CAWTHRON

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# CATCHMENT AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT GROUPS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND: GOALS, ACTIVITIES AND NEEDS

# CATCHMENT AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT GROUPS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND: GOALS, ACTIVITIES AND NEEDS

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Prepared for the Ministry for the Environment

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ministry for the Environment contracted the Cawthron Institute to survey catchment and community environment groups about how they are organised, what they are doing, what obstacles they face and their priorities for additional support. A link to an online survey was distributed by sector groups, NZ Landcare Trust, Predator Free NZ Trust, and regional councils. The survey was open from 1 September to 26 October 2021 and generated 240 useable responses.

**Organisation: Establishment and membership**

Of the biodiversity groups in our survey, 65% have existed for at least six years and half for 10 years or more. Two-thirds of waterways groups were formed in 2014 or later, with increases in 2017 and 2020 when new versions of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management were released by the government.

Biodiversity groups include both very small groups (25% with 10 or fewer members) and very large groups (4% with over 1000 members), whereas waterways groups are clustered around 20 people—78% of such groups have between 11 and 50 members. Town residents comprise the vast majority of those involved in biodiversity groups, while farmers—especially sheep and beef and dairy—account for most of those involved in waterways groups. Groups with a dual focus (i.e. biodiversity and waterways) have a mix of town and rural residents. In terms of who is not involved, forestry was most often mentioned as a land use that was not represented in a group, and farming was often mentioned as missing by biodiversity groups.

Of respondents, 37% said they had local tangata whenua as members of their group. Groups with a focus on waterways, or a dual biodiversity-waterways focus, were more likely to have tangata whenua members. A greater proportion, 69%, said their group interacts with Māori entities such as iwi, hapū, marae and Māori land trusts.

**What they are doing: Activities and monitoring**

Of the biodiversity groups who responded, 93% undertake pest or weed control and another 66% do planting for riparian management or biodiversity purposes. A majority (59%) do environmental monitoring. Other common activities include wetland restoration or protection (47%), improving local amenities (39%) and advocacy including making submissions or other representations to government or industry (33%).

Groups that have a dual focus on biodiversity and water have a wider range of activities than biodiversity groups, including planting (89%), wetland restoration or protection (66%), advocacy (61%), soil conservation (52%), and fencing (41%). In addition, half (50%) say they are doing collective management of water quality, while 30% are helping members with farm environment plans and 27% are looking at land use change or land retirement. A sizeable share of these groups (20%) is involved in constructing wetlands.

Groups that have a primary focus on waterways undertake similar activities as groups with a dual focus, though fewer waterways groups are involved in pest and weed control and improving local amenities.

Most groups, some 81%, said their group monitored progress toward their objectives, which is more than the number that reported environmental monitoring. This may be because 'progress toward objectives' was interpreted to include activities such as trees planted or traps set. Most biodiversity groups use multiple measures of activity reporting, although 47% also reported monitoring biodiversity outcomes. Pest kills and bird counts were the most common outcome measures. Water quality is being monitored by 22% of the groups with a waterway health focus.

**What support they would benefit from: Funding and other support**

Community environment and catchment groups obtain funding from a wide variety of sources, and these do not vary much across types of groups. Roughly equal numbers of groups source fundings from local and regional councils, charitable foundations and trusts, and central government. Private companies are a less common funder. Roughly half of biodiversity groups and waterways groups reported receiving less than $10,000 during the past three years while, at the other end of the spectrum, about 10% of groups have received more than $500,000 during the same period.

Groups receive advice and other forms of non-financial support from a wide variety of sources. Over half of biodiversity groups reported getting advice and support from both their city or district council and their regional (or unitary) council. The Department of Conservation has provided support to roughly one-quarter of biodiversity groups.

Waterways groups, and those with a dual focus, were more likely to get support from their regional council, with three-quarters of these groups receiving such support, and many also received support from city and district councils and from industry bodies. The NZ Landcare Trust is also a common source of support. Technical support was the most common type of support received by biodiversity groups, whereas assistance with meetings, with environmental monitoring and, to a lesser degree, funding applications, were common forms of assistance to waterways and dual-focus groups.

In terms of additional support that groups most need, technical support and monitoring were most frequently mentioned by biodiversity groups, followed by help preparing funding applications. For groups focused on waterways, or with a dual focus, technical support, monitoring, and help with funding applications were mentioned a roughly equal number of times. However, many respondents, especially from biodiversity groups, used the 'Other' option to say that their main need was for funding. Several others mentioned needing labour or help recruiting or managing labour.

**Priorities and constraints**

Asked what they would do if sufficient resources were available, biodiversity groups mostly mentioned expanding their current activities, i.e. pest and weed control, planting and environmental monitoring. However, 13% of these groups want to start cultural monitoring and 9% want to start environmental monitoring. Among waterways groups, most notable are the number that would like to initiate environmental monitoring (21%) and cultural monitoring (12%), and the 17% of groups that would like to help members with farm plans (in addition to the 29% that are already doing so).

One of the final questions asked respondents to identify obstacles facing their group, which we classified into several themes. Nearly half of the responses explicitly mentioned a lack of funding. Groups said they could do more if they had funding for materials and labour for weeding, fencing and planting, group coordinators, volunteer coordinators, and environmental monitoring, among other things.

In addition to identifying inputs in need of funding, respondents also identified challenges with the funding system. Six groups bemoaned 'proposal fatigue' that resulted from spending a large amount of scarce volunteer time on funding applications, with a small chance of success, and often for only small amounts of funding. Several groups identified financial uncertainty as a constraint to sustained progress. Activities such as planting require multi-year planning horizons, with two years to age seedlings and to clear and prepare the land.

Other constraints cited by groups include:

- labour constraints, including administrative capacity, specialist expertise and staff to recruit and sustain volunteer participation
- unresponsive or unhelpful government agencies and councils
- difficulty maintaining involvement of farmers and other landowners
- uncertainty about policy and regulations, e.g. freshwater standards and rules
- insufficient support from local organisations and local community
- limited engagement and relationships with tangata whenua.

**Recommendations**

Ad hoc, short term funding is problematic. As well as more funding, community groups would like to see a funding system that is simpler and more reliable. They also want access to more technical expertise and administrative support. Expertise could be provided by local councils, Department of Conservation staff, research organisations and Māori entities if they were sufficiently resourced, while administrative support could be provided through collectives or, for larger groups, paid staff funded by government grants.

Specific recommendations for the Ministry for the Environment:

- Work with other funders e.g. Department of Conservation, Predator Free NZ, and councils, and with representatives of community groups, to design a streamlined funding process for groups and increase total funding if possible.
- Explore how to address labour shortages, e.g. by funding volunteer coordinators and providing certainty of funding for contract teams.
- Provide funding for group administration, through collectives or NZLT for small groups and through direct grants for larger groups with a track record of performance and accountability. Small groups should also be able to access funds for administration if they can show need and accountability.
- Support groups to develop management plans, including identifying measurable indicators of progress toward outcomes. Technical experts from the Department of Conservation, councils, research institutions and/or Māori entities could be funded to assist groups on request.
- Provide funding for environmental and cultural monitoring, including technical and cultural advice to establish monitoring and on-going technical support for groups to maintain monitoring and interpret results.
- Support groups with objectives for both biodiversity and waterways, recognising that these issues are often linked and that a broader focus is more likely to attract a mix of rural and town members.

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# GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| B+LNZ | Beef + Lamb New Zealand Ltd |
| DOC | Department of Conservation |
| GIS | Geographical Information System |
| ha | Hectare |
| hapū | Sub-tribe |
| iwi | Tribe |
| km | Kilometre |
| mana whenua | Māori people who have traditional authority over an area |
| marae | Māori community who meet at a certain wharenui (meeting house), or the open area in front of the wharenui where formal greetings and discussions take place |
| mātauranga Māori | A body of knowledge that was first brought to Aotearoa by Polynesian ancestors of present-day Māori |
| MfE | Ministry for the Environment |
| MPI | Ministry for Primary Industries |
| n | Number of survey responses |
| NZLT | New Zealand Landcare Trust |
| NZPFT | New Zealand Predator Free Trust |
| SFF, SFFF | Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures fund |
| tangata whenua | Māori of a certain area |
| Te Mana o te Wai | A New Zealand government policy that says the first management priority is for the water itself |
| tikanga | correct procedure, custom, method |

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Around New Zealand, in both rural and urban areas, residents have formed local groups to address environmental issues. These groups include people engaged in pest control, revegetation, cleaning up litter along beaches and streams, and addressing land use practices to improve local water bodies, as well as other entities acting as collectives to provide support to such groups.

The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) asked Cawthron to develop a survey to find out more about these catchment and community environment groups: how they are organised, what they are doing, and what support they would most benefit from. The Ministry also asked us to recommend a research design to explore other questions that could not be accommodated in the survey format.

Anticipated benefits of this research include:

- better understanding of catchment and community groups and their needs
- better tailoring of government and industry support for local initiatives
- increased ability for groups to identify and contact other similar groups.

The survey targeted four main types of groups, for which we used these definitions in the survey:

- **Catchment groups** – Landowners and land users in a defined area who are collectively addressing shared issues on their own land and associated water bodies for which they have some legal or moral responsibility
- **Community environment groups** – groups whose primary focus is on restoration or protection of local public or community land or waterways, that is, mostly or entirely volunteers working on land they do not own or manage
- **Resource user groups** – groups that manage a shared resource such as an irrigation, drainage or flood control scheme
- **Umbrella groups** – collectives of any of the above types of groups within a specific region (i.e. not national bodies).

Based on our advice, MfE agreed that this survey would *not* target the following types of groups:

- Advocacy – groups that are only engaged in education and/or advocacy (such as making submissions, holding rallies)
- Multi-stakeholder advisory groups – groups whose primary purpose is to provide advice and/or overall strategy, typically to government or councils (for example, zone committees or similar)
- Industry or sector-based groups of land users in same industry, coordinated by an industry body (unless they fit one of the descriptions of groups 1–4)

- Māori entities (for example, iwi/hapū/marae authorities, land trusts, co-governance authorities).

Although we did not specifically target these groups for the survey, we still received responses from a few groups that fall into these categories.

Regarding Māori entities, we expect that a large number are involved in activities similar to those of catchment and community environment groups, but that their organisation, objectives and needs are likely to be different. We therefore recommended to MfE that this survey was not the best way to obtain information about the activities and needs of Māori entities, and that a different approach, developed with Māori researchers and representative bodies, would be more appropriate.

# 2. OTHER STUDIES OF CATCHMENT AND COMMUNITY GROUPS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

## 2.1. Studies of community environment groups

Other studies of catchment and community environment groups in Aotearoa New Zealand have been conducted over the past decade. Hardie-Boys (2010) produced the first profile of 'community conservation groups' in New Zealand, based on a survey of 208 groups that worked with the Department of Conservation. More than two-thirds of the groups were incorporated societies, charitable societies or trusts. About half of the groups had been established for less than 10 years, whereas one-fifth had been established for 25 years or more. Most groups had 25 or more members, participants and affiliates but had few if any paid staff.

Peters et al. (2015) followed this with a survey of 296 community environment groups from all over New Zealand, not limited to those working with the Department of Conservation. Perhaps reflecting the time that had passed since Hardie-Boys' study, nearly 80% of these groups had been established for six years or more. Group activities were similar to those identified by Hardie-Boys, centering on pest control, ecological restoration and conservation awareness and education. However, unlike the earlier study, Peters et al. found that 72% of surveyed groups had 20 or fewer participants (e.g. staff, members, and unpaid volunteers).

In 2019, New Zealand Landcare Trust (NZLT) surveyed 23 community groups in the Nelson-Tasman region. Activities reported were consistent with the earlier studies but this report provided greater detail, listing responses from each group including trap numbers and kill data for predator control groups, monitoring methods, volunteer hours, financial and in-kind support received by groups, and needs for further support (NZLT 2019). The study reported that the three main obstacles faced by groups were lack of funding (cited by 31%), lack of volunteers (24%), and behaviour of neighbours on adjoining properties, e.g. failure to control pests and weeds (27%). There were large differences in groups' individual priorities, so the study suggested that agencies supporting groups should perhaps tailor their approaches to the needs of particular groups.

