freshwater monitoring plans, which have included mātauranga Māori indicators where appropriate.

Focus Catchment Map Series (FCMS), were developed for 7 areas across Northland. These maps provided visual and data-based insight into catchment health and will guide groups in their catchment restoration efforts.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

The Northland Wai Connection team have built on their skills to support catchment groups by **completing the ACE training provided by the New Zealand Land Care Trust and a catchment management workshop run by NZARM/EIS.**

Capability building of catchment groups has been supported through **two grant seeking workshops** delivered by Strategic Grants. Groups have also received **GIS training through three workshops**, co-funded by Wai Connection and Te Kahu o Taonui.

Wai Connection has **facilitated and supported multiple community hui** in the last year using skills obtained from the “Facilitating effective catchment groups” training delivered by Participatory Techniques last year. These hui have resulted in community input, enabled groups to identify future goals and inform draft restoration plans where possible.

Building partnerships and collaborations

Wai Connection has facilitated connections between groups, the wider community, and agencies in Northland.

This has included:

- The **development of an MOU with the Kaipara Moana Remediation** last year has continued collaborative partnership including work in Tinopai (northern Kaipara harbour), engaging landowners, Tinopai Resource Management Unit and forestry partners.
- **An MOU with Hokianga Harbour Care is being developed** to outline how we will work together and collaborate

to support groups in the South Hokianga. We are also developing a MOU with Piroa Conservation Trust and Patuharakeke for the same purpose in the Bream Bay.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

An ongoing challenge has been **supporting volunteer-heavy catchment groups with their limited availability.** This has required flexible scheduling and being prepared for changes particularly when hui dates shift due to unforeseen circumstances.

The **process of developing plans has been an ongoing learning process.** Planning with groups has been transformative in helping groups clarify guiding principles, goals, and actions to inform their catchment restoration. **Many groups now have a clearer understanding of the importance of having a clear plan** to secure resources to achieve their goals.

Farmer engagement remained a challenge in year 2. Hapū-led groups have requested support from Wai Connection to involve landowners in catchment work. Building these relationships is a priority for year three, as well as exploring opportunities to engage with other farming communities. Progressing opportunities identified by the Kaipara Moana Remediation in this space will also be a priority.

What's Next?

Year 3 of Wai Connection in Northland will prioritise:

Finalising catchment restoration and monitoring plans.

Supporting catchment groups to secure funding for restoration and carry out restoration activities.

Supporting hapū groups to engage with local farmers and landowners to foster collaborative initiatives.

Increasing farmer and landowner engagement with the work of other catchment groups.

An increased focus on **wetland restoration.**

Connecting schools and other education providers with catchment groups currently supported by Wai Connection.

Continuing to build capability of existing catchment groups.

"We have been so fortunate to work with the Mountains To Sea / Wai Connection team. They are all knowledgeable and experienced, and very gracious with their support. We would have faced significant capability barriers to freshwater monitoring and inanga spawning mahi without their help."

- Northland region catchment group



Otago | Ōtākou

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Otago Catchment Communities (OCC)

TPOS Approval Date: 9 August 2024

Regional Coordinator: Judy Miller

Team: 1 Regional Coordinator, 16 Catchment Coordinators, and 1 Admin Coordinator

Catchment groups supported

NOSLaM	Lake Hāwea	Upper Taieri Wai
East Otago	Friends Of Bullock Creek	Mid-Taieri Wai
Otago South Rivercare Inc	Cardrona	Lower Taieri
Pomahaka	Glenorchy	Otago Peninsula
Lindis	Wakatipu	Aroha Kaikorai Valley
Manuherikia	Lake Hayes	Owhiro
Teviot Valley	Lowburn	Tomahawk
Wanaka	Thomsons Creek	Open VUE
WAI Wānaka	Ida Valley	

Regional Advisory Group:

The Otago Catchment Community Inc. steering group is made up of seven catchment group representatives from throughout the region and MPI and Otago Regional Council (ORC) senior staff. The group helps with direction setting, monitoring the work plan and effectiveness of OCC and budgets.

Cofunded and collaborative programmes with:

- Arai Te Uru Marae, Kaikorai Valley, Dunedin
- Wilderlab
- Otago Regional Council (co-funding of Coordinators time for catchment groups)
- OCC - in kind time (ORC/MPI)

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Farm management
- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring
- Facilitation
- Stakeholder engagement
- Finance & administration
- Farm environment planning
- ACE
- Monitoring and restoration planning
- Freshwater ecology

Training to date through Wai Connection

- Facilitating effective catchment groups
- Strategic doing facilitation workshop
- Engagement/communication workshops
- Website upgrades and development
- IT training
- GIS mapping
- Predator trapping workshops
- CBFM



1243 volunteer
hours donated

Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

142



Education and
Training

2024-2025 Otago Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

2024-2025 Highlights

Increased support has been provided through OCC by adding an additional 0.5FTE to deliver the Wai Connection programme and support groups throughout Otago.

MTSCT's national network has provided opportunities to share and learn from other groups around the country, participate in training programmes and provide support and access to resources and advice.

Connections and networks have been created throughout Otago - between catchment groups, iwi, Otago Regional Council and other industry groups through Wai Connection activities.

Learning About Our Local Waterways

A Community Based Freshwater Monitoring (CBFM) training run in June at Arai Te Uru Marae, Dunedin brought together attendees from iwi, catchment groups, Otago Catchment Communities and Otago Regional Council. Attendees learnt new skills for monitoring their waterways and engaged in shared learning. This training will enable Arai Te Uru Marae to provide education opportunities for local schools and organisations. In addition, catchment group leads will take this knowledge and provide similar learning opportunities in their geographical areas of Otago.

Through Wai Connect six groups were supported to explore the flora and fauna of their catchments through eDNA monitoring.

A GIS project in the East Otago Catchment Group (Post Office Creek) has been used as a case study to show other catchment groups how GIS can be used to understand contaminant risk and support decision making around optimum sites for mitigation.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

Through Wai Connection 16 catchment groups have built their capacity by receiving funding for a catchment coordinator (3.7FTE total). These roles have assisted with accounting, management of social media and communications for groups, administration and coordination of their group, volunteers and community projects.

Wānaka, Pomahaka and Lowburn catchment groups were supported to update their website assisting them in telling their story, celebrating their work and increasing their profile to improve engagement.

Friends of Bullock Creek catchment group have been assisted with IT support to enable them to be efficient in their recording and administration.

In May catchment groups and individuals in the Wānaka, Lowburn, Cromwell and Thomsons Creek area took part in a predator trapping training facilitated by Southern Lakes Sanctuary at Lowburn. Similarly, East Otago catchment group collaborated with the Mammalian Corrections Unit to run a predator and pest trapping one day workshop in Waikouaiti in May.

