

**JOBS | MAHI**  
FOR NATURE | MŌ TE TAIAO



# Mahitahi Project Profile



Purpose of this review:

**To highlight the positive social,  
environmental, and community benefits of  
Project Mahitahi.**







## Mahitahi – Maitai Ecological Restoration

Project Mahitahi is a joint effort to restore the ecosystem in the Maitai/Mahitahi Valley area. In collaboration with local iwi, this project focused on enhancing the area's ecological health by managing plant and animal pests while creating employment opportunities.

### Project goals<sup>1</sup>

- The terrestrial eco-systems of the Maitai/Mahitahi River and the Waimarāma (Brook) Stream are restored through planting of native species, managing invasive pests, and creating a functioning bio-corridor for wildlife (kaitiakitanga)
- Taonga are protected through partnerships (kotahitanga)
- People and communities are connected through enjoying the well-being of the river (whanaungatanga).

Region	Nelson Tasman
Recipient	Nelson City Council
Start date	30/11/2020
End date	04/11/2022
Approved funding	\$2m
Intent	Capability development, ecosystem restoration, freshwater restoration, pest control animals, pest control plants
Partners	Kūmānu Environmental, Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Kuia Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Koata Trust, Fulton Hogan, the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary, Easy Trails, and Nelson City Council Cawthron Institute, Nelson EnviroSchools, Nelson College for Girls, and Multi-cultural Nelson Tasman
Funder	Department of Conservation

## Why is the project important for the region? <sup>2</sup>

The creation of immediate employment opportunities for individuals in the Nelson Tasman region played a crucial role in alleviating pressure for potential unemployment during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ecological restoration of the Maitai/Mahitahi Valley needed to be restored back to health because of invasive plant and animal species, the loss of native biodiversity and an increase in soil erosion.

The project has generated significant value for the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary, estimated to be three times the funding received. It is estimated that for every \$1 of project funding spent so far, the Sanctuary has gained \$3 in benefits. The benefits include providing meaningful employment in the conservation field to people whose livelihoods were impacted by COVID-19, improved community visibility, volunteer skills development, increased sales, more visitors, growth in membership base, and a larger pool of skills and talents within the staff employed.

## What difference is the project making to people?

### Employment opportunities

The project employed 59 people over the two-year period of funding with a combined hours of 54,406, offering roles ranging from full-time positions to summer internships and temporary roles during peak planting season.

### Career advancement

Thirteen people have been retained by their host employer for full time roles and 11 have been employed in other Jobs for Nature (J4N) projects. Of the seven who

have found permanent employment outside of J4N or their J4N employer, two are employed by DOC, one at Wellington City Council Parks, one at Auckland Zoo, one is leading a community conservation team, one is employed at Nelson City Council as a freshwater technician, and one has found private employment.

### Improved skills and capabilities

Project Mahitahi created a range of roles, including planting and pest plant control, possum control, trapping for mustelids and rats, volunteer coordination and visitor services, biosecurity, nursery production, and administrative support. This led to the development of a tailored training programme at Kūmānu Environmental, which has been successfully delivered to J4N staff and the wider conservation community.

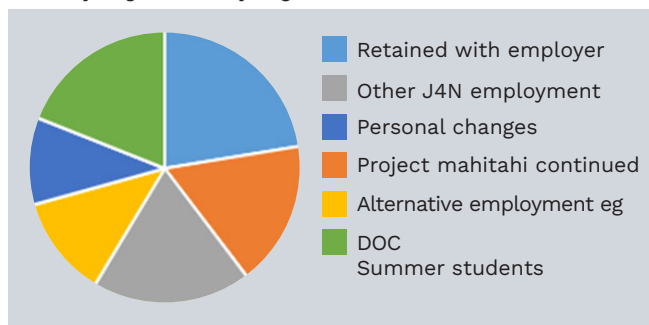
The project offered a diverse range of qualifications for participants, both formal and informal, allowing employees to specialize in areas such as animal pest control, weed management, or nursery skills. The project offered opportunities for cultural and leadership development. Eligible staff were able to participate in a Te Puni Kokiri