In 2020, Tasman Environmental Trust (TET) surveyed 40 predator control groups in the Nelson/Tasman region. Nearly 60% of respondent groups had 10 or fewer volunteers. Respondents considered that pest control has led to increased numbers of native birds. Their main challenges are the time required to check traps and the cost of traps and bait. Survey participants would most like support from TET for subsidised traps, funding, and opportunities to collaborate and network. Engaging committed skilled volunteers and training opportunities also ranked highly (Tasman Environmental Trust 2020).

A survey by Shanahan et al. (2021) explored the social and ecological outcomes from community-led conservation and the key conditions for successful community groups. This survey asked for views of 313 respondents as individuals rather than as group spokespersons and focused on people's motivations for participation. The most common reason to become involved was 'conserving or protecting nature' (35%). Key motivations to stay involved were 'social connections' (19%), 'health' (14%), and 'sense of satisfaction' (12%).

Funding for community conservation groups was a particular focus of Hardie-Boys (2010), who found that funding was unevenly distributed, with five groups (out of 208 surveyed) accounting for half of all income received. Brown (2018) also found disparity of funding, with over half of groups getting less than $5000 per year. Hardie-Boys estimated that the government was getting a return of $3–$4 for every government dollar and reported that groups saw lack of funding as the main obstacle to being able to achieve more. Brown went further, recommending more streamlined application processes for small projects, the formation of regional and national 'hubs' to provide a unified voice and a mechanism for funding.

## 2.2. Studies of collectives

As the number of community environment groups has continued to grow across Aotearoa, increasingly they are forming into collectives to communicate with each other, share knowledge and coordinate activities. Peters (2019) used website searches and interviews with 20 staff from conservation 'hubs' to examine what these collectives do, why, and how. She found that hubs were quite a recent phenomenon, with almost half of the 50 hubs reviewed having developed in the last 5 years. Hubs have focused on facilitating information sharing, building relationships among members, and accessing new funding opportunities. Their 'value add', Peters reported, is their independence from government and their ability to respond quickly and flexibly to issues arising.

Drawing on interviews with 13 conservation practitioners across New Zealand, Doole (2020) provided further insight into the tensions and challenges confronting collectives such as: the need for members to maintain their own identities, scepticism of 'top down' initiatives, and the need to draw on but not be overly steered by advice from agencies. Doole recommended that hub actions be more aligned with wider conservation priorities to get the 'best bang for buck', and that funding should focus on enhancing auditability of hub activities.

Most recently, McFarlane et al. (2021) used a survey of 27 collectives to identify commonalities and differences in the relationships, structures, priorities, and activities of collectives. They identified five types of collectives: community networks, tangata whenua-led collectives, project-based collectives, agency-led collectives and

partnership initiatives. They reported that 68% were formed in the last decade, that 93% receive government grants, and their activities focus on providing advice, public engagement/advocacy, monitoring, pest control, planting, weed control, fundraising, and lobbying. Almost all collectives have paid staff, with an average of FTE of 6.4, whereas of the 17 community environment groups they spoke with, just over half had paid staff.

## 2.3. Catchment group studies

Community environment and conservation groups have been relatively well addressed by research, but investigation of catchment groups or groups specifically focused on freshwater management has been more limited. Although catchment groups are emerging as part of the freshwater governance landscape in New Zealand, there is a gap in the literature as to their structure and activities, as well as their needs for funding and support.

Tyson et al. (2017) canvassed the views of farmers (n = 89) across three catchment groups in the South Island to identify perceived success factors for groups. While their study did not focus on group functions or needs, it did highlight access to science, training, and information, alongside effective leadership and farm planning and monitoring as important factors in group success according to the views of farmer members.

Duncan and Diprose (2020) examined collective action via five case studies of environmental groups, including three water management groups, in Central Otago. They focused on factors instrumental in the formation of collectives and found the knowledge needed for collective action goes beyond science to include legal, accounting and relationship management expertise. Also focusing on collective management, Boone and Fragaszy (2018) drew on two case studies of water management groups in Hawke's Bay and Canterbury to examine how 'common property resource institutions' can effectively govern and manage local water resources. They concluded that the success of such groups depends, in part, on how well they are articulated with authorities, regulatory structures, and policy architectures, which in turn depends on the nature of the formal structure and organisation of groups.

In a region with many new catchment groups, Thriving Southland (2021) surveyed 200 catchment group members and related stakeholders across Southland. While awareness of catchment groups was high, respondents were unsure about how well groups were functioning and identified a range of areas where support is needed. Some of the key needs were in scientific and expert advice, practical on-farm support and funding support.

Also in Southland, McIntyre et al. (forthcoming) used interviews and environmental monitoring data to understand how the Waikaka Catchment Group was established. Farmers had made recent on-farm improvements and felt the overall water quality in the Waikaka Stream was good (even though separate analysis showed that the stream did not meet regulatory standards in multiple places). Reasons for participating in a catchment group included a mix of place-based stewardship, obtaining social license to farm from their community, and creating an entity that can both respond to public concerns and engage with regulators.

Catchment group research has yielded valuable insights into the perspectives of group members and some factors in group formation and success. However, these insights have been derived from studies of individual rather than group perspectives or from a small number of group case studies. There remains an important gap in the research on the purpose, structure and functioning of catchment groups in New Zealand, and on the key areas where groups might benefit from support from public sector organisations, industry groups and researchers in pursuing their goals for land and water management.

The survey reported here was designed to fill this gap and to update previous studies on community environment groups. Collectives were included in this survey but were not a central focus because other research (e.g. McFarlane et al. 2021) was covering that area in more depth.

# 3. SURVEY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

## 3.1. Methodology for survey design

To design the survey, we first solicited research objectives and questions from staff of the Ministry for the Environment, the Ministry for Primary Industries, the Department of Conservation and the New Zealand Landcare Trust. Responses from these organisations were collated and presented to an online workshop of officials, together with our recommendations on issues of survey design and implementation.

Based on workshop feedback, we developed an initial list of topics for the survey, prepared a draft survey and discussed this at an online workshop with NZ Landcare Trust, DairyNZ Ltd, Beef+Lamb New Zealand Ltd, Horticulture New Zealand Inc., Irrigation NZ Inc. and Federated Farmers. Further comments were received from MfE staff and staff from two regional councils.

The project team further refined the questions and sent a pilot survey to leaders of four catchment or community environment groups for testing. Each completed the survey and provided feedback. The survey was revised again to address issues identified by pilot testing and submitted to MfE. Minor changes were made to reduce the length, improve clarity of wording, and enhance the flow of the survey questions. The final version is included as an appendix to this report, with sections and questions as shown in Table 1. The median response time was 30 minutes.

Ethics approval (CAW-ETH-210822) was obtained for workshops, pilot testing and the actual survey. Participants were notified that responses to questions in the first half of the survey would be shared with the Ministry for the Environment, NZ Landcare Trust and Predator Free New Zealand Trust. Individual responses to questions from Question 25 onward remain confidential to the research team; aggregate responses are summarised in this report.

Table 1. Topics in survey and number of questions for each.

| Section | Number of questions |
|---|---|
| Welcome page | None |
| Confidentiality and consent | 3 |
| General information – name, region, year started, members etc. | 12 |
| Origins, purpose, and objectives | 8 |
| Activities | 6 |
| Funding and support | 10 |
| Obstacles, comments | 3 |
| Demographics | 3 |

## 3.2. Survey implementation

Since there is no comprehensive database or mailing list of catchment or community environment groups in Aotearoa, we had to rely on organisations who have contacts with such groups to promote the survey. The following organisations agreed to circulate a link to the survey through a variety of means, including direct email and newsletters:

- Regional councils, through the Regional Sector Forum
- NZ Landcare Trust
- Horticulture NZ Inc.
- Beef+Lamb New Zealand Ltd
- DairyNZ Ltd
- Federated Farmers
- NZ Association of Resource Management
- Department of Conservation
- Ministry for Primary Industries.

In addition, Irrigation NZ, Thriving Southland and Wild for Taranaki agreed to promote the survey through newsletters and websites.

To incentivise and reward participation, each respondent who completed the survey (excluding duplicates from the same group) was invited to select either the Rural Support Trust or Predator Free NZ Trust to receive a donation of $20 from the research project. Based on selections by 228 survey respondents, donations totalling $4520 have been made to the two entities.

The survey went live on 1 September 2021 and the organisations listed above distributed the survey link through their email and social media networks. After two extensions, the survey was closed on 27 October.

## 3.3. Usable responses

We received 259 responses to the survey. Of these, 12 were duplicates, i.e. there was another, more complete response from the same group (in some cases from the same person who was unable to complete the survey on their first attempt). Two respondents read the explanatory information and consent form and chose not to proceed, and three more terminated the survey before providing any useable data. These responses were excluded from the dataset used for analysis.

Two other responses were not included in the survey results because the groups' profiles do not match the type of groups targeted by the survey. One was a golf club and the other a multistakeholder advisory group established by a regional council.

The final dataset used for analysis therefore comprises 240 responses. Twelve respondents did not finish the survey but their responses contained sufficient usable data to include in the analysis. Further, some respondents did not answer all the questions, so in the results presented below, some questions have fewer than 240 responses.

Because we do not know how many catchment or community environment groups there are in the country or how many groups were aware of the survey, we cannot calculate an accurate response rate. However, NZLT has a database with 230 catchment groups and 10 collectives (M Torres, NZLT, personal communication), and Predator Free New Zealand Trust's database has mapped 665 community environment groups and collectives (Z Heine, PFNZT, personal communication). If these numbers are indicative of the total number of groups, our 240 responses would represent 27% of groups nationally.

Finally, our sample is self-selected, based on who was prepared to complete the survey. It should therefore not be assumed to be a random sample that is representative of the wider population of groups.

# 4. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT GROUPS

## 4.1. Types of groups

### *4.1.1. Definitions of group types*

Catchment and community environment groups do not all fit neatly into the four categories or 'types' that we presented in the survey. Respondents were asked to indicate what type their group is, from a list comprising catchment groups, community environment groups, industry groups, user groups, umbrella groups or collectives of such groups, or 'Other'. Here we summarise how we refined our categorisation based on the substance of the responses.

Judging by the diversity of responses, these categories and their definitions (see the wording of question 8 in Appendix 1) proved to be confusing or imprecise for many respondents. We received several queries from people unsure whether their group was among the types that we wanted to complete the survey, and many used the 'Other' category.

We therefore examined all survey responses to confirm and refine our group categorisations. To do this, we looked at the descriptions of the area the group works in (Question 6), their objectives and activities (Q.20 and Q.24), and the proportions of farmers, lifestyle property owners, and town residents in their membership (Q.12). The categories of catchment groups and community environment groups were largely consistent with the other information provided by groups in the survey. For a small number of groups, however, we re-categorised them based on their responses to other questions.

The categories of 'Industry group' and 'User group' were not useful, so we reclassified these groups. Of the three respondents that chose 'Industry group', none fit this definition well. This was not unexpected—we were not targeting industry groups and included this category to identify groups that chose to respond but did not fit the types we were targeting. We re-categorised these three responses based on activities and membership: one has been counted as a collective (a charitable trust that develops pest control technology for groups nationwide), one as a community environment group (a charitable trust that maintains cycling trails along a river) and one as a catchment group (a group of farmers that formed to advocate for farmers and 'to keep an eye on' a large corporate water user).

Only two respondents chose 'User group', not a large enough sub-sample for meaningful analysis. Based on activities (e.g. advocacy, improving farming practice) and membership (mostly farmers), both have been re-categorised as catchment groups.

The term ‘collective’ (presented in the survey as ‘Umbrella group or collective of any of the above groups’) may also have been interpreted differently by groups. A group of some 300 farmers that has many subcatchment groups was reported as a catchment group rather than a collective, whereas a residents’ association in Marlborough was reported as a collective rather than a community environment group. We chose to leave these as reported, i.e. we did not re-classify these two groups.

Finally, we created a new, separate category for six ‘urban catchment groups’ because these groups may face different challenges than rural catchment groups. We also moved four responses from ‘catchment group’ to ‘community environment group’ based on their reported membership and activities.

Thus, for our initial analysis we used following revised categories: catchment groups, community environment groups, urban catchment groups and collectives.

#### *4.1.2. ‘Other’ groups*

Our references to public and private land in the definitions of group types likely contributed to the difficulty for respondents in selecting ‘type of group’. We defined community environment groups as comprising ‘mostly or entirely volunteers working on land they do not own or manage’ whereas catchment groups were defined as ‘landowners and users ... collectively addressing shared issues on their own land and associated water bodies’. In practice, many groups work on a mix of private and public land, so this distinction in the definitions proved problematic.