Facilitation training through Strategic Doing was delivered to four OCC members providing upskilling with tools to effectively facilitate catchment groups. Additionally facilitating effective catchment groups training was delivered to 18 attendees representing iwi, Otago Regional Council and environmental group leads. Facilitation techniques that were taught will enable participants to lead their group through conversations and analysis of complex information.

One-on-one engagement and communications workshops were held with six catchment groups facilitating them through the process of defining the purpose and goals of the group, crafting their story, identifying their target audiences/groups, building a communication plan and how to execute it successfully.

Building partnerships and collaborations

Collaboration between catchment groups, Otago Regional Council and iwi have been facilitated through participating in training events together (Facilitating Effective Catchment Groups and CBFM training). These trainings have enabled an opportunity for iwi and ORC to make connections with catchment groups.

OCC'S collaboration and connection with catchment groups has been increased by adding an additional 0.5FTE (Judy Miller) to deliver the Wai Connection programme and support groups throughout Otago.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

There have been learnings around understanding and making connections with mana whenua including who to contact and the need to build relationships without time pressure. It is a journey that we need to continue to foster through the connections we have made over the past 12 months.

Time has been a barrier, firstly to embed these programmes (as Otago has only been running the programme since late October 2024) and secondly to ensure there is adequate support/training throughout the catchment groups.

Geographical location is a challenge - there is the opportunity to reach groups that haven't had support through this

programme thus far and determine what their barriers are.

There is a challenge in getting groups to understand what training and workshop offerings there are and getting them to sign up or schedule in the time to make it happen.

Some of our groups have not responded to offers of eDNA kits or attended workshops (possibly due to the small window we have had to execute the programme). Further relationship development would be needed to activate these groups and determine what their barriers are.

What's Next?

Continuing opportunities to build relationships and connections with mana whenua to support a mutual understanding, and to create the richness that comes through these relationships. The Wai Connection programme has initiated some of these relationships but it will be important to continue to create opportunities to continue to learn together, educate and develop resources that continue to foster and support this.

Continuing the regional coordinators to strategically push groups towards their needs and guide them in their next steps.

Sharing knowledge on interpreting eDNA testing results through access to experts e.g. Wilderlab.

Continued communication and story telling support through engagement workshops.

Continuing the opportunity to provide website development where groups are interested.

Assisting catchment group members to travel to attend the ACE Communities of Practice in person.

Follow-up workshop and expansion of CBFM training after the workshop held in Dunedin.

Improving knowledge and practices around sediment control by embedding the knowledge learned through the GIS mapping project in East Otago and initiating GIS mapping in another catchment where there are different challenges that could also be a case study for the rest of Otago.

Sharing knowledge on pest and predator control including strategic planning and providing opportunities for catchment group members to attend a NMIT predator trapping course in 2026.



Southland | Murihiku

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Thriving Southland

TPOS Approval Date: 14 November 2023

Regional Coordinator: Sandra King

Team: 3 people, 1.7 FTE WC funded. 1 Wai Connection funded Catchment Coordinator, 1 Senior Catchment Coordinator (co-funded by Thriving Southland)

Ginny Kennedy - Catchment Coordinator

Catchment groups supported

Between the Domes
Lower Waiau

Orauea
Upper Aparima

Te Anau
Upper Mataura

Regional Advisory Group:

Catchment Coordinators have quarterly meetings inviting main agencies in the region to catch up on what everyone is doing in the sector (DairyNZ, Regional Council, Beef & Lamb, On Farm Support). Thriving Southland as an organisation holds a regular stakeholder breakfast open to rural professionals and others to hear updates on Thriving Southland and the work that Catchment Groups are doing.

Cofunded and collaborative programmes with:

- Regional Council - joined in CBFM and NĪSP training and are collaborating on the soil mapping project in Te Anau
- Dairy NZ - water quality specialist interpreting water quality and eDNA results
- Federated Farmers - came and spoke to a catchment group

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Catchment group facilitation
- Community engagement events
- Stakeholder engagement
- Event management
- First Aid

Training to date through Wai Connection

- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring training
- NĪSP training
- First Aid training
- Facilitating effective catchment groups training
- Comms training
- Extension training



4 volunteer hours
donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 32%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

38



Education and
Training

158



Community
engagement activities

2024-2025 Southland Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Year 2 Highlights

The funding for a Catchment Coordinator in an area we previously lacked the resources to support has transformed the region, revitalising an important catchment that sits alongside a national park.

This programme has enabled us to place a dedicated Coordinator in the heart of the community, fostering connections and driving meaningful activity that we could not achieve on our own. Having a local Catchment Coordinator has united the community, reinvigorated local groups, and sparked collaboration.

As a result, three catchment groups are now working together on an innovative soil mapping project, demonstrating how funding resources for catchment groups can breathe life into a

region and its environmental efforts. One of the great things to see has been previously dormant catchment groups come together with renewed energy and purpose.

Learning About Our Local Waterways and building capacity for the future

The uptake of eDNA testing shows a positive interest in understanding the unique ecosystems of our catchments.

A key highlight is the collaboration of three groups updating soil data across the Waiau Catchment. This multi-phase project involved integrating numerous datasets to produce high-resolution soil management unit maps, with phase two recently completed. The updated soil information will help farmers make

paddock-scale decisions, supporting improved environmental outcomes.

The groups had a landscape scientist who presented on how variations in landscape characteristics influence water quality outcomes. The presentation deepened the groups' understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities within their local environments and provided a strong foundation for joined-up thinking. The Upper Maitara group has undertaken water quality testing across nine different sites across their catchment to get a snapshot in time of their water quality. They have not stopped there, and have had those results interpreted and presented back to them by a water quality expert. They are now determining their next steps.

Building partnerships and collaborations

The coordinator has been instrumental in fostering collaboration among groups, leading to a shared understanding of common issues and the creation of a combined project aligned with their goals. This collective effort secured additional funding, including significant support from a local energy company, expanding the project's impact. Three Waiau Catchment groups have together undertaken a large-scale, high-resolution soil data project.

The Between the Domes Catchment Group, after completing wetland enhancement projects on two farms, recently reconvened. They shared a meal and heard from community leaders who highlighted the value of working together with ownership of challenges and solutions to improve environmental outcomes both on farms and at the catchment scale.

Lessons learned and what's next

The main lessons learnt during the past year have been that it takes time to build relationships and gain trust of the catchment group members. Another learning is that the group has to own their direction and projects, it is not our role to determine what they need to do and how they need to do it. We are there to support them and join the dots.

Groups tend to start with a small strong committee who put in the time but over time interest grows as the committee talk amongst their neighbours and fellow farmers. Farmers are the best way to spread the message as farmers trust and listen to their peers.

Catchment groups play a vital role in building farmer resilience, supporting positive wellbeing, and embedding sustainable change - but they require resources, such as Catchment Coordinators, to succeed. It is crucial to maintain the momentum gained over the past three years through dedicated resources and funding. Science serves as a powerful catalyst for change, providing an opportunity to deliver knowledge and evidence-based information directly to farmers, empowering them to drive meaningful environmental progress.