### Breakdown of roles created through Project Mahitahi

Employer	No	Roles
Nelson City Council	2	Project management and administration
Fulton Hogan	3	Animal pest control
Ngāti Koata Trust	3	Wetland restoration
Easy Trails	5	Weed control
Brook Sanctuary	5	Visitor and volunteer support; Biosecurity
Kūmānu Environmental	41	Weed and animal pest control; planting; GIS and technical support



## Post project employment status



programme, with 11 rangers completing their Kūmānu Conservation Ranger certificate, which covers technical, cultural, and leadership skills.<sup>3</sup>

## Benefits to Māori

Planting taonga species acknowledges and respects the cultural importance of these species to the local Māori communities, and the project's efforts contribute to habitat improvement and preservation of indigenous tree and plant species.

## Community impact<sup>7</sup>

By investing in ecological restoration and providing employment opportunities, the project helps reduce the future costs associated with environmental damage and unemployment benefits. This in turn, contributes to the overall economic wellbeing of the region.

## Recreation and tourism

Improved natural areas in the region attracts visitors and provide recreational opportunities, potentially boosting local tourism and related businesses.

## Impacts on the environment

The project has made a significant impact on the local environment in the Nelson Tasman region through direct and indirect benefits. These include:

## Improved ecosystem services

The project improved water quality in the Maitai/Mahitahi River by planting trees, controlling pest plants, and restoring wetlands, leading to benefits such as water filtration, air purification and carbon storage.<sup>8</sup>

## Improved flood resilience

The increased vegetation helps reduce flooding by absorbing and slowing down excess water, and the project contributed to the restoration of 1.3 hectares of wetlands.<sup>9</sup>

## Reduced erosion

Planting trees, including taonga species, stabilizes riverbanks and decreases erosion in the Maitai/Mahitahi Valley.

## Improved biodiversity

The project's tree planting, pest plant control, and wetland restoration efforts enhance habitats and protect indigenous tree and plant species, some of which are unique to the Maitai/Mahitahi Valley.<sup>10</sup>

## Pest management

Project Mahitahi controls pest plants in the Maitai/Mahitahi and Brook Wāimarama catchment, limiting the spread of invasive plant species.



# References

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<sup>1</sup> Kaimahi for Nature: End of Project Report (January 2022)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Conservation. (2020). Jobs for Nature boost for enhancing Nelson's Mahitahi (Maitai) River. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2020-media-releases/jobs-for-nature-boost-for-enhancing-nelsons-mahitahi-maitai-river/> and Project Mahitahi | Shape Nelson