Thirty-six groups chose the ‘Other’ category and provided further details about their groups that enabled us to categorise them as catchment, community environment or collective groups. Of these, many respondents commented on whether their group worked on public or private land, highlighting that our definitions were problematic for some.

Using information provided by respondents, including responses to other questions about membership and activities, we found that of the ‘Other’ category, 31 groups focus primarily on terrestrial biodiversity objectives and mostly involve town residents or lifestyle property owners working on land owned by others. We therefore counted these as community environment groups. Four ‘Other’ responses were categorised as catchment groups based on their membership and activities, and one group was re-categorised as a collective because it works across the country (all other collectives who completed the survey are regional).

The resulting categorisation by group type, reported by region, is shown in Figure 1. Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty dominated the responses from community environment groups, whereas catchment group responses were more evenly spread, with South Island regions generating the most responses.

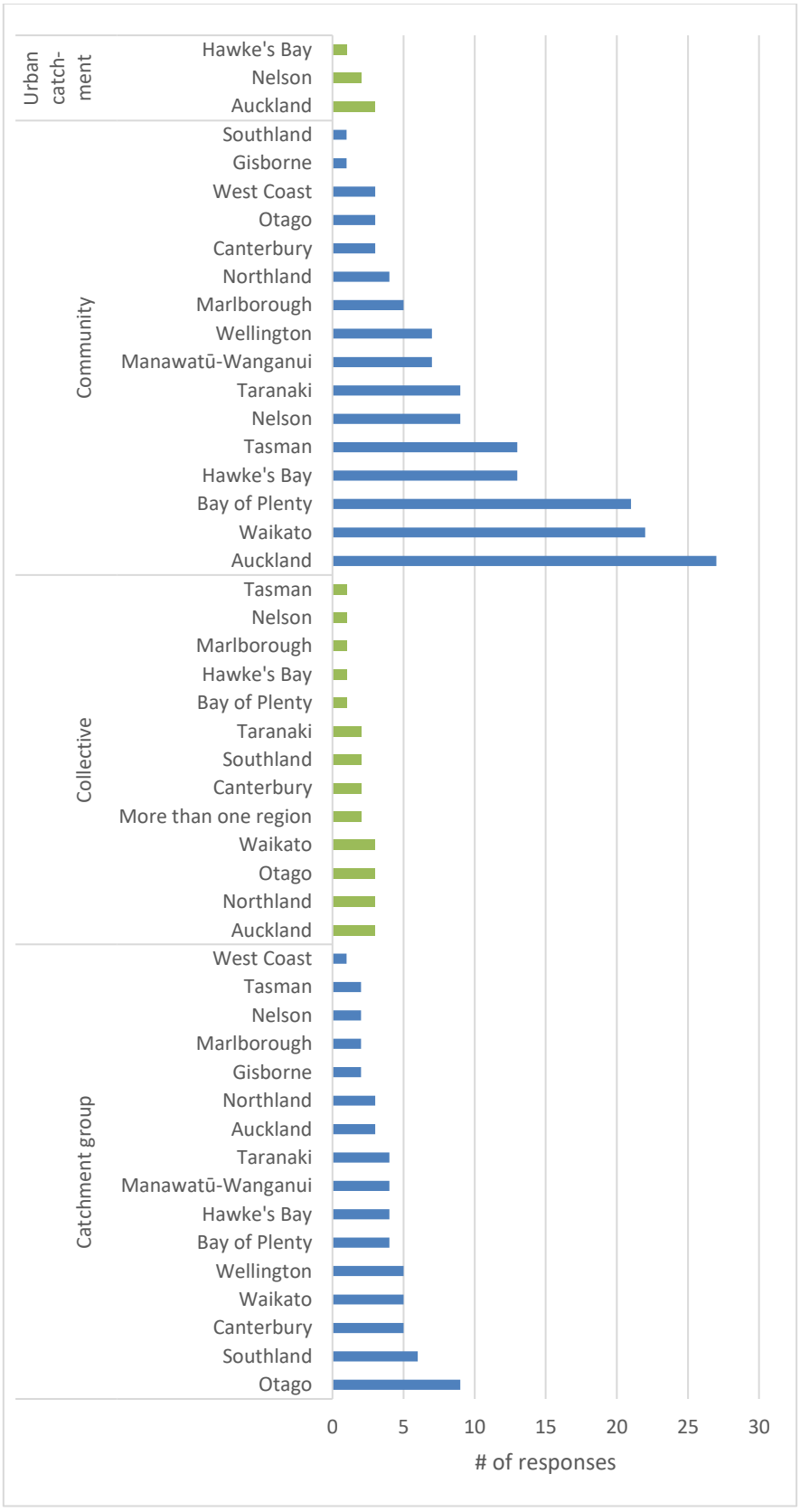


Figure 1. Type of surveyed group by region.

## 4.2. Types of groups by main area of focus

Although our initial four-part classification of groups was relevant for analysing our sample, we noticed that several ‘catchment groups’ did not have a focus on water, whereas some community environment groups did. We therefore created another classification scheme called ‘Main focus’ and, based on reported reasons for forming (Q.16), objectives (Q.19) and activities (Q.24), classified each group as having a main focus on one of the following: terrestrial biodiversity (hereafter referred to as simply biodiversity), waterways, a combination of these two, or other.

Those groups that mentioned pest control, the protection of birds or other threatened terrestrial species, or habitat restoration were classified as ‘biodiversity’. Groups whose main environmental objectives concerned fresh water were classified as ‘waterways’. Groups that had both waterways and biodiversity objectives were classified as ‘biodiversity and waterways’.

Six groups did not fit these categories of main focus and were placed in an ‘Other’ category. This comprised three catchment groups who reported advocacy as their main focus and three community groups—one with an advocacy focus and two focused on cycle trails.

Table 2 shows that the main focus of groups, as we have defined it, aligns reasonably well with group type, but not completely. Of the 61 catchments groups, about half (48%) have a primary focus on waterways and 36% focus on both waterways and biodiversity. Seven catchment groups (11%) focus mainly on biodiversity. In contrast, community environment groups focus predominantly on biodiversity objectives, with 118 groups (80%) having that as their sole focus and another 18 (13%) also citing the health of waterways. Urban catchment groups also have primarily a biodiversity focus, with only one including a shared focus on waterway health. The collectives have similar objectives to the community environment groups, with 21 out of 25 (84%) having biodiversity as a key focus. Four collectives (16%) have waterways as their main focus and three focus on both waterways and biodiversity.

Community groups with a biodiversity focus dominated the responses from most regions, especially Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Hawke’s Bay, Nelson and Tasman. In Canterbury, Otago, and Southland, responses from catchment groups with a freshwater focus outnumbered other types of groups, as shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Main focus of groups by group type.

| | Main focus | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group type | Biodiversity | Waterways | Biodiversity & Waterways | Other | Total |
| Catchment group | 7 | 29 | 22 | 3 | 61 |
| Urban catchment | 5 | | 1 | | 6 |
| Community | 118 | 9 | 18 | 3 | 148 |
| Collective | 18 | 4 | 3 | | 25 |
| Total | 148 | 42 | 44 | 6 | 240 |

Table 3. Main focus of groups, by region.

| | Main focus | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | Biodiversity | Water | Biodiversity & Waterways | Other | Total |
| Northland | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 10 |
| Auckland | 30 | 4 | 2 | | 36 |
| Waikato | 18 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 30 |
| Bay of Plenty | 22 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 26 |
| Gisborne | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 3 |
| Hawke's Bay | 10 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 19 |
| Taranaki | 10 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 15 |
| Manawatū-Whanganui | 7 | 3 | 1 | | 11 |
| Wellington | 3 | 3 | 6 | | 12 |
| Tasman | 15 | 1 | | | 16 |
| Nelson | 12 | | 2 | | 14 |
| Marlborough | 5 | | 3 | | 8 |
| Canterbury | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 10 |
| West Coast | 3 | | 1 | | 4 |
| Otago | 2 | 6 | 7 | | 15 |
| Southland | 2 | 7 | | | 9 |
| More than one region | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Total | 148 | 42 | 44 | 6 | 240 |

## 4.3. Year established

The survey asked what year the group was started, using the year of the group's first meeting even if the group was formally established later.

As shown in Figure 2, there was a noticeable increase in biodiversity groups starting in the early 2000s, in 2009–2010 and again in 2015–2017, following the establishment of Predator Free New Zealand Trust in 2013 to 'connect and energise all New Zealanders towards a predator free Aotearoa New Zealand to enable our native species to thrive'[1]. Of the biodiversity groups in our survey, 65% have existed for at least six years and half have existed for 10 years or more.

Groups focusing on waterways, including those with a dual biodiversity-waterways focus, did not appear in numbers until 2014, with further upticks in 2017 and 2020 (Figure 2). These are the years that new versions of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management were released by the government. Two-thirds of waterways groups formed in 2014 or later.

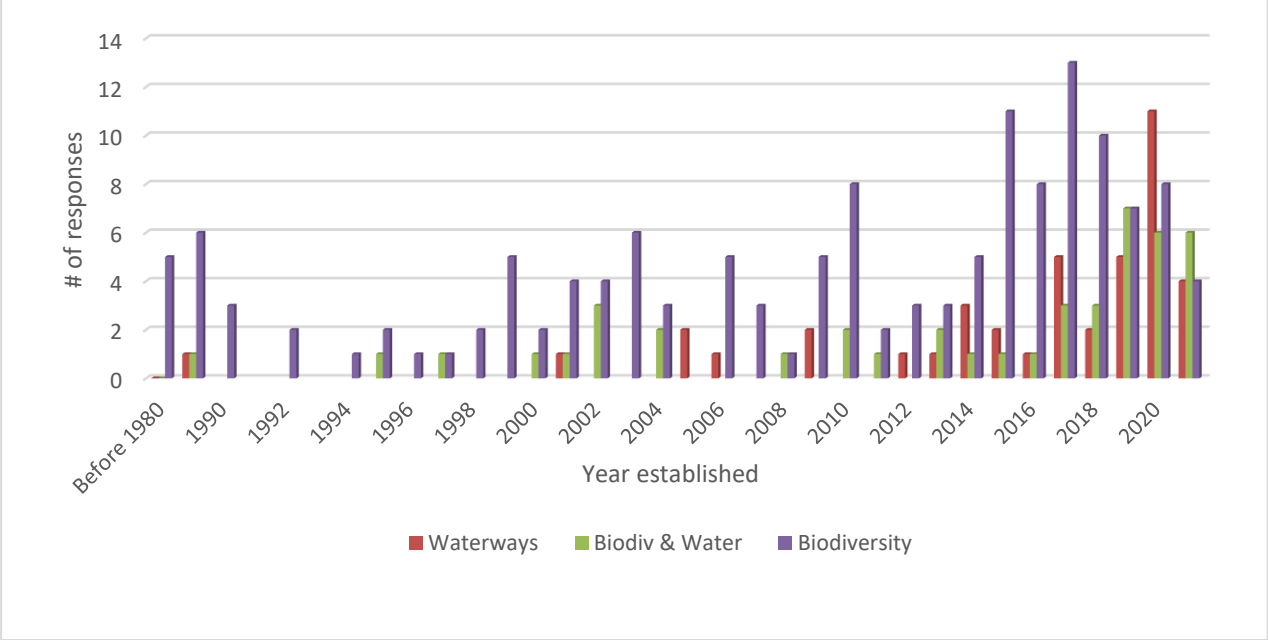


Figure 2. Year in which groups were started, by main focus of group. Note the increase in new Biodiversity groups (purple) in 2015–2017 and new Waterways groups (red) in 2014, 2017 and 2020.

[1] https://predatorfreenz.org/about-us/predator-free-new-zealand-trust/

## 4.4. Legal status

Over half of catchment and community environment groups are formally constituted as an incorporated society, charitable trust or company, while around 40% have no legal status. Collectives are more likely to be legally constituted, with over 80% reporting some legal status (Figure 3).