Taranaki

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust

TPOS Approval Date: 13 June 2024

Regional Coordinator: Lisa Berndt

Team: 8 People (5.25 FTE)

Timara Wallace - Catchment Coordinator/Connector embedded within Te Kaahui o Rauru

Darlene Gibson and Brett Stewart - Catchment Coordinators embedded within Te Ihowai

Nicky Toothill - Catchment Coordinator/Connector embedded within Taranaki Regional Council

Emily Roberts and Timoti King - Catchment Coordinators/Connectors embedded within Te Kāhui o Taranaki

Catchment groups supported

21 groups (plus 12 schools that have been part of a regular Wai Connection programme and continued local freshwater mahi rather than 'one off' school programme delivery)

Catchment Groups

Te Kāhui o Taranaki
Te Ihowai Ltd. representing Ngāti
Te Whiti and Ngāti Tūparikino (2)
Taranaki Catchment Communities
(16 groups)
Ngā Kaitiaki o Puketapu Hapū
Trust
Te Kaahui o Rauru

Schools

Frankley School
St Joseph's School Waitara
Toko School
Green School Oakura
Welbourn School
Omata School
Uruti School

Highlands Intermediate Schools
Devon Intermediate School
Spotswood College
Woodleigh School
St George's School

Regional Advisory Group:

He Hononga Taiao is an alliance between Ngā Iwi o Taranaki, Taranaki Regional Council, DOC and Wild for Taranaki. He Hononga Taiao was established in August 2020 in response to DOC's 'Jobs for Nature' Covid19 response funding, as the regional partnership mechanism to process the funding. The region is committed to this on-going leadership structure - strengthening a unified partnership to achieve our region's long-term environmental aspirations. The group has acted as the regional advisory group for Wai Connection providing regional oversight of the project.

Cofunded and collaborative programmes with:

- Te Kāhui o Taranaki
- Te Kaahui o Rauru
- Te Ihowai Ltd
- Taranaki Regional Council
- Taranaki Catchment Communities (only collaborative programmes not co-funding)

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Stakeholder management & engagement
- Community engagement
- Project management
- Communications
- Catchment group facilitation
- Tangata whenua engagement
- Community events
- Environmental programme delivery for schools and community (Whitebait Connection,
- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring)
 - Monitoring and restoration planning and implementation
 - Inanga habitat assessment and restoration
 - Freshwater ecology
 - Training facilitation

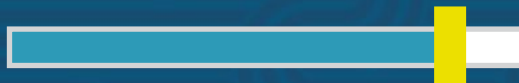
Training to date through Wai Connection

- Inanga spawning
- SHMAK training
- Fish barrier/passage training
- Taranaki - Wellington team knowledge exchange
- Sediment issues wānanga
- Mountains to Sea wānanga
- Catchment group facilitation training
- Capturing content on a phone



1371 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 84%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

5285



Education and
Training

1752



Community
engagement activities

753



Monitoring and
restoration

243



Hui

2024-2025 Taranaki Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Year 2 Highlights

Wild for Taranaki is the region's biodiversity trust and the regional provider for Wai Connection in Taranaki. Wild for Taranaki operates across the entire region (all six of Taranaki's Freshwater Management Units - FMUs) supporting more than 45 member groups and organisations working to protect and enhance the unique native plants, animals and ecosystems including freshwater within Taranaki.

Our purpose is to connect and enable our members, and advocate for the biodiversity sector in Taranaki. Our shared vision is a thriving Taranaki biodiversity which we achieve through skilled, energised and connected communities leading impactful regional scale restoration.

Wai Connection funding enabled us to support and build on the delivery of existing freshwater programmes in our focus areas: the Volcanic Ring Plain FMU, Southern Hill Country FMU and the Pātea Catchment FMU.

Embedding the Wai Connection team in member organisations empowered them to lead efforts to improve the health of their focus catchments. Wai Connectors and Coordinators were placed within Te Kāhui o Taranaki and Te Ihowai, Ngā Kaitiaki o Puketapu Hapū Trust (Volcanic Ring Plain FMU), Te Kaahui o Rauru (Southern Hill Country FMU) and Taranaki Regional Council (Pātea Catchment FMU). A strong collaboration with Taranaki Catchment Communities provided a single touch point for existing farmer driven catchment groups in Taranaki.

The 2024–2025 year has been an impactful period for the Taranaki Wai Connection programme in Taranaki, marked by strengthened partnerships and collaboration, expanded capability and capacity within our communities, and deeper engagement with and understanding of freshwater ecosystems across the region. While this represents Year two of

the national programme, it is the first full year of delivery in Taranaki, with impressive outcomes across all participating organisations.

From July 2024–June 2025 Taranaki Wai Connection delivered 303 activities for 48 catchments groups across the region:

- 131 pre-school, primary and high school water education programmes reaching 4,950 students.
- 87 community engagement events such as talks, workshops, funding application support, film screenings, spotlighting events for 1,995 community members.
- 78 restoration and monitoring activities involving 753 people.
- 27 freshwater wānanga / training opportunities such as SHMAK training, īnanga spawning and fish barrier/passage training as well as catchment group facilitation training for more than 335 participants.
- Over 3,500 native trees planted.
- In summer 24/25 this also included EMR programmes offering ten snorkel experiences to 490 community members.

Learning About Our Local Waterways

Across Taranaki, significant progress has been made building knowledge and capability in freshwater monitoring, macroinvertebrate and periphyton monitoring. Upskilling has occurred in the areas of:

- Stream health monitoring (e.g. macroinvertebrates, periphyton, īnanga spawning, wetland ecology).
- Cultural and scientific knowledge sharing, including mātauranga Māori and western science.
- Training in national monitoring tools, such as SHMAK and eDNA

"Wai connection has provided an amazing opportunity for Te Kaahui o Rauru to develop/form relationships with the community through hands-on training, storytelling, and support to improve, and bring greater awareness to the pressures our waterways are facing. Being able to meld stories of place/whakapapa and western science has helped embed our connection to wai and the importance of protecting it as it has intrinsic value."

sampling, as well as inter-regional knowledge exchange.

Te Kāhui o Taranaki Catchment Coordinators/Connector's key achievement has been designing and implementing an inanga spawning programme. Locally, very little was known about inanga spawning prior to this current mahi. Following training with Nic Naysmith (National Inanga Spawning Project National Coordinator), they were able to adapt national protocols and undertake saltwater wedge surveys and habitat assessments. This led them to identify inanga spawning sites across 11 catchments and develop a robust monitoring programme.

Te Ihowai Ltd Catchment Coordinators have seen a significant increase in both the scale and variety of restoration and monitoring activities in the first year of Wai Connection. They supported schools and hapū with stream assessments and restoration, planted over 3,500 native trees, and helped Puketapu Hapū deepen their understanding of stormwater impacts and water health.