<sup>3, 4, 5</sup> Refer 1

<sup>6</sup> Refer 3 and benefits flow from Project Maitai | stuff.co.nz

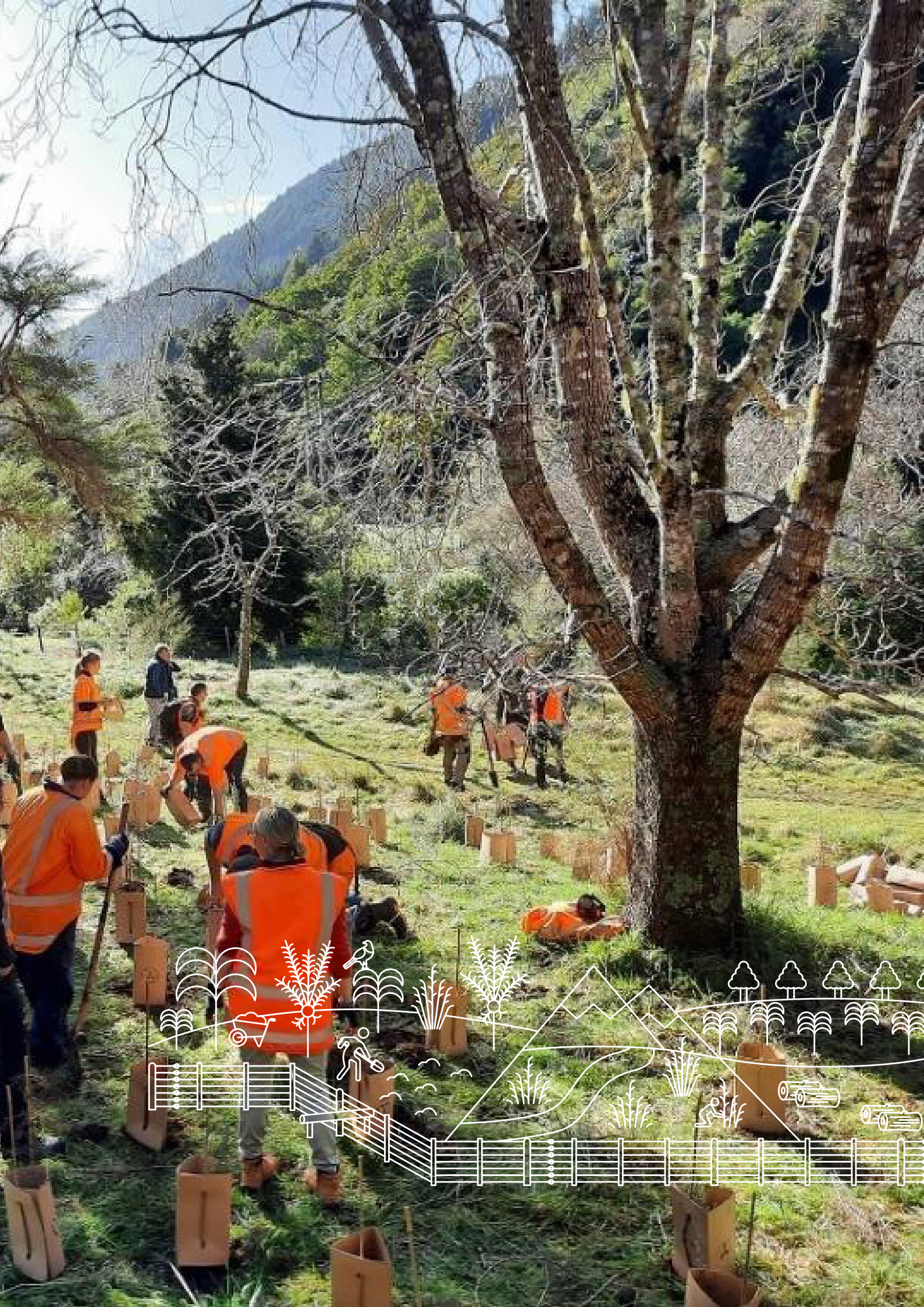
<sup>7</sup> Ministry for the Environment. (September 2021). \$3.7m project to restore the mauri of Nelson's Mahitahi catchment well underway. <https://environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/stories/3-7m-project-to-restore-the-mauri-of-nelsons-mahitahi-catchment-well-underway/#:~:text=Read%20inspiring%20stories-.%243.7m%20project%20to%20restore%20the%20mauri%20of%20Nelson%27s%20Mahitahi,the%20Jobs%20for%20Nature%20programme>

<sup>8</sup> Society for Conservation Biology. (23 October 2017). <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/conl.12419>

<sup>9</sup> AdvantaClean. (October 26 2017). What are the best plants for flood control? [The Best Plants For Flood Control | Article \(advantaclean.com\)](#) and [Ecosystem Services | National Wildlife Federation \(nwf.org\)](#) and The National Wildlife Federation. Ecosystem Services. <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Understanding-Conservation/Ecosystem-Services>

<sup>10</sup> Trees unlimited L.L.C. (30 August 2021). How to prevent soil erosion using trees. <https://treesunlimitednj.com/how-to-prevent-soil-erosion-using-trees/>

**All images courtesy of Project Mahitahi and the Kūmānu Environmental - Conservation Projects Team**



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