

**Purpose:** To show the Jobs for Nature investment to date in the West Coast region and the significance of funding in the context of economic and environmental challenges.



Map sourced from Land Information New Zealand 2023

## Significance of Jobs for Nature (J4N) funding to the West Coast region during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Economic and employment impacts:** The expected employment and economic impacts due to the COVID-19 lockdowns and border closures on the West Coast were significant. The region was already facing financial difficulties with disruptions from the Waiho Bridge washout, the Omoto slip and the partial closure of SH6 in December 2019.

The West Coast economy comprises of a small number of industries with tourism, agriculture, and mining making significant contributions. The region is heavily reliant on tourism, with guest nights per capita, five times higher than the national average. The ability for the West Coast to offset these losses through domestic tourism was challenged by its remoteness from major population centres in the North Island and scale of the decline.<sup>1</sup> During the early stages of the pandemic the region's forecast decline in employment to 2021 (relative to BAU) was -9.0%.

Māori, Pasifika and youth were likely to experience the greatest impacts, particularly those in key tourism centres. An increase in youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) was expected.

A survey conducted by Development West Coast found that 9% of all businesses were no longer operating, with 15% of businesses indicating that they would not survive the subsequent six months without additional support.<sup>2</sup> The tourism industry was hit hard, with visitor spending falling from \$522 million to \$480 million in the year to March 2020.<sup>3</sup>

## Environmental challenges facing the region

**Flooding and landslides** are a recurring issue on the West Coast, with heavy rains causing slips, rivers to break their banks, and thousands of residents to be evacuated from their homes.<sup>4</sup> Many West Coast communities are located along narrow coastal and river strips beneath mountain ranges, leaving them exposed to increased risks of storms, flooding and landslides.<sup>5</sup>

**Climate change impacts:** Rising sea levels and increased storm surges can erode coastlines and inundate low-lying areas. Additionally, changing weather patterns can impact the region's unique ecosystems.<sup>6</sup>

**Water quality challenges:** Freshwater ecosystems on the West Coast are rich in biodiversity, but modified environments and reduced water quality have negative consequences for ecosystem health.

Water pollution is also an issue with acid mine drainage having significant effects on freshwater ecosystems. Water deterioration occurs at the lower levels of a number of catchments.<sup>7</sup>

**Impact of agricultural and urban pressures:** Most waterways in the West Coast region drain catchments with indigenous land cover. However, agricultural land cover and intensity have increased, which might explain the increasing trends observed for nitrogen and E. coli.<sup>8</sup>

# Regional Profile: West Coast/Te Tai o Poutini

## How is J4N investment addressing environmental challenges facing the region while creating employment opportunities?

Data as at 30 September 2023

<b>Funding</b>	\$26.9 million across 17 projects
<b>Employment opportunities</b>	591
<b>Hours worked</b>	344,947

These projects collectively aim to improve biodiversity, restore natural habitats, engage local communities, improve infrastructure and contribute to boosting the West Coast economy.

The projects are educating employees and the community on sustainable practices, ensuring equitable treaty participation, and create recreational opportunities for the community and visitors. We're creating employment opportunities and capability development for local communities, including for Māori rangatahi.

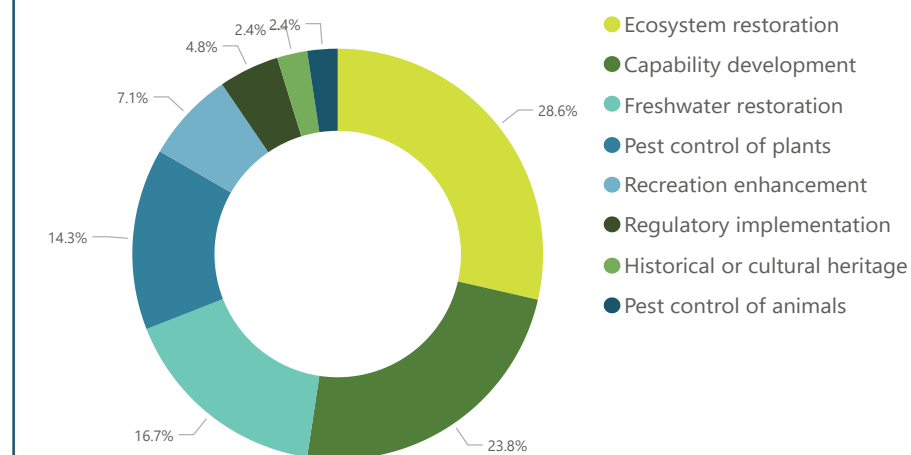
## Overview of labour market participation in the West Coast region

Labour market <sup>9</sup>	
Working age population <sup>10</sup>	60.5% (2022)
Labour force participation rate	60% with an average estimated 18,652 employees (2023)
Employment rate	57%
Median annual household income <sup>11</sup>	\$62,369 (2022)
Unemployment rate <sup>12</sup>	3.5% (2023) NEET RATE: 11.7% (2020) <sup>13</sup>

Māori	
Population	12% (3687) 2018
Working age	Suppressed
Labour force participation	Suppressed <sup>14</sup>
Unemployment rate <sup>18</sup>	Suppressed <sup>15</sup>

Pasifika	
Population	1.5% (477) (2018)
Working age	Suppressed <sup>16</sup>
Unemployment rate	Suppressed <sup>17</sup>

Percentage distribution of project intent across West Coast



Source [Q1 Data as at 30 September 2023]

## References

1. Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. (2020). Regional Summary West Coast August 2020.
2. Radio New Zealand. (26 November 2023). Survey shows extent of Covid-19 impact on south Westland.
3. West Coast. (2023). West Coast economic update.
4. West Coast Regional Council. (December 2018). State of Environment Document West Coast region.
5. Refer 4.
6. Ministry for the Environment. (31 May 2018). Climate change projections for the West Coast region.
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8. The West Coast Regional Council. (2018) State of the Environment Summary 2018.
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10. Ministry for Business Innovation & Employment. (2023). Regional Factsheets.
11. Infometrics. (2023). Regional Economic Profile - West Coast Region.
12. Infometrics. (2023). Regional Economic Profile - West Coast Region. West Coast Region at a Glance.
13. Refer 12.
14. StatsNZ has suppressed these figures to protect the privacy of individuals.
15. StatsNZ has suppressed these figures to protect the privacy of individuals.
16. StatsNZ has suppressed these figures to protect the privacy of individuals.
17. StatsNZ has suppressed these figures to protect the privacy of individuals.

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