Taranaki Regional Council based Catchment Connector facilitated catchment surveys with schools, creating lasting connections and confidence in teachers to carry out monitoring independently with their students.

Te Kaahui o Rauru's Catchment Connector supported the communities in their rohe, schools and marae to monitor water quality and taonga species, embedding whakapapa and tikanga into freshwater mahi.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

- Created jobs 5.25 FTE whose focus is freshwater improvement.
- Provided training (catchment facilitation, monitoring and restoration techniques) and gear / resources which will benefit the region beyond the term of the funding.
- Purchased monitoring gear as well as provision of eDNA kits and analysis will benefit the region beyond the term of the funding.
- Expanded education and outreach programmes.
- Created Taranaki specific resources.
- Efficiency of coordination across different organisations in the region, sharing resources and aligning activities, such as shared/co funded training sessions across catchment groups and programmes, and wananga on regionally relevant topics.
- Schools and students across Taranaki are now independently leading stream investigations and restoration planning.
- Tamariki and rangatahi are learning tikanga, karakia, and species identification, supporting long-term kaitiakitanga.
- Schools have invested in their own monitoring gear and are embedding freshwater health into their curricula.
- The collaborations, knowledge and capability built will continue to drive local leadership and innovation in freshwater management and catchment care.

Building partnerships and collaborations

- Wai Connection in Taranaki has catalysed valuable relationships that have empowered local-led action:
- Collaborations with hapū (e.g. Puketapu, Otaraua, Whenuakura) have supported community engagement and education.
- Cross-agency coordination involving Taranaki Regional Council, DOC Ngāmotu and Whanganui, New Plymouth District Council, Stratford District Council, and Forest & Bird has enabled a joined-up approach to restoration, education, and freshwater planning.

- The Waitōtara Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) Project, led by Te Kaahui o Rauru, continues to integrate community voices and traditional knowledge into flood and catchment resilience planning.

The Wai Connection project has enabled multiple riparian and wetland restoration efforts, species habitat improvements, and action planning. Key outcomes include:

- Over 3,500 natives planted with support from schools, landowners, hapū and volunteers.
- Schools such as Woodleigh and Rawhitiroa initiated long-term restoration projects, including lizard habitat creation and awa monitoring.
- Marae and kura in the Ngaa Rauru rohe applied for restoration funding to support nursery development, planting, and wetland projects.
- Landowners, supported by Te Ihowai, implemented projects alongside Taranaki Regional Council's water monitoring sites to link student learning with real-world action.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

As an organisation created to provide a network for all parties working towards environmental improvements in the region, Wild for Taranaki already understood that providing a local hub for the network of freshwater projects would be the most useful way to build this capability in the community to look after their awa. Embedding Wai Connection coordinators and connectors directly in our partner organisations was a new approach for us, so we were pleased to learn that this was exactly the right course of action.

One change we will make, detailed below, is to also have a coordinator based in the Wild for Taranaki hub so that we can be more flexible and responsive to catchment groups across the whole region, particularly given the reduced budget.

What's Next?

The first year of Taranaki Wai Connection has laid strong foundations for long-term impact in freshwater health and catchment care. Through collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and capability building, the programme has empowered local leadership and innovation across the region.

A key change this year is the transition of the former Wai Connector role at Taranaki Regional Council into a new, flexible Wai Coordinator role based at Wild for Taranaki. This change will reduce support for school groups but provides on-demand, tailored freshwater support to catchment groups and Wild for Taranaki members across the region. Other Wai Connection team members remain embedded within Te Kāhui o Taranaki, Te Ihowai Ltd, and Te Kaahui o Rauru, continuing their catchment-specific work to restore and protect waterways.

Taranaki Catchment Collective (TCC) have sourced significant funding to continue the work supported by Wai Connection, so while no Wai Connection funded team member is needed there, a strong collaboration with TCC will continue, ensuring coordinated planning and efficient use of funding. We will support unmet needs and help fill gaps where capacity allows to strengthen overall impact. Our new Wild for Taranaki based role will be key in connecting farmer led groups with iwi/hapu led groups, a key aim of both.

Looking ahead to 2025–2026, Wai Connection will maintain a region-wide, collaborative approach, with a focus on strengthening regional coordination, expanding freshwater monitoring and restoration, deepening education & engagement, and supporting leadership in catchment management. A regional annual plan will guide these efforts.

"Through training wānanga [Te Kaahui o Taranaki] have built knowledge, confidence and capability, in addition to forming valuable collaborations. There have been many highlights which include learning from inspirational experts and using new skills to better protect our local waterways."



Tasman | Te Tai-o-Aorere

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Tasman Bay Guardians

TPOS Approval Date: 14 March 2024

Regional Coordinator: Jude Heath

Kate Radloff - Catchment Connector

Carolyn Gray - Catchment Connector

Monique Patterson - Catchment Coordinator (Īnanga/CBFM)

Syd Eru - Catchment Coordinator (Īnanga/CBFM)

Scott Keen - Catchment Coordinator (CBFM)

Willow Milligan - Catchment Coordinator (CBFM)

Caroline Chapman - Administrator

Regional Advisory Group:

Membership includes representatives from Tasman District Council, Nelson City Council, Marlborough District Council, Ministry for Primary Industries, Beef & Lamb, Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, tangata whenua, Tasman Environmental Trust, Fish & Game, NZ Landcare Trust, Moutere, Motueka, Mohua, Waimea Inlet Forum, Roding Catchment Group and other community/catchment group representatives.

Catchment groups supported

Motueka FMU

Motueka Catchment Collective
Sub 1 Orinoco
Sub 2 Greenhill RD
Sub 3 Baton
Sub 4 Win Valley
Sub 5 Dove
Sub 6 Tapawera Stanley Brook
Sub 7 Brooklyn Valley
Sub 8 Tadmor/Glenrae
Sub 9 Rocky River
Sub 10 Waiwhero
Motueka Delta (Whakapaetuarā - Iwi/ Led
TDC -Project)

South Wai Atua

Thorps Creek

Abel Tasman - Kaiteriteri FMU

Otuwhero

Kaiteriteri

Moutere FMU

Tasman - Ferrers Creek community

Williams Road Moutere Group

Moutere Catchment Group

Beukes Bush

Black Bird Valley group

Friends of Fields Creek

Tasman Valley Stream residents

Takaka FMU

FAMA Friends of Arthur Marble Aquifer
- Farmer led

Manawhenua Ki Mohua

Friends of East Mohua

Takakā Waterways

Aorere - West Coast FMU

Onekaka

Farmers on the West Coast

Parapara Valley Environmental Group

Waimea FMU

Pearl Creek Sub Catchment

Waimea Catchment Group

Rodding Catchment Group

Cofunded and collaborative programmes with:

