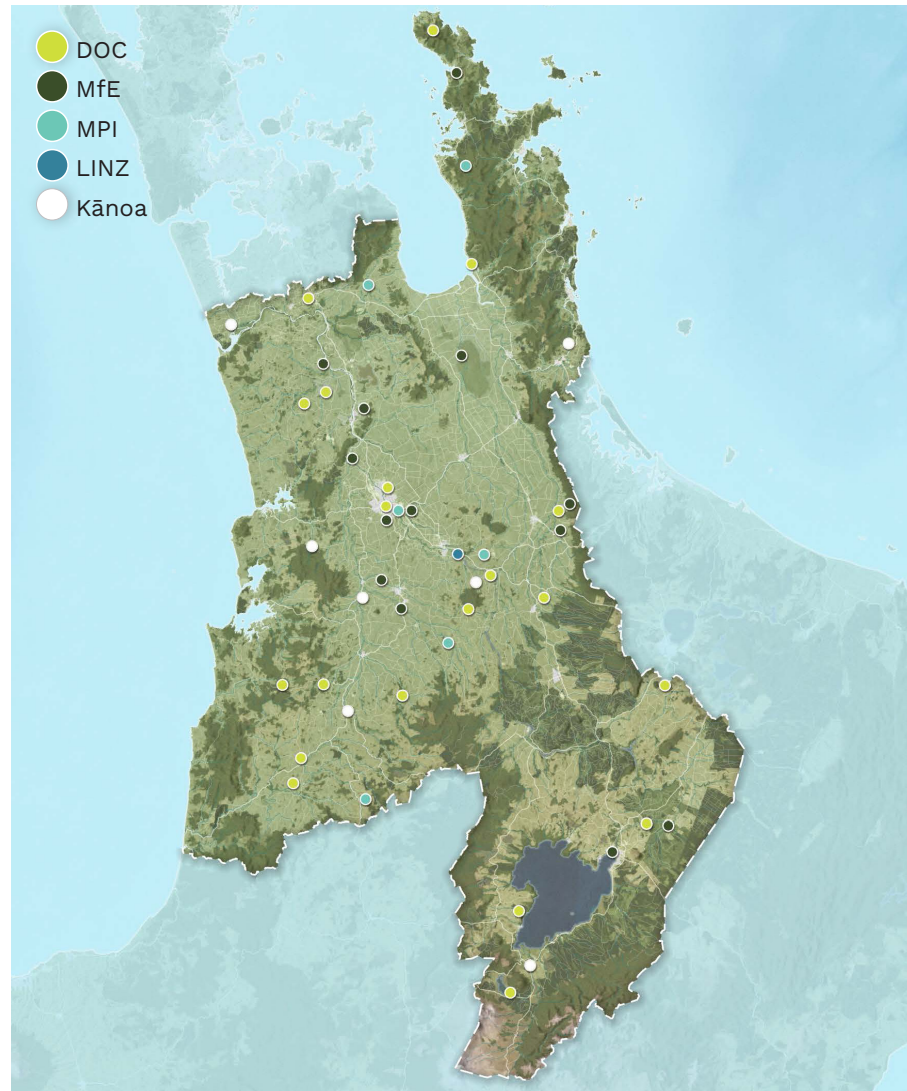


Purpose: To show the Jobs for Nature investment to date in the Waikato region and the significance of funding given in context of the economic and environmental challenges to the region.



Map sourced from Land Information New Zealand 2023

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

Economic and employment impacts: The COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 impacted the Waikato region, affecting all sectors, with a significant rise in unemployment predicted. The region’s employment was forecasted to fall by 5.6% relative to usual business operations. During the lockdown, 83% of businesses in the region accessed the wage subsidy, and 63% of households reported a decrease in their incomes, with some experiencing a total loss. The number of individuals seeking job benefits increased by 25%, with nearly half being first-time beneficiaries.¹

The agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors were anticipated to suffer due to the drought, fluctuating commodity prices, and export challenges. The agricultural sector, particularly dairy and meat farmers provided economic support but border closures at the time led to an increase in skill shortages for the sector.²

It was anticipated that the impacts of COVID-19 would have a significant impact on Māori employment, with an 8% job loss predicted, potentially doubling in 2020/21.³

Environmental challenges facing the region

Climate change: The region is experiencing the impacts of climate change, such as drought, reduced rainfall, water scarcity, and flooding.⁴ Rainfall patterns are also expected to change, with decreases in rainfall projected for the eastern regions of New Zealand.⁵

Higher temperatures and changes in rainfall could result in higher lake levels, more algal blooms, a reduced range of trout, and the spread of pest species like carp.⁶ High greenhouse gas emissions per capita are a concern, particularly because a large share comes from agriculture, which is a significant sector in the Waikato region.⁷

