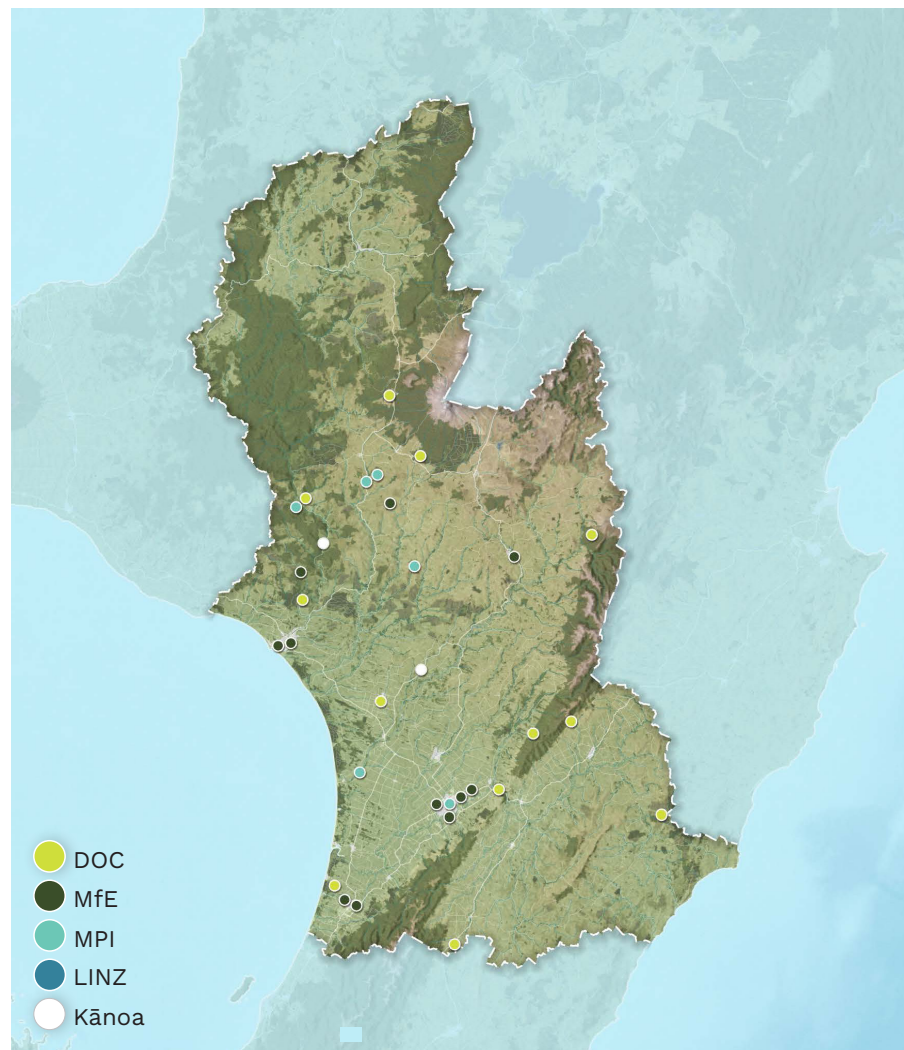


Purpose: To show the Jobs for Nature investment to date in the Manawatū-Whanganui region and the significance of funding in context of the economic and environmental challenges to the region.



Map sourced from Land Information New Zealand 2023

Significance of Jobs for Nature (J4N) funding to the Manawatū-Whanganui region during the COVID-19 pandemic

Economic and employment impacts: The Manawatu-Whanganui region was expected to handle the economic impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns better than most due to the agricultural and defence sectors that were able to continue operating.¹ However, the region still anticipated a loss of \$382.5 million in 2020 due to the Level 3 and 4 COVID-19 restrictions.² The retail, accommodation and food services sectors, and the wider services sector were considered the most vulnerable to the impacts of the lockdown period.

The region's employment was predicted to drop by 5.3% in 2021, which was less than the national average drop of 6.7%. The most affected groups were expected to be Māori and Pasifika communities, and young people, especially in smaller regional centres. The number of young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) was expected to increase, with Māori job losses from 2020 to 2022 predicted to be around 4%.³

Environmental challenges facing the region

Climate impacts: The region is projected to experience increased drought and ongoing sea-level rise, which could expose larger parts of the region to flood hazards, particularly in the Manawatū, Rangitikei, and Tararua districts.⁴

Water quality: The region's rivers and streams have seen increased phosphorous and algal growth levels over the last decade, largely due to land use and discharges into the water. The Manawatū River in particular, has seen a decline in water quality over recent decades.⁵

Deforestation and biodiversity loss: The Foxton Estuary is one of the largest on the North Island. Recognised internationally as a Ramsar site (wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention), it is an important site for migratory shorebirds and hosts up to 93 species. Protection of this site is crucial for the biodiversity of the area.