- Tasman District Council
- The Nature Conservancy
- Sports Tasman
- Kaiteriteri Recreation Reserve Trust
- Department of Conservation
- Tasman Environmental Trust
- Te Atiawa
- Rātā Foundation
- Ngāti Apa
- Ngāti Tama
- Motueka Catchment Collective
- Manawhenua Ki Mohua
- NZ Landcare Trust
- Department of Conservation
- Ngāti Rarua
- Ngāti Kuia
- Ngāti Koata
- Mana whenua ki Wakapuaka
- Motueka Community Trust
- Golden Bay Community Trust
- Cawthron Institute
- Otago NZ Marine
- Nelson Biodiversity Group
- Waimea Inlet Forum
- Fish & Game
- NZAEE
- Kimiora
- Nelson Building Society
- Mountains to Sea Wellington
- EOS Ecology
- Abel Tasman Eco Tours
- Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle Water Taxis

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring
- Mātauranga Māori and wai māori
- Health & safety
- Tangata whenua engagement
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- Stakeholder engagement
- Monitoring and restoration planning
- Freshwater ecology
- Wetland restoration
- Freshwater and community education events
- Inanga habitat assessment, monitoring, restoration and community engagement
- Estuary monitoring
- Seagrass and seaweed restoration and monitoring
- Integrated catchment management planning
- Community group facilitation
- Environmental programme delivery Whitebait Connection, Nurseries in School, National Inanga Spawning Programme, Experiencing Marine Reserves and Love Rimurimu Programme delivery

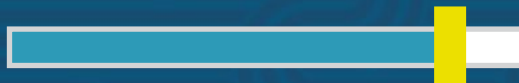
Training to date through Wai Connection

- ACE training
- Facilitating effective catchment groups
- Whitebait Connection programme delivery endorsement
- EMR delivery endorsement
- Conservation standards training course
- Wader training
- First Aid training
- NISHRP data training
- Integrated catchment planning



1489 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 53%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

1703



Education and
Training

915



Community
engagement activities

510



Monitoring and
restoration

148



Hui

2024-2025 Tasman Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Year 2 Highlights

In year two of Wai Connection delivery, 33 catchment groups were supported in the Tasman region from Waimea to Takakā.

Learning About Our Local Waterways

The community were engaged in learning about their local freshwater and marine environments through the delivery of ten CBFM workshops, five īnanga workshops and three snorkel events.

An eDNA test was done for every catchment engaged in Wai Connection in the region.

Each focus catchment engaged also received freshwater monitoring, īnanga monitoring and restoration support.

Four Focus Catchment Map Series were created for the Motueka/Riuwaka, Moutere Inlet, Kaiteriteri/Mārahau Coast and Takakā catchments enabling data-informed restoration planning.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

Mana whenua ki Mohua were supported with ki uta ki tai monitoring, cultural health monitoring plans, community engagement events and īnanga surveys using Survey 123.

Wai Connection supported the Motueka Catchment Collective to define clear goals, identify the right council contacts, and articulate the key challenges the catchment will face over the next decade. Training for survey-123 monitoring was also provided to build local capacity.

Building partnerships and collaborations

In the Motueka catchment, the Whitebait Connection education programme was delivered to five schools across the lower, middle, and upper sub-catchments. These schools were then connected with local sub-catchment groups to support ongoing monitoring

and ecological restoration.

Wai Connection facilitated collaboration between the Motueka Catchment Collective to train ten sub-catchment citizen science freshwater-monitoring groups comprising farmers and landowners. The groups were trained and supported in data collection, resource sharing, and monitoring. Ongoing structured support has been given for their SHMAKERS sub-catchment group, which meets quarterly to review monitoring results.

Mana whenua tamariki from Parklands School were connected to the Motueka Delta and shared stories connected to their ancestors. This inspired continued ongoing monitoring and restoration of the wetlands, awa and an īnanga restoration site.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

Ongoing funding is essential for maintaining SHMAK kits, consumables and monitoring tools. Without this, groups lack the resources to continue core activities.

Clear signals and communications about what is coming in terms of freshwater farm plans and council regulations, and what support will be available for catchment groups and landowners to do restoration or monitoring work.

Groups are enthusiastic about the potential of monitoring projects, but need an integrated place to store, analyse and share their monitoring data. Otherwise each group is doing this differently.

Tasman is a large area with a relatively small rural population. Groups and farmers in remote areas would like support however it is logistically challenging to accommodate this. Particularly with new relationships and early stage groups, online help is insufficient. Face to face time requires extra hours and mileage, but is necessary early on to establish the trusted relationships required for collaborative work.

What's Next?

The next year will focus on:

- Providing support to ten sub-catchment groups with monitoring, restoration, planning, SHMAK kit support, eDNA testing and the use of Survey123.
- Facilitating restoration planning and collaboration with the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance, Tasman District Council, schools, and mana whenua at the Motueka Delta.
- Delivering a nurseries in schools programme support to connect with Brooklyn sub catchment group.
- Providing support for Tapawera, Brooklyn, Riuwaka, Parklands and Motueka High School to deliver nurseries in schools, Whitebait Connection and the National Īnanga Spawning programmes to link to Motueka Catchment Collective sub catchment groups and farmers/ landowners.
- Providing support for spotlighting events and ongoing community engagement linking iwi and thematic groups to share knowledge in the Motueka Catchment.
- Providing assistance with recruiting new members to catchment groups by helping to run community river days and follow up communications.
- Providing assistance with coordination and collaboration between key groups through regional steering groups and sharing of resources and coordinating activities.
- Providing support for restoration plans and monitoring at īnanga spawning habitats with Motueka catchment Collective, Kaiteriteri Reserve Board and iwi, South Wai Atua landowners and iwi, Motueka Delta, Motueka Landowners, Pearl Creek landowners, Tasman community members, Friends of Field Creek and Otuwhero Catchment Group.



Waikato

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: GoEco (Waikato Environment Centre) in collaboration with
 Piako Waihou Catchment Trust (PWCT)
 K Collab (Mohi Korohina, Ngāti Hinerangi)
 Pokaiwhenua Catchment Group (PCG)

TPOS Approval Date: 8 August 2024

Regional Coordinator: Wendy Boyce

Team:

2 x FTE Catchment Coordinators

1 x .20 FTE Hapū Coordinator

1 x .20 FTE Communications Coordinator

Catchment groups supported

Piako Waihou Catchment Trust (PWCT)

PWCT has ten sub catchment groups under their umbrella. This year they have formed a new alliance with the Western Firth Catchment Group.

Pokaiwhenua Catchment Group (PCG)

PCG has six main subgroups. This year they have formed a new alliance with Predator Free Tokoroa and Hodderville Farms Ltd, to connect rural and urban communities.

Regional Advisory Group:

Wai Connection, Waikato reports to the Waikato Regional Council Integrated Catchment Management Committee. The Committee includes elected representatives from across the Waikato Region. The Committee meets monthly and is open to the public.

The Catchment Coordinators report to their Trustees. Each Trust includes representatives from the local community. For example, Piako Waihou Catchment Trust has representatives from Dairy New Zealand, New Zealand Landcare Trust, Fonterra and the Waikato Environment Centre.

