

Purpose: To show the Jobs for Nature investment to date in Otago 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 Otago region during the pandemic

Economic and employment impacts of COVID-19: The construction and tourism industries in Otago were expected to be the hardest hit, with job losses of approximately 1,350 expected over a 12-month period in 2020. Projected job losses for Māori 2020-22 were expected to be 6% and the Mackenzie District expected to lose nearly 8% of total employment.¹

A survey conducted in April 2020 found that 13% of households had lost more than a third of their income due to the impacts of COVID-19, with a further 25% suffering losses less than a third.²

Early estimates for the Queenstown-Lakes, district heavily reliant on tourism, found that employment was projected to fall by 25.3% between March 2020 and March 2021, with a total loss of 7,900 jobs. A contraction of 23.3% in economic activity (GDP) in the District over the year to March 2021 was also expected.³

Environmental challenges facing Otago

Climate change: Otago's climate is diverse and can be extreme, with noticeable long-term trends of climate and sea level changes already occurring. In the coming years, it is expected to face further climate changes, which could increasingly affect local communities negatively. The region may experience hotter temperatures, with more frequent hot days and fewer frosty ones. Winters and springs are likely to become wetter, and there could be a significant reduction in snowfall.⁴

Otago has been identified as having one of the highest flood risks in the country, accounting for 15% of the national annual average river flood loss.⁵ In 2020, the region experienced significant flooding events that caused substantial damage and economic costs.

Water management: The region is experiencing a short supply of surface water in some areas, necessitating the careful use of water. Changes in climate could lead to increased river flows in some areas, but also potential decreases in runoff in coastal areas if warmer and drier conditions are realised.⁶

Intensified agriculture and land use, associated runoff into rivers and lakes, increased demands for irrigation water, and land-tenure change all contribute to pressures on the environment.⁷

Deforestation has resulted in dramatic biological shifts in freshwater ecosystems. This has had major impacts on the diversity of species present in rivers and on ecosystem function, with several key forest species now being rare or absent in deforested regions.⁸

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

Data as at 30 September 2023

Funding	\$61.9 million across 31 projects
Employment opportunities	910
Hours worked	588,845

J4N projects in the Otago region are collectively delivering a wide range of environmental and social benefits these include:

Environmental benefits

Delivering ecosystem restoration, pest control, and freshwater restoration benefits. The Jobs Increasing Hoiho Conservation project is helping to recover the hoiho/yellow-eyed penguins through species monitoring, pest control, and habitat fencing. With the Southern Lakes Sanctuary employing people to deliver landscape-scale predator control conservation work, protecting a diverse range of indigenous fauna.

Te Nukuroa o Matamata is restoring the Taiari catchment by improving water quality, reversing the negative effects of drainage, development, and adverse land use practices.

Social and cultural benefits

The projects provide opportunities for capability development and skills training. Training individuals in environmental and conservation work, provides them with valuable skills that can be used in future employment. The Wild - Queenstown & Fiordland Workforce Hub project recruited displaced tourism workers into conservation projects within the region, providing immediate employment opportunities.

Many of the Otago projects include local communities and iwi and hapū groups in ecosystem restoration efforts. For example, the Te Nukuroa o Matamata project uses mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) to empower kaitiakitanga (guardianship) in the restoration of the Taiari catchment.

Tourism benefits

J4N projects in Otago contribute to the local economy. Increased conservation and biodiversity efforts help protect the wildlife and tourism. The gross annual turnover of enterprises directly involved in the viewing of wildlife on the Otago Peninsula is around \$6.5 million per year, and they employ the equivalent of 70 full-time persons. The presence of wildlife species and their use for tourism generate over \$100 million annually in the Dunedin regional economy, creating 800-1,000 full-time equivalent jobs.⁹

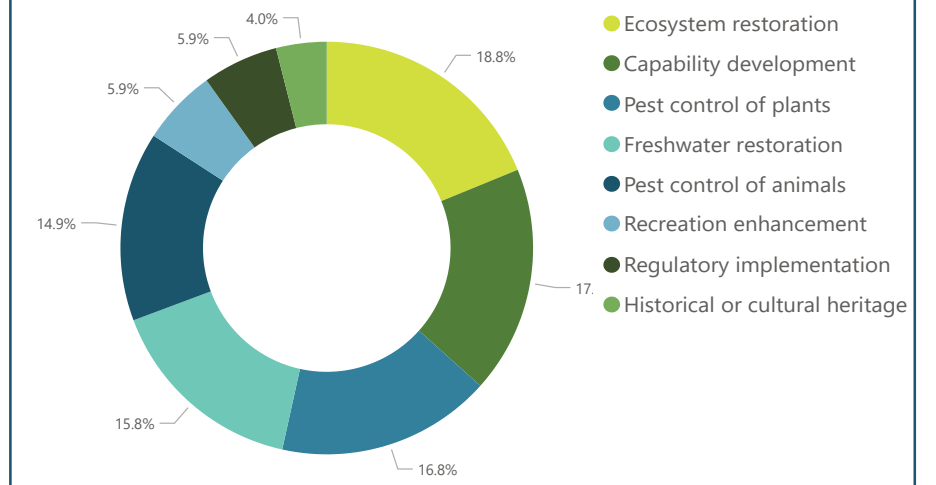
Overview of labour market participation in the region

Labour market	
Working age population ¹⁰	287,600 (includes Southland) (2021)
Labour force participation rate ¹¹	71.8% with an estimated 151,400 people employed (2023)
Employment rate	69.7% (2023)
Median annual household income ¹²	\$102,800 (2023)
Unemployment rate ¹³	2.7% NEET: 9.0% (2023)

Māori	
Population	20,600 (2018)
Working age	12,800 (2020)
Participation	70.1% (2020)
Unemployment rate ¹⁴	4.3% (2023)

Pasifika	
Population	6,099 (2018)
Working age	3,900 (2020)
Participation	79.0% (2020)
Unemployment rate ¹⁵	4.3% (2023)

Percentage distribution of project intent across Otago



Source [Q1 Data as at 30 September 2023]

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