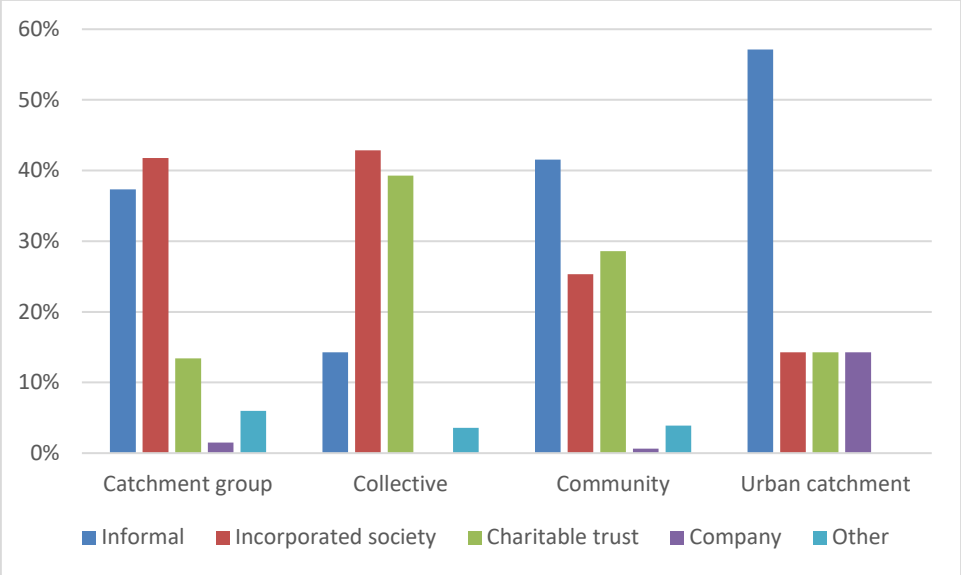


Figure 3. Legal status of groups, by group type. 'Other' includes a residents' association, a 'friendly society', a 'registered charity' and several groups that are part of a collective entity.

## 4.5. Coordination and facilitation

Question 36 asked "If your group is supported by a paid facilitator or administrator, how is that person paid?" Of those answering, only one-third of groups have a paid facilitator or coordinator. Most groups with a paid facilitator or administrator, especially groups with a dual biodiversity-waterways focus, fund this position through grants or contracts, while some pay for this using member funds. Other sources of funding are councils (7 groups), collectives (4), industry (3) and NZLT (2) (Table 4).

Table 4. Percent of groups receiving funding for facilitator or coordinator from different sources, by main focus of groups (not all respondents answered this question)

| | Source of funds | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None | Grants/ contracts | Member funds | Other | n |
| Biodiversity | 71% | 23% | 2% | 6% | 133 |
| Biodiversity & Waterways | 48% | 36% | 10% | 10% | 42 |
| Waterways | 67% | 14% | 6% | 17% | 36 |
| All groups | 66% | 24% | 4% | 9% | 211 |

## 4.6. Participation

### *4.6.1. Group membership*

The survey elicited estimates of group membership by asking how many group members or participants are from each of several rural and urban categories (Q.12). Since not all groups have formal membership, the survey defined members as 'any individual who pays membership fees or participated in activities at least twice in the past 12 months'. For collectives, respondents were asked to indicate the number of groups in the collective, although some responses did not include numbers in this field. To approximate total membership of the group, we added together the number indicated for each category of member in Question 12.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of sizes for groups whose main focus is biodiversity (a median of 24 members), waterways (21), and biodiversity and waterways (25). This excluded collectives and groups that did not provide membership data. Notably, all three types had between two and six groups that had very large numbers of members or participants, so each graph is truncated at 100 to avoid skewing the vertical axis.

Biodiversity groups reported the largest number of people involved, with 4% of these groups (5 of 114) reporting more than 1000 members and participants and another 15% having more than 100. However, there are also many very small biodiversity groups, with 25% having 10 or fewer active participants. Waterways groups and groups working on both biodiversity and waterways tend to have between 11 and 50 members and participants, though 16% of groups doing both kinds of work have more than 100 participants (Table 5 and Figure 4).

Table 5. Percentage of groups in each size range, by main focus of group (excluding collectives, 'Other' types of groups, and groups that did not provide membership numbers).

| | Size of group (members and participants) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Main focus of groups | 1–10 | 11–25 | 26–50 | 51–100 | 101–1000 | Over 1000 | No. of groups (n) |
| Biodiversity | 25% | 28% | 20% | 8% | 15% | 4% | 114 |
| Biodiversity & Waterways | 16% | 37% | 16% | 16% | 16% | | 38 |
| Waterways | 6% | 50% | 28% | 13% | 3% | | 32 |
| Overall | 20% | 34% | 21% | 10% | 13% | 3% | 184 |

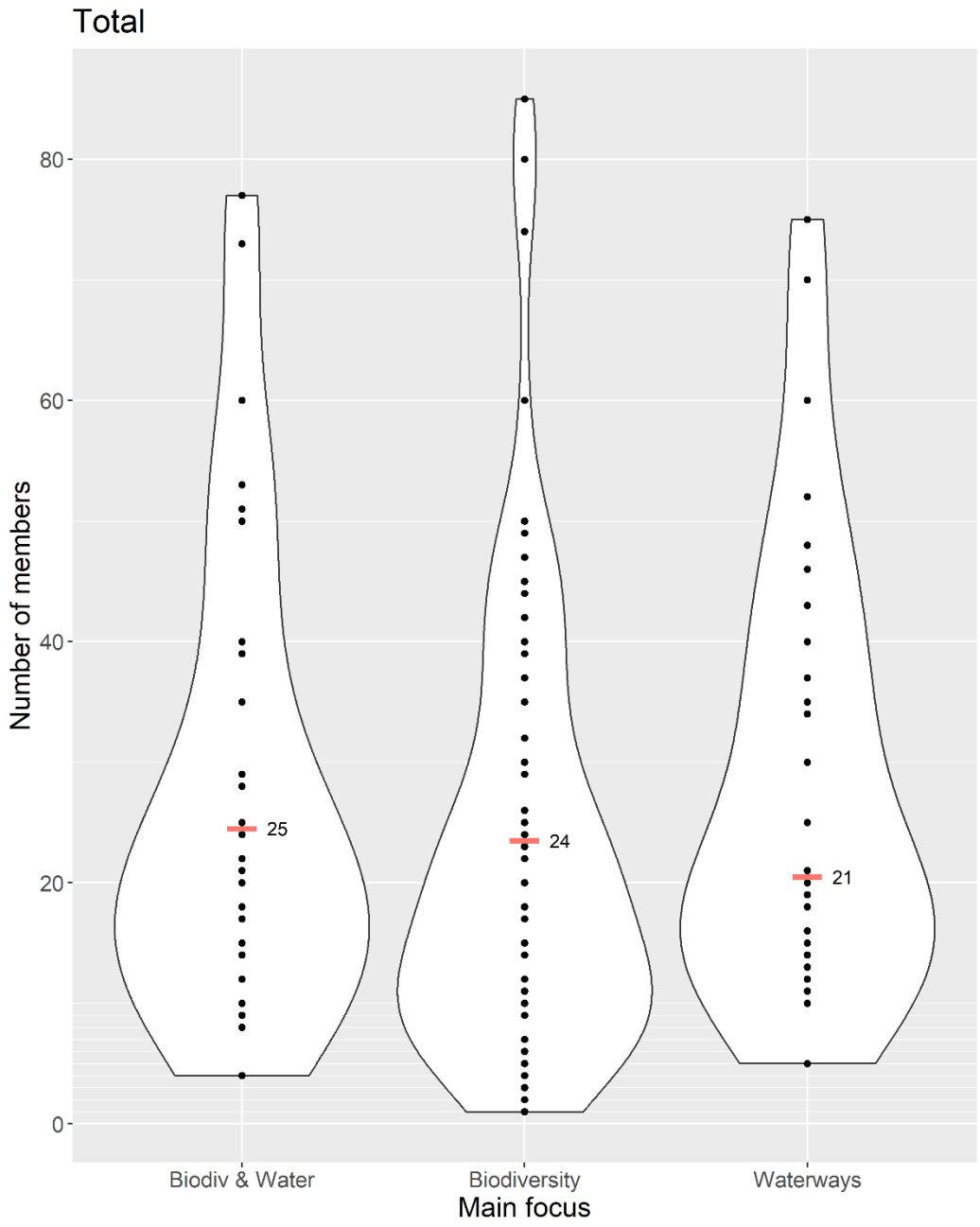


Figure 4. Distribution of group size (number of members and active participants), by main focus of group. Short red line indicates the median value. To avoid the vertical axis being skewed by very large groups, each distribution is truncated and the number of groups with more than 100 members are not shown, but large groups are included in calculation of medians; see Table 5 for data on these large groups. (Collectives, 'Other' groups, and groups that did not provide membership numbers are not included in the figures.)

Town residents and 'others' comprise the vast majority of those involved in biodiversity groups, while farmers—especially sheep and beef and dairy—account for most of those involved in waterways groups. Groups with a dual focus have diverse participation and a more even mix of town and rural membership. Lifestyle property

owners are most evident in biodiversity groups but also active in water-focused and dual-focus groups (Figure 5). The survey did not ask respondents to explain who they included in the ‘Other’ category, but inspection of the data revealed that 6062 ‘Other’ participants in this category are from one large charitable trust that said (in another question) that it works with schools in Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty. The group also reported working with 100 dairy farmers and 50 lifestyle block owners but no town residents, so ‘Other’ may have been a catch-all for school children and others whose background is unknown or not counted.

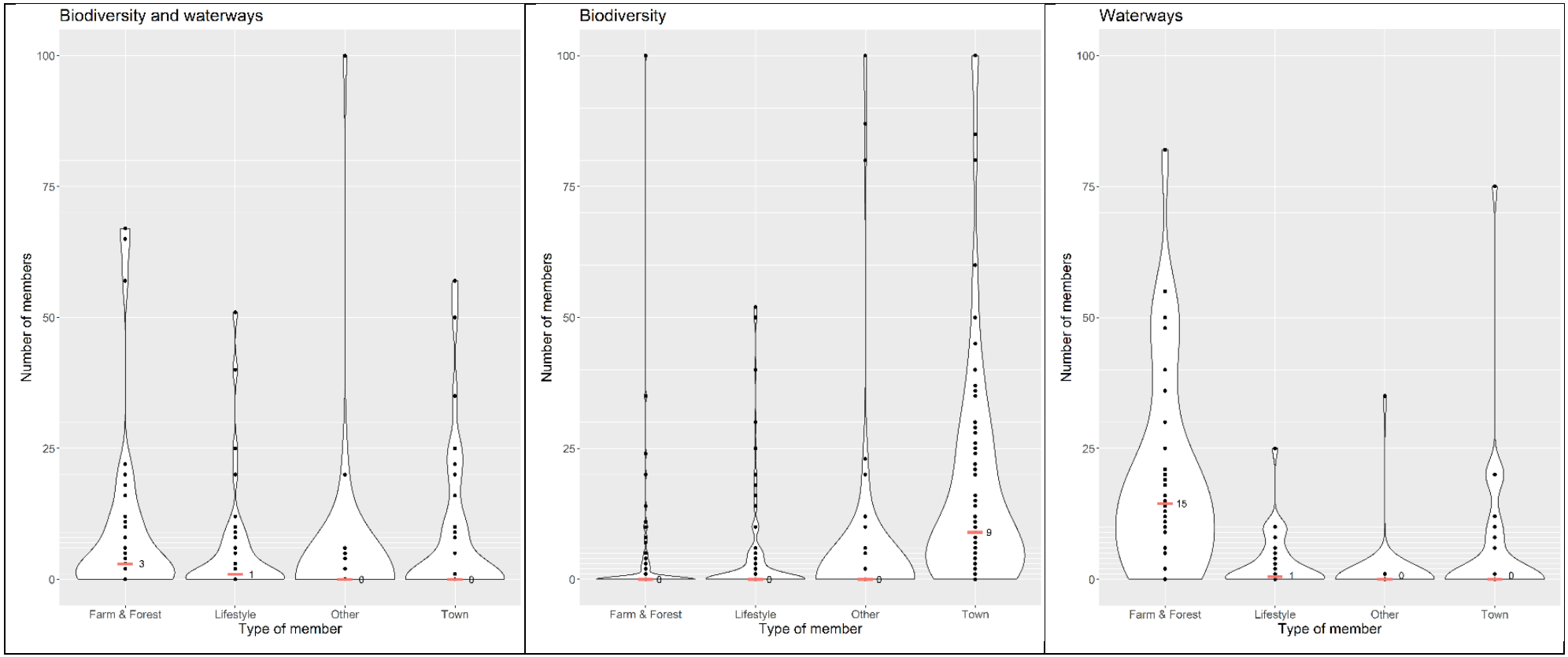


Figure 5. Distribution of number of members from different property types, by main focus of group. Short red line indicates the median value. For example, the right graph shows that waterways groups are dominated by farmers and forest owners (Farm+Forest), with a median of 15 such members, and typically have few or no members from other property types (median values 1 or 0). Biodiversity groups (middle graph) are the opposite, usually town residents and with few or no farmers, lifestyle block owners or others, though when others are present they are in larger numbers than farmers and lifestylers. To avoid the vertical axis being skewed by very large groups, each distribution is truncated and the responses of more than 100 members are not shown, but are included in calculation of the median values. (Collectives, 'Other' groups, and groups that did not provide membership numbers are not included in the figures.)