Cofunded and collaborative programmes with:

- Waikato Biodiversity Forum
- Raukawa Trust Board
- New Zealand Landcare Trust
- Dairy New Zealand
- Farm Foresters
- Waikato Environment Centre
- Hodderville Farms Ltd
- Pokaiwhenua Catchment Group
- Waikato Regional Council
- Maanaaki Whenua Landcare Research
- Ngāti Hinerangi Marae
- Matamata Piako District Council
- Ngāti Haua Mahi Trust
- Toimata Foundation
- Predator Free Waikato
- Te Ohaki Marae
- Inghams Ltd
- Ngāti Hauā
- Bittern Conservation Trust
- Waikato River Authority

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Communications
- Management
- Strategic planning
- Event management
- Volunteer recruitment
- Fund raising
- Project management
- Health and Safety
- Science communication
- Tangata whenua engagement
- Stakeholder engagement
- Community engagement
- Social science
- Evaluation
- Facilitation
- Community-based social marketing
- Integrated catchment management
- Habitat restoration
- Pest management
- Water quality monitoring
- Environmental programme delivery

Training to date through Wai Connection

- Īnanga habitat restoration
- Community Based Freshwater Monitoring
- Catchment group facilitation
- Mountains to Sea wānanga attendance
- Facilitate Aotearoa facilitating essentials one day workshop



212 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 28%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

70



Education and
Training

1026



Community
engagement activities

0



Monitoring and
restoration

8



Hui

2024-2025 Waikato Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

Year 2 Highlights

In Waikato, Wai Connection has enabled communities to increase their pride in their area and given communities the confidence to keep making improvements. For example, Piako Waihou Catchment Trust has developed an on farm demonstration site of simple actions land owners can take to plant carex and create soft engineering works to retain water on farm. This has led to water quality in small tributaries moving from grade two (degraded) to grade two.

Learning About Our Local Waterways

The Piako Waihou Catchment Trust hosted four community and school on-farm planting events engaging over 260 people in planting 2875 plants. The Pokaiwhenua catchment group held two community planting events engaging 71 people.

The Pokaiwhenua Catchment Group co-hosted the Waikato Biodiversity Forum event in May. This event attracted 50 people from the greater Waikato region, and involved a bus tour around the south Waikato region, showing the group a number of the projects the Pokaiwhenua Catchment Group has been working on, as

well as the iconic Blue Spring near Putāruru.

Waikato Regional Council (WRC) developed focus maps for the two Waikato Wai Connection focus catchments. The maps integrate water quality, biodiversity and cultural priorities using council and iwi data. WRC have integrated priorities from the Waikato River Restoration Strategy into their own GIS mapping system.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

Workshops, field days and events enabled by Wai Connection have equipped groups and participants with technical skills, fostered a sense of community responsibility toward conservation and bridged the gap between science and active stewardship.

An īnanga spawning and CBFM training event was held in Thames in May 2025 with trainers from Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust and NZ Landcare Trust. The event was attended by 25 people from the Coromandel, Piako and Waihou catchments and from the wider Waikato region.

The Piako Waihou Catchment Trust attended the Waikato Community Catchment Workshop in Hamilton

on June 25, along with 50 people. The event was hosted by GoEco. Attendees shared catchment successes and reviewed catchment stocktake maps against the WRC priority areas for funding. Opportunities were identified for how WRC could extend support to catchment groups and projects and also how catchment groups could assist WRC to achieve its catchment outcomes.

Building partnerships and collaborations

Wai Connection has helped connect communities, mana whenua, industries and businesses with catchment groups.

A capability building event was held at Te Oohaki Marae in April 2025. The Piako Waihou Catchment Trust supported Mohi Korohina (Wai Connection Hapū Educator - Ngāti Hinerangi) to bring together landowners and land managers to learn about local people, history and context, to connect with each other and learn new skills from mātauranga specialists. A cross section of iwi and hapū reps, local government, catchment groups and local farmers attended.

The Piako Waihou Catchment Trust hosted a field day at the Van Ras Family Farm to showcase on-farm restoration of waterways via carex planting and wetland restoration. Thirty people attended the event including industry, farmers, regional, local, and central government, the banking sector, and local iwi. Attendees also heard about catchment water quality trends from Roland Stenger (Lincoln Agritec), the science of shade and how to focus on restorative actions from Craig Depree (Dairy NZ), and cultural context and the integration of Mātauranga Maori into projects from Makoha Pene from Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust.

In February the Pokaiwhenua Catchment Group launched a wetland restoration/tuna pond creation project alongside DairyNZ and Raukawa.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

One lesson learned is the importance of indigenous leadership in freshwater and biodiversity restoration projects and the need to invest time into supporting these kaupapa through long-term, respectful partnerships.

Another lesson learned was the importance of events that bring catchment groups together, strengthening relationships across sectors and communities. These

events enable knowledge sharing and exchange of valuable lessons on riparian planting, wetland management, species monitoring, and community mobilisation.

There are ongoing challenges with resources (funding), recruitment and capacity building.

What's Next?

The next year will focus on:

- Supporting the appointment of Catchment Connectors to improve coordination in South Waikato and the King Country.
- Establishing an MOU with Ngāti Maniapoto Marae PACT Trust to establish on the ground coordinators and trainers.
- Continuing farmer, landowner & mana whenua engagement across catchment groups.
- Supporting events to set up and bring together new stream care groups such as Little Wairere Stream Care Group.
- Engagement with Tokoroa groups and extending Pokaiwhenua catchment work into a sub-catchment group.
- Continuing to seek landowners who would like to partner with the Piako Catchment Group in restoring riparian areas or steep land on their properties.
- The extension of carex planting trial projects to farms and waterways in the Western Firth Catchment in collaboration with Western Firth Catchment Group.
- Continued collaboration and support for business and industry-led restoration projects along the Waitoa River focusing on wetland and lowland forest restoration, habitat enhancement and walkway development and education/interpretation of values.



Wellington | Te Upoko o te Ika a Māui

Regional Summary

Provider Organisation: Mountains to Sea Wellington (MTSW)

TPOS Approval Date: 9 November 2023

Regional Coordinator: Liz Gibson

Team:

Sam Kearns - Catchment Coordinator Te Awa Kairangi / Te Whānaganui a Tara

Abbey Huriwai - Catchment Coordinator Porirua/ Te Whānaganui a Tara

Alice Jenkins - Catchment Connector - Whole region

Roni Mohan - Catchment Connector - Whole region

Maddy Glover - Catchment Coordinator Wairarapa

Kara Kenny - Catchment Connector/ Coordinator Wairarapa

Liz Gibson - Regional Manager / Catchment Coordinator Kapiti

Elly Holland - Events, Comms and Volunteer Coordinator

Steve Moorhouse (left in Sept 2024) -> Sarah Kachwalla - Education and Administration Manager

Sarah Haerewa - Accounts

Ben Knight - Admin and HR

Regional Advisory Group:

This is a crowded space to work in Wellington and the addition of another advisory group for our work was unnecessary. MTSW meets regularly with our partners based on the variety of kaupapa that we do, as well as based on the locations we work. Wai Connection has given us more hours to engage with these many groups and committees, where we build relationships, plan and deliver mahi where needed to assist these groups and communities on the path to understanding and improving the outcomes of their waterways and catchments.