Pollution of freshwater: Freshwater pollution is spreading over a wider area, affecting the quality of water bodies in the region. Water quality tends to be poorer in areas of intensive farming, including the extensive areas of dairy farming for which the region is known.⁸

Biodiversity loss: More than 200 native plant and animal species are under threat of extinction in the Waikato region. The threats to biodiversity include habitat loss and degradation, pests, and disease. The Waikato Biodiversity Forum is a partnership between community groups, landowners, iwi, research, and government agencies including J4N working to halt the loss of biodiversity in the region.⁹

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

Data as at 30 September 2023

Funding	\$48.2 million across 51 projects
Employment opportunities	1,005
Hours worked	519,049

Collectively the Waikato J4N projects contribute to a more sustainable and resilient region, with improved natural environments, stronger communities, and a highly skilled workforce.

Benefits include:

Improved health and wellbeing

By improving access to natural spaces and enhancing recreational areas, these projects contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of the community. Projects like the ecological corridor between Maungatautari and Pirongia involve community participation, improve community engagement in nature-based activities which strengthens social bonds, and increases participation in nature.

Skills and training

Waikato J4N projects offer training opportunities such as biodiversity skills, pest control, riparian wetland management, and upskilling the environmental workforce.

Contribution to restoring ecosystems and freshwater resources

Many projects focus on restoring native habitats, controlling pests, and planting native species, which contribute to biodiversity conservation. Projects like the Waipa River restoration involve fencing and planting along waterways, improving water quality and aquatic habitats.

Cultural benefits and heritage preservation

Projects often include historical or cultural heritage restoration, which helps preserve the cultural identity and heritage of the local iwi and hapū

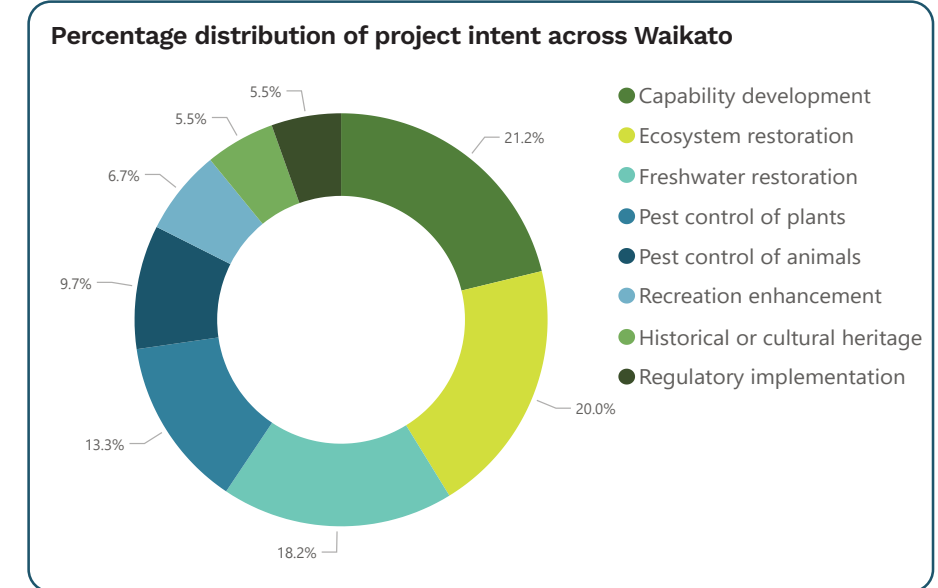
Some projects integrate Mātauranga Māori knowledge and practices which contributes to strengthening the cultural connection to the land and water. Many projects include historical or cultural heritage restoration, which helps preserve the cultural identity and heritage of the local iwi and hapū. businesses and workforce.

Overview of labour market participation in the Waikato region

Labour market	
Working age population ¹¹	327,276 (2023)
Labour force participation rate ¹²	69.8% with an estimated average of 280,700 employed (2023)
Employment rate ¹³	64.9% (2023)
Median annual household income ¹⁴	\$108,500 (2023)
Unemployment rate ¹⁵	4.2% NEET 12.2% ¹⁶

Māori ¹⁵	
Population ¹⁷	24.2%
Employment rate ¹⁸	60.8% with an estimated 56,200 employed
Participation	67.4%
Unemployment rate ¹⁹	9.7% (2023)

Pasifika	
Population ²⁰	4.7% (2023)
Employment rate ²¹	68.0% (2023)
Participation	70.0% (2020)
Unemployment rate ²²	5.9% (2023)



Source [Q1 Data as at 30 September 2023]

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