### 4.6.2. Land uses with limited participation in some groups

The survey also asked about land uses in the group's area that are not well represented in the group. Of the 240 responses, 39% said yes and provided further detail. The land uses mentioned are shown in Table 6.

Forestry was most often mentioned, with instances evenly spread across different kinds of groups. Farming was often mentioned by biodiversity groups, and both biodiversity and waterways groups mentioned 'Other' land uses such as Māori entities (six mentions) and quarries, mining and gravel extraction (four mentions).

Table 6. Number of times land uses were named as 'not having much participation' in a group, by group's main focus.

| | Land use | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Forestry | DOC | Horti-culture | Farming | Lifestyle | Public | Urban | Other |
| Biodiversity | 16 | 1 | 2 | 15 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 9 |
| Biodiv & Water | 12 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 |
| Waterways | 12 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| General | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 41 | 7 | 2 | 27 | 8 | 7 | 17 | 17 |

### 4.6.3. Māori involvement and engagement

Question 25 asked "Are any local tangata whenua (that is, Māori with ancestral connections to the local area) members of your group?" Of the 232 responses to this question, 37% said yes and another 14% were not sure. Groups with a focus on waterways, or dual biodiversity-waterways focus, were somewhat more likely to have Māori involved in their group (Table 7).

To Question 26, "Does your group involve or interact with local Māori entities (for example, iwi, hapū, marae, trust)?", 69% of groups said yes (Table 7).

Table 7. Number and percentage of groups with Māori members and interacting with Māori entities.

| | Number and percent of groups | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | With Māori members | | Interacting with Māori entities | |
| Biodiversity | 50 | 35% | 95 | 67% |
| Biodiversity & Water | 19 | 43% | 31 | 70% |
| Waterways | 18 | 44% | 28 | 68% |
| Other | 0 | 0% | 5 | 100% |
| All groups (n = 232) | 87 | 38% | 159 | 69% |

Thirdly, for those who said their group interacted with Māori entities, Question 27 asked what kind of entities. More groups are interacting with iwi than with other kinds of entities, though a significant number of groups are also interacting with hapū, marae, Māori trusts, and other entities (Figure 6).

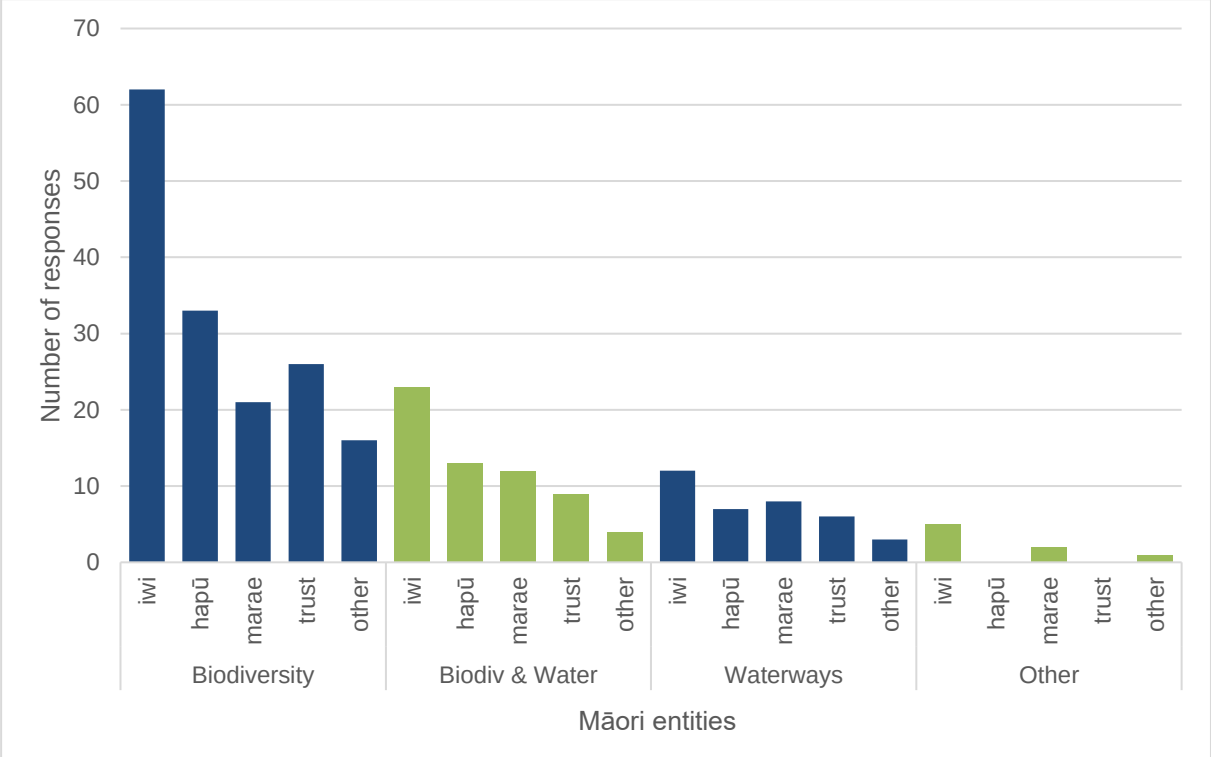


Figure 6. Type of Māori entities with which groups are interacting.

# 5. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The survey includes questions about the reasons for starting the group, the group's environmental objectives and the group's other objectives, followed by a question about whether progress toward any of these is being monitored and, if so, how.

In the pilot survey, to avoid giving primacy to environmental objectives, we tested a question that asked respondents to list the group's three main objectives. This elicited responses that were very generic, e.g. 'to learn' and 'to get involved' from one catchment group, and 'engage and enthuse local communities and volunteers', 'habitat restoration' and 'trap predators' from an environmental restoration group.

Because environmental work is the primary orientation of the survey, and to promote more consistency in responses, we reverted to asking first about environmental outcomes, including any specific targets, and secondly about other objectives. Even so, the objectives cited by groups were quite general and often were similar to the reasons they named for forming the group. The questions invited respondents to use their own words to describe each of these, which we then coded into several categories as described below.

## 5.1. Reasons for forming

When asked why their group had formed, community outreach, engagement and collaboration with other groups were common themes across all groups regardless of their particular focus, with more than half of respondents citing these as reasons for forming the group. However, most respondents referred to the issues they wanted to address or their broad environmental goals.

Of 144 groups with a biodiversity focus, 67% cited a reason related to habitat restoration or supporting the recovery of a particular species. Pest control was also mentioned by 48% of biodiversity groups (Table 8).

For the 42 groups with a waterways focus, 74% mentioned a desire to improve water quality. Gaining and sharing knowledge within the group (36%), advocacy, e.g. being in planning decisions (31%), and supporting farmers to adopt good management practices (21%) were also common motivators. A reasonable share of these groups (21%) also mentioned biodiversity reasons for forming, whereas only two biodiversity groups mentioned water issues as a reason for forming.

Table 9 provides further detail on how we defined the different types of reasons and gives examples of each, including for different kinds of groups.

Table 8. Percent of groups citing a given reason for forming the group, by main focus of groups. Most respondents named more than one reason.

| Reason for forming | Main focus of groups | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Biodiversity (n = 148) | Biodiversity & Waterways (n = 44) | Waterways (n = 42) |
| Biodiversity: Habitat & Species Support | 67% | 50% | 21% |
| Pest Control | 48% | 11% | 0% |
| Community Outreach & Collaboration | 47% | 57% | 40% |
| Env-general/Other | 22% | 30% | 24% |
| Gaining & sharing knowledge w/in group | 13% | 16% | 36% |
| Coastal Issues | 8% | 16% | 14% |
| Advocacy/Planning | 5% | 16% | 31% |
| Water Quality | 1% | 41% | 74% |
| Farming & Good Management Practice | 1% | 14% | 21% |

Table 9. Examples of reasons for starting a group (verbatim wording from survey).

| Theme | Examples for different kinds of groups |
|---|---|
| **Biodiversity** – including habitat restoration, recovery of vulnerable species, and more general statements about improving biodiversity | Biodiversity<br>• To protect native species in the area, so they can breed more successfully.<br>• Overall to enhance the biodiversity of the [name] Valley<br>• To protect a relic population of NI kokako and other birds<br>Waterways<br>• Biodiversity loss in waterways<br>• Protecting the endangered longfin eel. We want to see the restoration of eels and other native fish and invertebrates that were historically present.<br>Biodiversity & Waterways<br>• Increase biodiversity of the area's rivers forest wetlands and coast |
| **Pest Control** – references to control of weeds and animal pests | Biodiversity<br>• To rid the local community of unwanted pest plants and animals<br>• Could see weeds like woolly nightshade taking over the native bush<br>• To enhance the city's ecological well-being by eradicating pest predators<br>• Creating a pest free halo around the southern entrance to the National Park |
| **Community Outreach & Collaboration** – providing a benefit to the wider community, reaching out to and collaborating with other groups | Biodiversity<br>• Creation of public walking tracks<br>• Increase recreational benefits<br>Waterways<br>• Promote enjoyment and cultural/heritage knowledge<br>Biodiversity & Waterways<br>• Wanting to make a community contribution<br>• Concern for youth and poverty |
| **Gaining & Sharing Knowledge** – supporting members of the group or collective | Biodiversity<br>• To develop both a water quality and biodiversity database (spatial and temporal) to understand how the lagoon/catchment ecosystem works – to understand/mitigate nuisance algal blooms<br>• Desire to understand and improve water quality of stream which runs through our suburb and is of known poor quality<br>• Native plant and animal research<br>Waterways<br>• Understanding our contribution to environmental problems |
| **Coastal Issues** – including references to estuaries and other coastal habitats and species | Biodiversity<br>• Restoration of estuarine wetlands<br>• Protect coastal and estuarine environment<br>• Create a safe haven for native wildlife transitioning along [name] and beyond<br>• Safeguard roosting shorebirds<br>Waterways<br>• To improve the health of [name] Harbour by improving freshwater ecosystems<br>• The poor health of the [name] Estuary which the [name] River flows into<br>Biodiversity & Waterways<br>• People want the [name] Estuary to be healthier |
| **Advocacy/Planning** – representation to formal organisations such as councils, government departments, industry, etc. | Biodiversity<br>• Community voice for local issues<br>Waterways<br>• To be involved and engage with all land users, industry, government bodies, industry groups and wider community<br>Biodiversity & Waterways<br>• To represent landowners particularly farmers in our area. |

| Theme | Examples for different kinds of groups |
|---|---|
| **Water Quality** – references to the health of streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands | Waterways<br>• To take ownership of the quality of water that passes through our catchment area<br>• Maintaining water quality in Lake [name]<br>• Restoring the mauri ora of the stream including the health of connected water ways, ground water, stream life and aquatic plants<br>• Catchment funded water testing<br>Biodiversity & Waterways<br>• To improve freshwater quality in streams entering the [name] Harbour. To protect wetlands.<br>• Plant natives to support restoration and health of [name] Stream |
| **Farming & Good Management Practice** – supporting farmers e.g. to adopt good management practices | Biodiversity<br>• To support farmers and other landowners to restore and protect forests and wildlife on their land<br>Waterways<br>• Farmer ownership of the issues facing the industry now<br>• To make informed on farm decisions<br>• Building knowledge in farming entities, through developing farm plans<br>Biodiversity & Waterways<br>• Farmer wellbeing and engagement in dealing with fast paced regulation<br>• Supporting farmers to adopt Good Management Practice |
| **Environment / Other** – environmental reasons that do not fit other categories | Biodiversity<br>• Greening [place name]<br>• Improve quality of our environment<br>• Absorb carbon emissions |

## 5.2. Environmental objectives

Question 19, which asked for the main environmental outcomes being sought by the group, generated responses similar to the reasons for forming the group. Most common were improving biodiversity, reducing pests and weeds and, for waterways groups, improving water quality. The results are shown in Table 10. Only 10% of groups reported specific targets, and many of these stated pest elimination goals. Other examples included:

- 54,000 ha of predator-controlled land connecting east to west—known as the Central Bridge
- to work alongside farmers to create a 23 km biodiversity and carbon capture corridor
- ensuring [name of city] gets to a 10% biodiversity cover
- establishment of 37 hectares of indigenous flora
- reducing sediment loads by 50%
- water quality improvements—having the [name] River as having the absolute highest water quality.