Catchment groups supported

Kāpiti Catchments

Waikanae Awa catchments
Mangaone Stream

Te Awarua o Porirua Catchments

Porirua Stream
Kenepuru Awa
Kahotea Stream
Pāuatahanui

Te Whanganui a Tara Catchments

Kaiwharawhara
Kumutoto
Waipahihi Karori
Makara Ohariu

Te Awa Kairangi Catchments

Te Awa Kairangi
- Mangaroa
- Halls Creek
- Pareraho Catchments
- Korokoro

Wairarapa Rūāmahanga Catchments

Waipoua
Wakamoekau
Mangatarere
Rangitūmau
Taueru
Whangaehu

Parkvale

Pāpāwai Mangarara

Waiunga

Tauanui

Turanganui

Wairarapa Moana

Wairarapa East Coast Catchments

Tinui

Whareama

Homewood

Awhea

Cofunded and collaborative programmes with:

- Wellington City Council
- Greater Wellington Regional Council
- Porirua City Council
- Ngati Toa Rangitira
- Ministry of Education
- NIWA
- Conservation Volunteers NZ
- Sustainable Coastlines
- DOC (Waikanae ki Uta ki Tai partnership)
- Enviroschools
- Environmental Educators Network

Team Capability / Expertise:

- Catchment group facilitation - from formation to action and celebration
- Community Engagement Events, eg. stream walks, taiao engagement days, spotlighting, community snorkel events, seaweed fest
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- Education programme delivery (Whitebait Connection, EMR, Love Rimurimu)
- Community Based Freshwater and Marine Monitoring
- Cultural health monitoring programme development and training with mana whenua
- Wānanga planning and delivery
- Stakeholder engagement
- Monitoring and restoration planning
- Inanga habitat assessment and restoration
- Marine/ estuarine/ coastal and freshwater ecology
- GIS
- Tangata whenua engagement and collaboration
- Communications and storytelling
- Seaweed spore collection, aquaculture (lab growth) and aPublic speaking
- Data analysis, interpretation and science communication
- Grant writing
- Project management - tools, tech, budgets, team hours etc

Training to date through Wai Connection

- First Aid
- Facilitate Aotearoa: Facilitating Effective Catchment Groups
- Massey University constructed wetland course
- ArcGIS online basics program
- ArcGIS Survey123 basics
- ArcGIS Survey123: Creating and publishing surveys
- ArcGIS Survey123: Using ArcGIS Survey123 Connect
- NZ Landcare Trust ACE training
- Water safety for events
- Whitebait Connection Programme Coordinator endorsement
- CBFM trainer endorsement
- NISP training
- Te Kuaha Te Tiriti training workshop
- Interpretation of water quality data with Traverse Environmental
- Algae identification and survey protocols with Traverse Environmental
- WQ monitoring training w/ community groups
- School education programmes
- Wairarapa wānanga on community connection and engagement, native forest regen, talks from Ranvir Singh on constructed wetlands
- Ngā kaitiaki taiao o Wairarapa Wānanga
- Wide range of engagement events across the region - stream open days, awa after dark events, planting days
- Wander Waipoua
- Freshwater conferences, presentations and talks



4100.5 volunteer
hours donated

Catchment group coverage
as a % of region: 29%



Number of engagements in community activities by type: July 2024–Jun 2025

3924



Education and
Training

4758



Community
engagement activities

711



Monitoring and
restoration

601



Hui

2024-2025 Wellington Wai Connection Year 2 Summary

24/25 Highlights - Communities in Action

The Wai Connection project has enabled transformative change across the Wellington Region through tailored, place-based support for community, mana whenua, and catchment groups to work together. Across the areas of Wairarapa, Kapiti Coast, Te Awa Kairangi, Porirua and Te Whānaganui a Tara, we have connected people to place, uplifted environmental capability and understanding, and empowered long-term restoration action grounded in collaboration and partnerships.

Some of our biggest region-wide highlights include:

- The roll out of our “Awa After Dark” spotlighting events - both targeted to catchment specific communities and to the wider public. These events have provided a platform for wider community engagement in catchment initiatives.
- Our massive collaborations and partnerships are at the heart of our success, with more than 48 different organisations working alongside us.
- Greater community engagement at local freshwater places, with 4758 people reached through Wai Connection Wellington events.
- We are actively monitoring freshwater biodiversity, habitats, and water quality at 72 different sites across the region, providing hands-on training to catchment

community groups. Many groups are ready to monitor independently and are comfortably using new Quality Assurance/Quality Control field tools to capture and store data.

- New discoveries in many catchments, such as finding piharau juvenile populations in the Waikanae catchment and detecting lymphocystis in bullies (the first group to do so). This lymphocystis data is soon to be included in a published Cawthron paper.
- Using their findings catchment groups have developed action plans, informing community planting sites, trials in innovative permaculture-inspired restoration methods, initiated SedNET modelling to identify sediment hotspots, secured funding for willow removal projects, and built on pest control programmes.

Learning About Our Local Waterways

Wai Connection has supported the Wairarapa Moana Īnanga Spawning Monitoring Project which aims to better understand Īnanga spawning habitats in the lower Wairarapa Moana catchment. Nine potential Īnanga spawning sites have been mapped using GIS and local input, with three prioritised for future monitoring. The project has engaged 122 people in three community events, with strong involvement from Rangitāne o Wairarapa, local schools, DOC, and MPI.

Freshwater monitoring with Pareraho Forest Trust, Korokoro Environment Group, and Opahu Stream Community Group has enabled community use of eDNA, and helped the groups to undertake advocacy, and build connections to council action. The Opahu group is now deeply embedded in their place.

In Porirua coordinated water quality and fish monitoring training and ongoing support has been delivered across six community groups, and to many schools.

Building Skills and Capacity for the Future

Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o Te Ika have been supported to design and gain resourcing to undertake Te Kura Takai Rangi, a cultural monitoring program. This program is now being trialled in Kaiwharawhara and a resource pukapuka guiding uri to undertake this monitoring program is nearing completion.

Support for groups such as FOWKS, Kumutoto Stream restoration, and Chartwell Reserve has included eDNA, SHMAK training, and fish passage assessments. These groups are growing in capability to undertake monitoring and restoration, with strong links to schools and tertiary students now being fostered.

The Wairarapa Catchment Collective has been supported to finalise their strategic plan, outlining a vision, purpose, and objectives. Fourteen catchment action plans have also been developed.