From 2000-2020, the Manawatū-Whanganui region experienced a net change of 0.65% in tree cover. The loss of indigenous vegetation has led to increasingly fragmented and degraded habitats, impacting the region's biodiversity.⁶ For instance, the ancient lowland kahikatea forest in the region has been reduced to less than 5% of its former extent.

Many of the rare and threatened fish species in the region are also highly vulnerable to regional decline or extinction.

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

Data as at 30 September 2023

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Funding | \$61.1 million across 31 projects |
| Employment opportunities | 508 |
| Hours worked | 520,507 |

The J4N projects in the Manawatū-Whanganui region collectively contribute to the restoration and protection of ecosystems, improvement of water quality, employment and skill development, biodiversity conservation, and cultural heritage restoration.

There is significant focus on investment in iwi groups, with projects aimed at enhancing the capacity and capability of Māori communities, while also delivering environmental benefits.

Benefits include:

Ecosystem restoration and protection: These projects aim to restore and protect ecosystems that have been affected by human activities. This not only helps to maintain biodiversity but also ensures the continued provision of essential ecosystem services such as clean air, water, and food.

Freshwater protection: The investments are helping with maintaining and enhancing the health of freshwater systems, which is crucial for both human consumption and the survival of various species. Our fencing waterways projects protect freshwater from pollutants and create a habitat for various species.

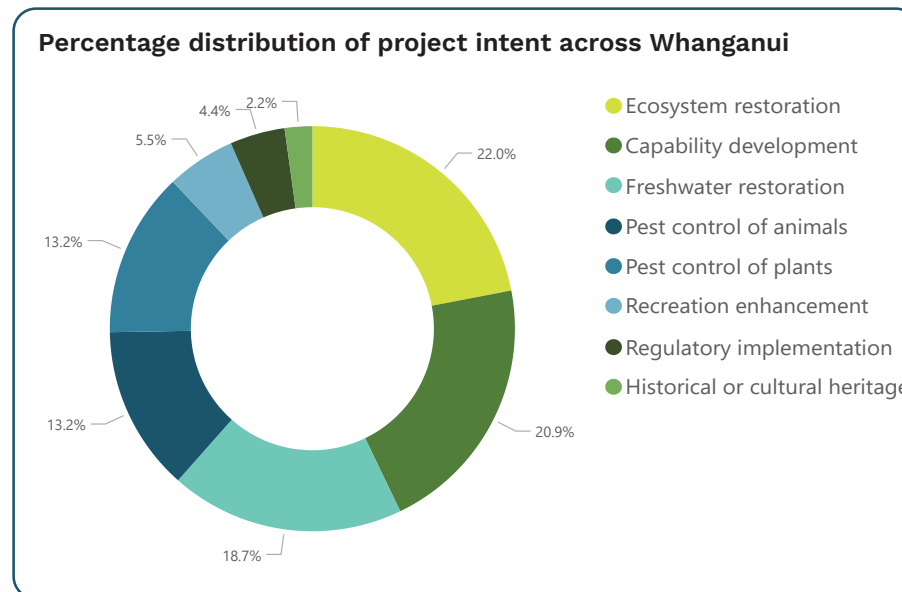
Skills and training: Our projects are providing jobs and training opportunities, improving the capabilities of the local community, preserving cultural heritage, and addressing skill shortages. These projects are upskill individuals to undertake fencing, riparian planting, pest control, and biodiversity activities, which are in high demand in the region.

Overview of labour market participation in the Whanganui region

| Labour market | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Working age population | 198,300 (2020) |
| Labour force participation rate | 69.0% with an estimated average of 135,400 employed |
| Employment rate | 64.1% |
| Median annual household income | 103,000 (2023) |
| Unemployment rate | 4.1% (2023) NEET rate: 12.8% |

| Māori *includes data from Taranaki | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Population | 23.2% (2023) |
| Employment | 63.4% with an estimated average of 39,000 employed (September 2023) |
| Labour force participation | 68.3% (2020) |
| Unemployment rate | 8.7% (September 2023) |

| Pasifika | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Population | 4.4 (2023) |
| Working age | 8,500 (2020) |
| Participation | 70.5% (2020) |
| Unemployment rate | 7.2% (2020) |



Source [Q1 Data as at 30 September 2023]

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