Table 10. Number and percent of groups citing different types of environmental objectives, by main focus of groups. Most responses named more than one objective.

| Environmental objectives | Biodiversity (n = 148) | | Biodiversity & Waterways (n = 44) | | Waterways (n = 42) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Biodiversity: Habitat & Species | 107 | 72% | 28 | 64% | 24 | 57% |
| Pest Control | 82 | 55% | 17 | 39% | 8 | 19% |
| Community Outreach & Collaboration | 41 | 28% | 9 | 20% | 16 | 38% |
| Coastal Issues | 21 | 14% | 8 | 18% | 2 | 5% |
| General Environmental Goals/Other | 20 | 14% | 8 | 18% | 4 | 10% |
| Water Quality | 13 | 9% | 22 | 50% | 25 | 60% |
| Farming & Good Management Practice | 11 | 7% | 11 | 25% | 6 | 14% |
| Wetlands | 11 | 7% | 5 | 11% | 7 | 17% |
| Soil Conservation | 3 | 2% | 5 | 11% | 5 | 12% |

Question 20 about ‘Other’ (i.e. non-environmental) objectives produced responses similar to Question 19, except that biodiversity objectives were less common because so many groups had listed these as environmental objectives in Question 19. Most noticeable is that, as with the reasons for forming a group, community outreach and collaboration with others was by far the most common objective listed, across all kinds of groups (Table 11). Some examples of ‘other objectives’ given included:

- link science/scientists with citizen science to achieve more collectively

- uphold Te Mana o te Wai to protect/enhance the mauri of urban waterways
- build a strong, connected, resilient community of volunteers and supporters.
- to promote awareness and knowledge about wetland conservation
- wherever possible, provide employment for people living in the area
- delivery of education programme in schools and at events
- advocating for public access to public land
- to get fair outcome for dairying in Water Conservation Order process
- imbue confidence and self-efficacy in [local area] farmers to farm sustainably in today's economic environment.

Table 11. Number of groups citing types of other objectives, by main focus of groups.

| Other objectives | Biodiversity (n = 148) | | Biodiversity & Waterways (n = 44) | | Waterways (n = 42) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community Outreach & Collaboration | 67 | 45% | 26 | 59% | 18 | 43% |
| Biodiversity: Habitat & Species | 19 | 13% | 5 | 11% | 4 | 10% |
| Pest Control | 17 | 11% | 2 | 5% | 2 | 5% |
| Gaining & Sharing Knowledge | 9 | 6% | 5 | 11% | 4 | 10% |
| General environmental goals/Other | 8 | 5% | 4 | 9% | 2 | 5% |
| Funding | 5 | 3% | 4 | 9% | 1 | 2% |
| Advocacy/Planning | 4 | 3% | 2 | 5% | 5 | 12% |
| Water Quality | 4 | 3% | 3 | 7% | 3 | 7% |
| Farming & Good Management Practice | 0 | 0% | 2 | 5% | 4 | 10% |

## 5.3. Evolution of group purpose and activities

When asked whether the group's purpose had changed over time, 48 respondents (20% of all respondents) reported that it had. The responses outlined a variety of ways in which group objectives and activities have evolved over time, and we grouped these into five categories.

Respondents described groups as having diversified into ecological restoration more widely or into specific restoration activities (such as riparian planting, wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, endangered species protection). Groups also reported new or expanded networks of collaborators among relevant agencies and allied groups. Seven groups reported developing a focus on education and awareness-raising in the community, while seven groups were working on providing support and realising benefits for the community and farmers. Table 12 presents a selection of responses received from groups illustrating how their purpose has changed.

Table 12. Selected explanations of change in group purpose, by main focus of groups (verbatim from survey).

| Type of change | Illustrative responses |
|---|---|
| Expanded scope or coverage | Biodiversity<br>• Initial focus was just on weeds. Now increased focus on fauna – long-tailed bats.<br>• Now addressing the preservation of all native flora and fauna in our region.<br>• Broadened from water to whole of ecosystem health.<br>• It has included other areas such as [name] Valley, [name] Forest Park.<br>Biodiversity and Waterways<br>• Looking into different areas of interest: Soil health, winter grazing, biodiversity.<br>• After 25 years of riparian planting to improve the [name] Harbour, we are pivoting to native tree planting for carbon capture on farms.<br>• Our geographical scope has changed from initially focusing on the estuary to now also focusing on the whole catchment feeding into the estuary.<br>Waterways<br>• Moved from understanding [water quality] to mitigating and attenuating contaminant loss.<br>• Has become broader, to encompass forest restoration as well as stream restoration. |
| Ecological restoration | Biodiversity<br>• It was started because of the impact of the reserve's neglect on local properties. It quickly became about restoring the reserve for the native wildlife and the enjoyment of local residents.<br>• Pest control has joined forces with the landcare group to share resources. We have realised the two issues, pest control and landcare are linked.<br>Biodiversity and Waterways<br>• The interest in trout fishing was transitory and the trust is now concerned with riparian planting, enhancing the river's water quality and providing a green corridor for birdlife.<br>Waterways<br>• Although water quality is the main focus we are wanting to increase biodiversity by trapping pests and planting natives. |
| New networks and partnerships | Biodiversity<br>• Our focus is the same, but the journey towards that vision has changed as our relationship networks and project clarity has grown.<br>• Greater involvement with DOC, close partnership/shared projects. |
| Community awareness raising/ education, citizen science | Biodiversity<br>• Initially weed control, eradication and revegetation with natives, was followed by monitoring species, which led to trapping and poisoning-predator control, public awareness & interpretation displays.<br>• It is now a vehicle for creating social change in our communities.<br>Waterways<br>• New focus on creating range of small catchment restoration exemplars demonstrating possibilities. |
| Community/farmer support | Biodiversity<br>• The focus has shifted towards operating as a hub, providing support services to community conservation groups.<br>Biodiversity and Waterways<br>• Pivoted in 2019 to focus on providing on the ground support for our farmers, and enabling environmental action through being a conduit for funding.<br>Waterways<br>• A primary focus is management of an FIF [Freshwater Improvement Fund project] to improve water quality, biodiversity and provide jobs. |

Table 13 shows the types of changes reported by the three kinds of groups. The categories in the left column are not mutually exclusive, as many respondents reported that their group's purpose had evolved in multiple ways or that the group had expanded its activities into multiple areas. Overall, half of the 48 groups that reported a change in purpose described having expanded the types of activities carried out or having extended their geographic coverage (e.g. from a specific stream to a whole catchment).

Table 13. Number of groups citing ways in which group purpose has changed (excluding two groups whose main focus is 'Other'). Some groups cited more than one change.

| Ways in which purpose has changed | Biodiversity (n = 28) | | Biodiversity & Waterways (n = 13) | | Waterways (n = 7) | | Total (n = 48) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expanded scope or coverage | 14 | 50% | 6 | 46% | 4 | 57% | 24 | 50% |
| Ecological restoration | 10 | 36% | 2 | 15% | 4 | 57% | 16 | 33% |
| New networks and partnerships | 6 | 21% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 6 | 13% |
| Community awareness/education | 4 | 14% | 2 | 15% | 1 | 14% | 7 | 15% |
| Community/farmer support | 2 | 7% | 3 | 23% | 2 | 29% | 7 | 15% |

## 5.4. Activities

Respondents were asked to indicate what activities they currently 'undertake or coordinate', from a list of 17 options, and they could report additional activities using the category 'Other'. The responses are summarised in Table 14.

Of the 148 groups focusing primarily on biodiversity, 93% undertake pest or weed control and another 66% do planting for riparian management or biodiversity purposes. A majority (59%) do some form of monitoring (see also Section 6), and other common activities include wetland restoration or protection (47%), improving local amenities (39%) and advocacy, including making submissions or other representations to government or industry (33%).

Groups that have a dual focus on biodiversity and water have a wider range of activities than biodiversity groups. Notable are the higher proportions (compared to groups with only a biodiversity focus) doing planting (89%), wetland restoration or protection (66%), advocacy (61%), soil conservation (52%), and fencing (41%). In addition, half (50%) say they are doing collective management of water quality and 48% promoting good farming practices, while 30% are helping members with farm environment plans and 27% are looking at land use change or land retirement. A sizeable share of these groups (20%) is involved in constructing wetlands.

Groups that have a primary focus on waterways undertake similar activities as groups with a dual focus, though fewer waterways groups are involved in pest and weed control and improving local amenities.

Of the 'Other' current activities reported, 20 groups listed some form of community outreach or education. Groups also mentioned gaining and sharing knowledge with their members, species transfers and related work, plant nurseries, marine restoration, carbon planning and collaborating with other groups.

Table 14. Percent of groups undertaking various activities, by main focus of groups (excluding six 'Other' groups).

| Activity | Biodiversity (n = 148) | Biodiversity & Waterways (n = 44) | Waterways (n = 42) | Total (n = 234) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pest/weed control | 93% | 80% | 48% | 82% |
| Planting | 66% | 89% | 69% | 71% |
| Soil conservation | 20% | 52% | 43% | 30% |
| Fencing | 16% | 41% | 45% | 26% |
| Amenities | 39% | 48% | 17% | 36% |
| Wetland restoration | 47% | 66% | 57% | 52% |
| Wetland construction | 9% | 20% | 17% | 13% |
| Monitoring – environmental | 59% | 68% | 48% | 59% |
| Monitoring – cultural | 8% | 27% | 12% | 12% |
| Good farming/management practices | 6% | 48% | 52% | 22% |
| Farm plans | 1% | 30% | 29% | 11% |
| Land use change | 3% | 27% | 12% | 9% |
| Resource consents | 1% | 7% | 0% | 2% |
| Advocacy | 33% | 61% | 33% | 38% |
| Collective management of water quality | 5% | 50% | 62% | 24% |
| Collective management of water takes | 1% | 7% | 0% | 2% |
| Purchasing | 13% | 16% | 7% | 12% |
| Outreach | 8% | 11% | 7% | 9% |
| Other | 22% | 34% | 26% | 25% |

# 6. MONITORING OF ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

## 6.1. Recording of volunteer hours

Over half of respondents from all types of groups said their group records volunteer hours or in-kind contributions. About three-quarters of collectives record this information, and biodiversity groups are somewhat more likely to record this than are other kinds of groups (Table 15).

Table 15. Number and percent of groups that record volunteer hours or in-kind contributions (not all respondents answered this question).

| | Yes | Yes (%) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| By main focus: | | | |
| Biodiversity | 89 | 62% | 143 |
| Combination | 20 | 45% | 44 |
| Waterways | 19 | 48% | 40 |
| Other | 3 | 60% | 5 |
| By group type: | | | |
| Community Environment | 86 | 60% | 143 |
| Collective | 17 | 74% | 23 |
| Catchment group | 26 | 43% | 60 |
| Urban catchment | 2 | 33% | 6 |
| Total | 131 | 56% | 232 |

## 6.2. Monitoring of activities and outcomes

After asking for a group's top three objectives, the survey asked, "Is progress towards these objectives being monitored or measured?" and then "If so, how?" Most groups, some 81%, said their group monitored progress toward their objectives, which is more than the number that reported environmental monitoring. This may be because 'progress toward objectives' was interpreted to include activities such as trees planted or traps set.

Where detail on the type of monitoring was provided, we categorised content into five main types:

- activities, e.g. number of trees planted, traps laid, events held, time worked
- intermediate biodiversity outcomes, e.g. pests killed or volume of weeds removed
- biodiversity outcomes, e.g. counts of birds, live pests, or plants
- water outcomes, generally described simply as 'water quality testing'
- photographs.

Some of these types of monitoring were further broken into sub-types (Table 16). Some general findings include:

- Activity reporting is mostly used by biodiversity groups, many of whom use multiple measures.
- Among groups with biodiversity as a main focus, 69 groups (47%) reported monitoring biodiversity outcomes. Pest kills and bird counts were the most common measures.
- Water quality is being monitored by 19 (22%) of the 86 groups that have waterway health as a main focus.
- Photographs were used as a monitoring tool by 14 groups, mostly by those with a biodiversity focus.