Kahotea Stream Restoration are empowered to advocate to council using their data, pushing for fecal pollution investigations and policy response, to accompany their planting efforts and ongoing monitoring. We have also built connections for them to mana whenua through codesigning an eDNA project - helping them to engage with Ngāti Toa to talk about wider outcomes for taiao in this space, such as eDNA, signage, monitoring, and planting.

Working Together for Our Waterways

In Kāpiti Wai Connection has supported a collaborative initiative bringing together Mountains to Sea Wellington, DOC, Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai, Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki. This partnership is actively monitoring juvenile piharau (lamprey) populations, strengthening the capability and skills of iwi taiao teams. The long term ambition is to re-establish the cultural practice of sustainably harvesting piharau.

In Te Awa Kairangi the community has reconnected with councils and other organisation partners through MTSW's Wai Connection events and wānanga - such as the "catchment catch up" networking event in Upper Hutt. This has helped with establishing and nurturing relationships,

building awareness of others and providing organisations access to community and taiao.

Public events such as the Bothamley Park Taiao Festival and Awa After Dark have strengthened ties with communities in Porirua East and Pauatahanui, and initiatives with KETE and schools broadened their connection to planting programs in the catchment.

Through the Whitebait Connection programme school students across the region have been part of meaningful catchment action. For example Southend School is undertaking ongoing water quality monitoring and moss translocation projects for the Mangatarere catchment group. Whareama school is undertaking inanga spawning artificial habitat trials and presenting to the catchment group.

In partnership with Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai a pepeha based taiao monitoring, education and action program has been delivered at Otaraia and on the awa. This programme has engaged all schools in Waikanae, and the wider community, in education programs and planting events. Planting events have kick started the native revegetation of a significant pā site with over 4000 trees planted.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Having only two coordinators in the Wairarapa isn't enough, an additional coordinator is required part time for field work assistance to have resilience.
- A tuākana-teina support model for coordinators has been beneficial.
- Some groups are very slow to form and despite keen individuals it takes a lot more community buy-in for any action to be successful and lasting.
- Cyclone recovery and low farm gate returns slowed progress for some groups in Wairarapa.
- Paid coordination for a leader in a group has enabled stronger community engagement.
- Funding continuity and volunteer capacity are key challenges.
- Organising continuation funding early will pay off long term.
- Fixed term contracts don't provide job security and good people leave before new funding is secured.
- Progress is most effective when the pace matches community readiness. Hard conversations take time.

What's Next?

Thanks to support from Greater Wellington Regional Council, MfE, Ministry of Education, and Wellington City Council - our project has been funded for another year and

we are in discussions for more long term funding.

While continuing on with work in all the regions we have identified some priorities for the year ahead. These include:

Supporting community engagement and data collection in preparation for the Wairarapa East Coast Whaitua process.

Continuing our partnership with Wairarapa Catchment Collective.

Expanding the school-catchment/community group linkage model for our education programme delivery across the whole region.

Continuation of the Wairarapa Moana Īnanga Spawning Project and community monitoring programme.

Expansion into new catchments such as Wainuiomata and building on support for rural fledgling catchment groups in Mangaone, Makara Ohariu, Pauatahanui and Upper Hutt.

Reviewing our Porirua catchment community group monitoring programmes and reprioritising efforts to work with groups in most need.

Reviewing Te Whanganui-a-Tara WIP and Te Mahere Wai to identify, prioritise and plan relevant community actions for improving urban waterways.

Continuing our support work for our mana whenua partners across the region with specific commitments to Taranaki Whānui, Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai, Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki, and Ngāti Hinewaka.

Bringing cohesion into our events calendar to build a solid schedule of summer season and winter season community events - Awa after dark in winter and day time events in summer.

Many of the groups who have undertaken two years of monitoring and training are now ready to take on independent monitoring. This will require proper data management check-ins. With succession planning they will graduate to being supported in other ways, such as data interpretation, additional skills workshops, restoration planning, and wider community engagement support. Some groups will remain in regular support as needed.



5

Wai Connection in Year Three: Sustaining the Network



Supporting Regions and Groups at Different Stages

As Wai Connection enters its third year, the project supports 13 regions and 350 plus groups at distinctly different stages of their community-led catchment management journeys. Groups with two years of implementation are demonstrating readiness for independence, having mastered monitoring techniques and built sustainable partnerships. Meanwhile, groups that received support from year two are rapidly developing foundational skills and beginning to experience the collaborative benefits of network participation.

This diversity creates a powerful mentoring dynamic across catchments and regions, where experienced groups support newer ones while learning from fresh approaches. The cross-pollination of ideas accelerates progress across all participants and demonstrates the value of sustained network investment.

Learning from Experience and New Challenges

Beyond providing evidence for the impact of the project to date, the evaluation report completed this month highlights important areas for improvement for the year to come, which in turn provides unique challenges for the Wai Connection network.

What's Working: The most significant outcomes emerge in the second year of implementation as relationships mature and skills become embedded. Newer regions benefit from proven models and network connections, though still require time for full development.

Key Challenges: Two critical needs have emerged from the evaluation process:



Data Management Infrastructure: The incomplete objective for a CBFM website/portal leaves a need unmet. While we did not secure sufficient stakeholder support to build the proposed data sovereignty-respecting platform, the need for groups to store, analyze, and share monitoring data persists.



Reduced Interregional Capacity: Budget reductions have significantly impacted the national budget that funded cross-regional training, wānanga, and knowledge sharing. While regional support continues, reduced national coordination limits professional development opportunities and inter-regional collaboration.

Year 3 focus areas



Despite budget constraints, Wai Connection maintains its commitment to supporting **175 catchment groups** across the network. Regional teams have conducted detailed analysis to prioritize where resources can achieve maximum impact, focusing on:

Established Groups: Supporting transition to independence through strategic mentoring, data interpretation assistance, and connection to funding opportunities.

Emerging Groups: Intensive skill building using refined approaches while rapidly connecting groups to the broader network for shared learning.

Network Resilience: Coordinated planning and strengthened stakeholder relationships will maximize value sharing across the network, while fundraising efforts support continued cross-regional learning opportunities.

Foundation for Future Growth



With strong foundations laid in 13 regions and momentum growing in many groups around the country, the Wai Connection project is set for another great year of grassroots capacity and capability building. With proven models, trained coordinators, and demonstrated outcomes across regions at different implementation stages, Wai Connection has created a robust foundation for strategic expansion. The network effect ensures new participants can benefit from accumulated knowledge while contributing fresh innovations.

The evidence is clear: strategic investment in community-led catchment management delivers measurable environmental and social returns that strengthen over time. As established regions transition toward independence and newer regions build capacity, the opportunity exists to support more communities through this proven pathway.

Year Three priorities focus on maintaining network connections despite resource constraints, supporting groups toward independence, and building the infrastructure necessary for future expansion. The methods are proven, the pathway is established - ensuring continued access to this transformative approach to freshwater stewardship remains the central challenge and opportunity ahead.



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