Fifteen groups draw upon monitoring by other parties, including regional councils (10), the Department of Conservation (4) and a private firm contracted by a government funding agency (1).

Table 16. Type of monitoring by main focus of groups.

| Type of monitoring | Biodiversity | Waterways | Biodiversity & Waterways | General | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Activities: | | | | | |
| Engagement | 4 | | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| Planting | 7 | 3 | 1 | | 11 |
| Time worked | 2 | 2 | | | 4 |
| Traps deployed | 5 | | | | 5 |
| Multiple measures | 10 | | 4 | | 14 |
| Other | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Subtotal: Activities | 29 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 42 |
| Intermediate biodiversity outcomes*: | | | | | |
| Pests killed | 29 | | 4 | | 33 |
| Weeds removed | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Subtotal: Intermediate | 31 | | 4 | | 35 |
| Biodiversity outcomes: | | | | | |
| Bird counts | 18 | 1 | 2 | | 21 |
| Bird & pest counts | 8 | | | | 8 |
| Bird & other counts | 5 | | | | 5 |
| Pest counts | 3 | | | | 3 |
| Tree & plant counts | 6 | | | | 6 |
| Other | 5 | | 1 | | 6 |
| Subtotal: Biodiversity | 45 | 1 | 3 | | 49 |
| Water quality | 3 | 8 | 11 | | 22 |
| Photographs | 11 | 1 | 2 | | 14 |

* These are 'intermediate outcomes' because they are one step removed from the ultimate goals (i.e. final outcomes), which we assume are reduced pest populations and increased populations of indigenous species.

## 6.3. Management plans

The survey asked if the group has a management plan (for example, that states what, when and where activities will be done) and, if so, whether it was developed by the group itself or someone else. Roughly half of all three types of groups have developed their own management plan, and another 20% of groups have had a plan developed by or with a third party. Councils were the most common third party to provide such assistance, with consultants, individuals, the Department of Conservation, industry bodies, and others also named (Table 17).

Table 17. Developer of the group's management plan.

| Who developed the group's management plan | Biodiversity | | Biodiversity & Waterways | | Waterways | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No plan | 33 | 24% | 17 | 39% | 12 | 29% | 118 | 53% |
| Group did its own | 76 | 55% | 22 | 50% | 20 | 49% | 62 | 28% |
| Third party | 30 | 22% | 5 | 11% | 9 | 22% | 44 | 20% |
| of which: | | | | | | | | |
| Council | 15 | | 3 | | 1 | | 19 | |
| Consultant | 4 | | 2 | | 1 | | 7 | |
| Individual | 5 | | | | 1 | | 6 | |
| Another group | 1 | | | | 3 | | 4 | |
| Department of Conservation | 3 | | | | | | 3 | |
| Other | 1 | | | | 1 | | 2 | |
| Industry body | | | | | 2 | | 2 | |
| New Zealand Landcare Trust | 1 | | | | | | 1 | |
| Total | 139 | | 44 | | 41 | | 224 | |

## 6.4. Number of group activities

Question 28 asked "How many group activities (such as planting days, meetings, etc.) occurred in the past 12 months?" More than half of all biodiversity groups had more than 10 activities in the past year, and over 30% had more than 20 activities. In contrast, most waterways groups (most of which are catchment groups) had between one and six activities per year, reflecting a different mode of working together. Groups with a dual focus are in two clusters: 45% had six or fewer activities, whereas 27% had more than 20 activities (Figure 7).

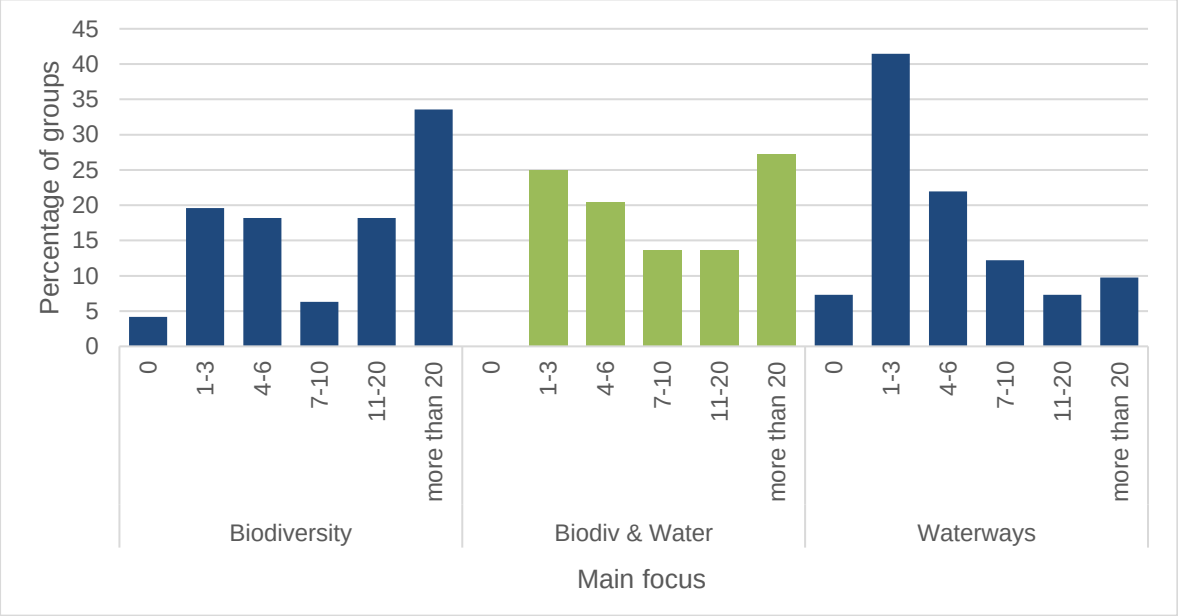


Figure 7. Percentage of groups having different number of activities in past 12 months (n = 143 biodiversity, 44 biodiversity and waterways, and 41 waterways).

# 7. FUNDING

## 7.1. Self-funding

Question 37 asked “Do group members pay a subscription or levy to the group?” We present results for this question and the next, regarding the subscription amount, by group type because collectives, whose members are usually smaller groups, might have distinctly higher fees. When the data are summarised instead by the groups’ main focus, biodiversity groups are very similar to community environment groups in terms of paying subscriptions, and waterways groups are very similar to catchment groups.

Overall, 27% of respondents said yes, their group members pay a subscription. The percentage paying a subscription was highest, at 43%, amongst collectives, followed by catchment groups (36%), community environment groups (21%) and urban catchment groups (17%) (see Figure 8).

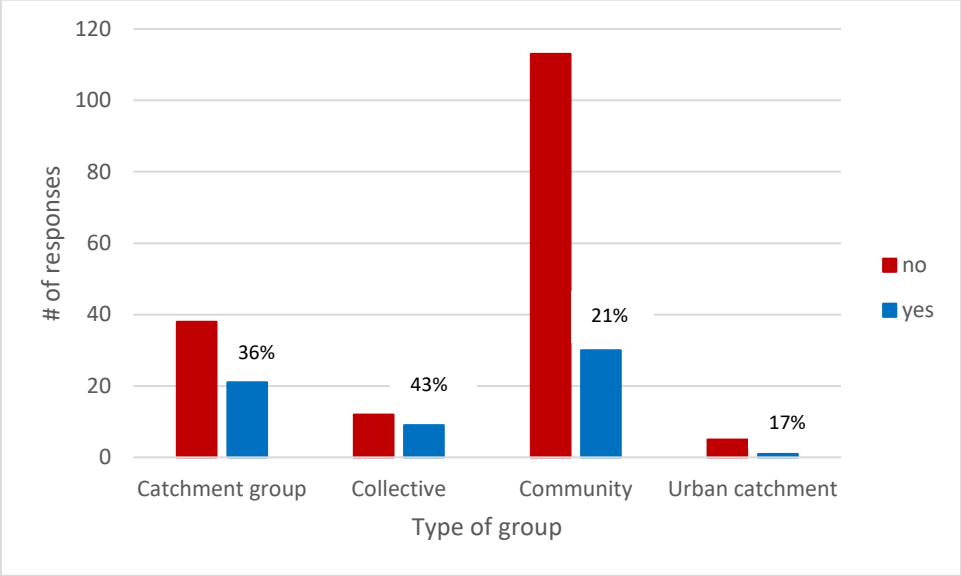


Figure 8. Number and percent of groups whose members pay subscriptions (n = 59 catchment groups, 21 collectives, 143 community environment groups and 6 urban catchment groups).

Groups with subscriptions typically collect $50 per year or less. Catchment groups and collectives are more likely to charge amounts over $160 per year, with one catchment group charging $1000 and another $3000 per year. This latter group classified itself as a catchment group but in many ways operates as a collective (Figure 10).

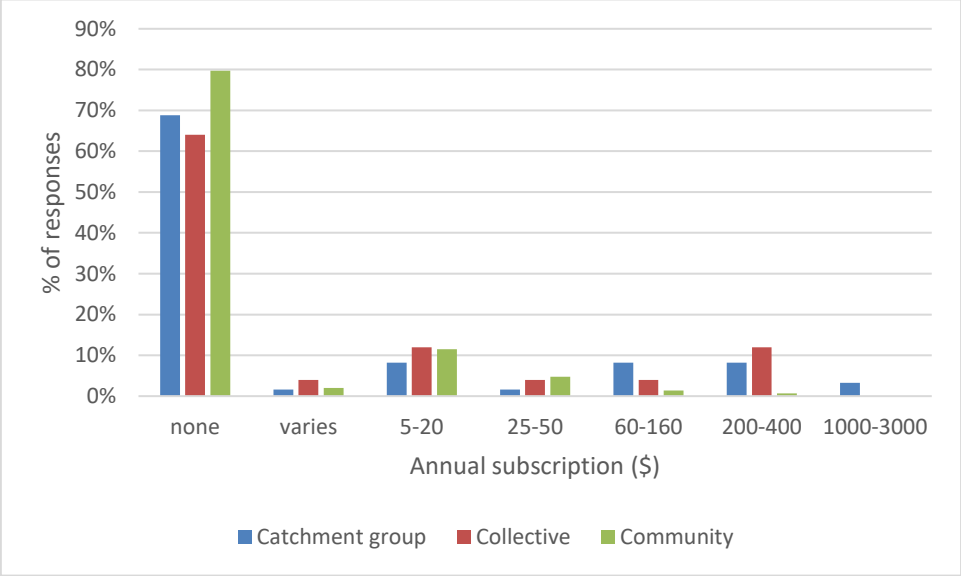


Figure 9. Percent of groups paying different subscription amounts ('n' is same as for Figure 8; urban groups are not shown because the one urban group with a subscription fee did not provide further information).

## 7.2. Funding sources

Groups obtain funding from a wide variety of sources, and these do not vary much across the focus of groups. Roughly equal numbers of groups source funding from local and regional councils, charitable foundations and trusts, and central government. Private companies are a somewhat less common funder. About a quarter of groups reported no external funding (Table 18).

Table 18. Sources of funding, by main focus of groups, including breakdown of various government departments (note: groups could list multiple sources of funding).

| Source of funding | Biodiversity (n = 148) | | Biodiversity & Waterways (n = 44) | | Waterways (n = 42) | | Total (n = 234) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Councils | 44 | 30% | 20 | 45% | 10 | 24% | 74 | 32% |
| Charitable foundations & trusts | 43 | 29% | 12 | 27% | 9 | 21% | 64 | 27% |
| Private companies | 10 | 7% | 6 | 14% | 2 | 5% | 18 | 8% |
| Central government: | 48 | 32% | 14 | 32% | 11 | 26% | 73 | 31% |
| DOC (incl Community Fund)[a] | 27 | 18% | 2 | 5% | 1 | 2% | 30 | 13% |
| MFE (incl Jobs4Nature)[b] | 4 | 3% | 2 | 5% | 0 | 0% | 6 | 3% |
| MPI (incl SFF, Te Uru Rākau,1BT)[c] | 11 | 7% | 4 | 9% | 5 | 12% | 20 | 9% |
| MBIE [d] | 6 | 4% | 6 | 14% | 5 | 12% | 17 | 7% |
| None | 32 | 22% | 5 | 11% | 10 | 24% | 47 | 20% |

[a] Department of Conservation, [b] Ministry for the Environment
[c] Ministry for Primary Industries, including Sustainable Farming Fund, Te Uru Rākau, and One Billion Trees
[d] Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

## 7.3. Amount of funding over past 3 years

The amount of funding received by groups varies from none to more than $500,000 over the past three years. Roughly half of biodiversity groups and waterways groups reported receiving less than $10,000 while, at the other end of the spectrum, about 10% of groups have received more than $500,000 during the same period (Figure 10).

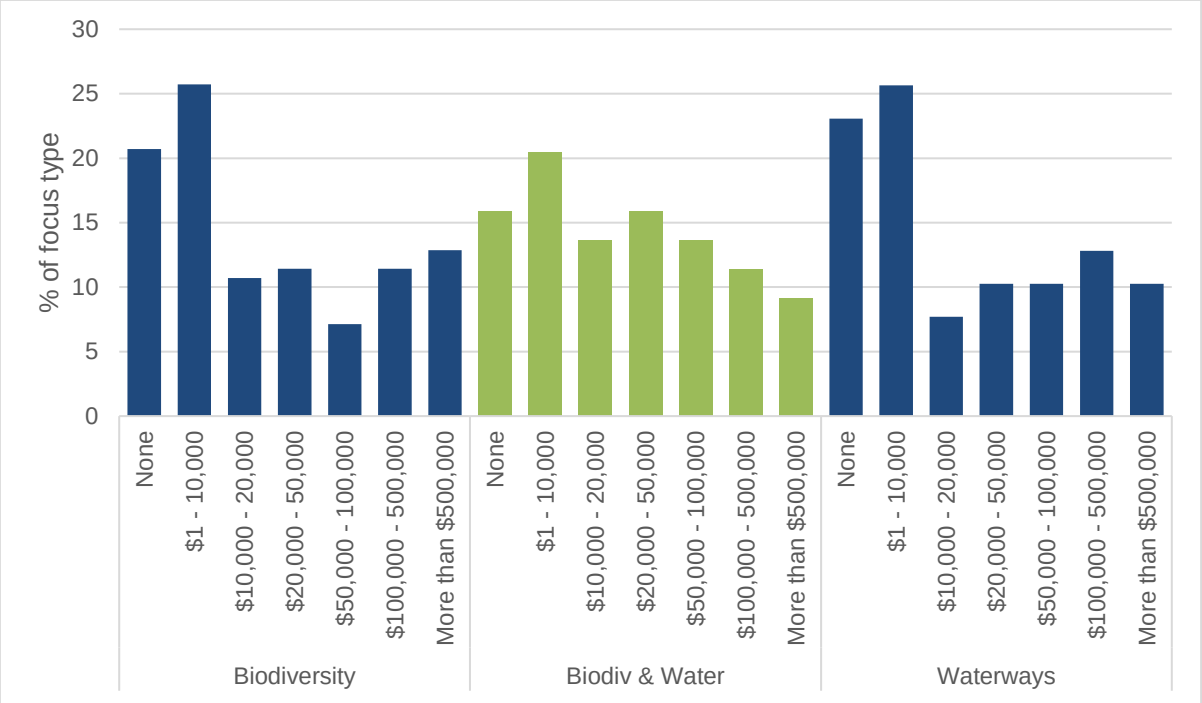


Figure 10. Percentage of groups and levels of funding received over the past three years, by main focus of groups.

# 8. NON-FINANCIAL ADVICE AND SUPPORT

## 8.1. Sources of support

Groups receive advice and other forms of non-financial support from a wide variety of sources. Over half of biodiversity groups reported getting advice and support from both their city or district council and their regional (or unitary) council. The Department of Conservation has provided support to roughly one-quarter of biodiversity groups.

Waterways groups, and those with a dual focus, were more likely to get support from their regional council, with three-quarters of these groups receiving such support, though many also received support from city and district councils. Most of these groups also got support from industry bodies such as Beef+Lamb NZ, Dairy NZ and Fonterra. The NZ Landcare Trust is also a common source of support, helping 45% of dual focus groups and 33% of waterways groups. Private companies were mentioned by 30% of dual focus groups and 29% of waterways groups. Collectives (e.g. collectives of catchment groups) were cited by 19% of waterways groups (Table 19).

Table 19. Number and percentage of groups receiving advice and non-financial support from various sources.

| Source of support | Biodiversity (n = 148) | | Biodiversity & Waterways (n = 44) | | Waterways (n = 42) | | Total (n = 234) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| City/district council | 87 | 59% | 17 | 39% | 9 | 21% | 113 | 48% |
| Regional/unitary council | 78 | 53% | 33 | 75% | 31 | 74% | 142 | 61% |
| Department of Conservation | 35 | 24% | 2 | 5% | 4 | 10% | 41 | 18% |
| Private company | 23 | 16% | 13 | 30% | 12 | 29% | 48 | 21% |
| Collective group | 12 | 8% | 2 | 5% | 8 | 19% | 22 | 9% |
| NZ Landcare Trust | 10 | 7% | 20 | 45% | 14 | 33% | 44 | 19% |
| Ministry for Primary Industries | 7 | 5% | 11 | 25% | 8 | 19% | 26 | 11% |
| Industry bodies | 3 | 2% | 27 | 61% | 29 | 69% | 59 | 25% |
| Other | 26 | 18% | 11 | 25% | 11 | 26% | 48 | 21% |

## 8.2. Types of support received

The survey asked what types of advice and non-financial support groups had received, with respondents able to select from the following categories:

- coordination or facilitation of meetings or activities
- administration, such as meeting notes, finances
- technical advice

- environmental monitoring
- preparation of funding applications.

Technical support was easily the most common type of support received by biodiversity groups, whereas assistance with meetings, with environmental monitoring and, to a lesser degree, funding applications, were common forms of assistance to waterways and dual-focus groups (Figure 11).

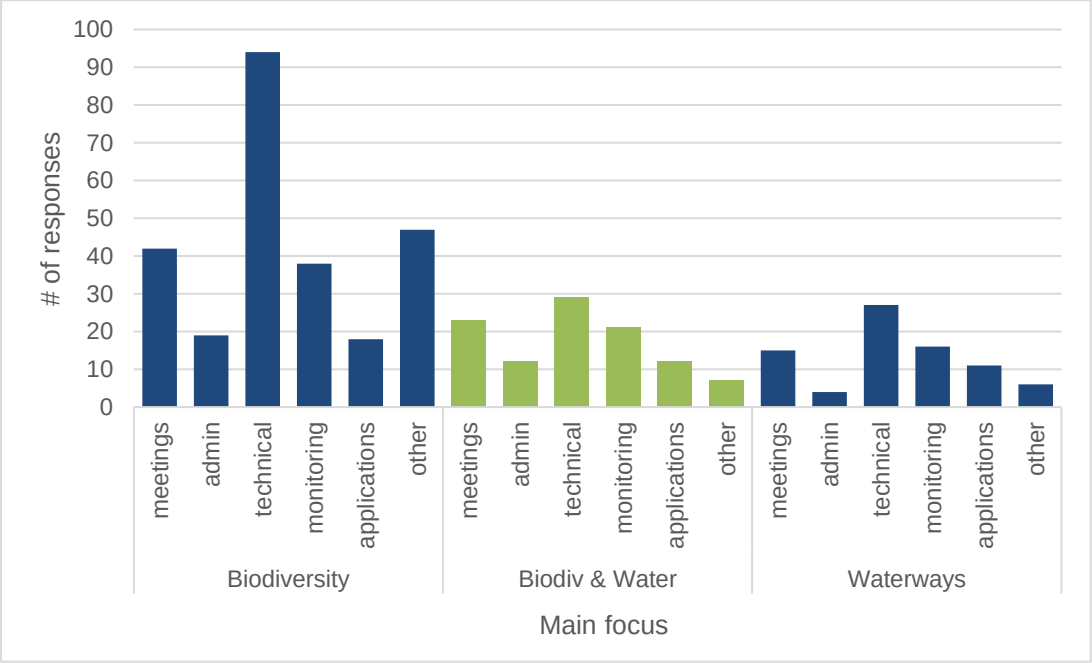


Figure 11. Number of groups receiving various types of support, by groups, by main focus. See text for full wording of support types.

## 8.3. Advice and support needs

Question 34 asked “What type of additional advice and support do you *most* need?” The options presented were the same as the previous question about kinds of non-financial advice and support currently received. For biodiversity groups, technical support and monitoring were most frequently mentioned, followed by help preparing funding applications. For groups focused on waterways, or with a dual focus, these three categories were mentioned a roughly equal number of times (Figure 12).

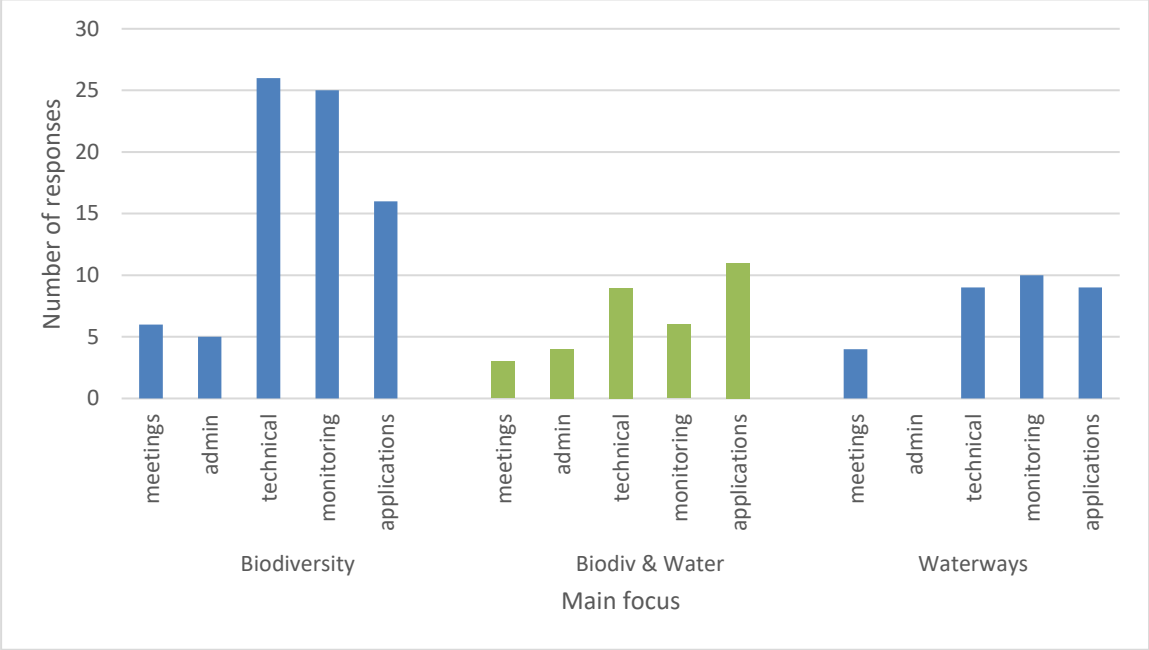


Figure 12. Additional advice and support most needed by groups, by group's main focus.

However, many respondents, especially from biodiversity groups, used the 'Other' option to say that their main need was for funding. Several others mentioned needing labour or help recruiting or managing labour. Additional 'Other' responses mentioned some of the existing options offered, such as technical advice or help with meetings. These have been recoded and added to the counts for those options. Counts for 'Other' responses are therefore not shown in Figure 12. Table 20 presents a selection of comments about 'Other' advice and support needed.

Table 20. Selected comments about types of support needed (verbatim from survey).

| Type of support needed | Selected comments |
|---|---|
| Labour | Biodiversity<br>• Support with manpower doing weed control - we are mainly older and clambering up and down steep banks is not possible.<br>Waterways<br>• We have an ever growing need for a group to do on the ground maintenance of weeds and pests and will need to formulate a plan for how to coordinate and fund this work load. A work in progress. |
| Funding | Biodiversity<br>• Funding for traps outside our current funding agreements. Funding for fencing and coordination time outside our current funding agreements.<br>• We most need continuity and simplification of financial support. |
| Networking | Biodiversity<br>• What I think would be useful is some method of sharing advice and experience. Such as what other groups have done. We all seem to work in isolation and I suspect this ends up with waste of time and money.<br>Waterways<br>• Additional assistance with mana whenua engagement would be useful. |
| Services | Biodiversity<br>• We need the Department of Conservation to substantially cull deer and pigs on their land which neighbours ours. The animals continually invade our land and we are constantly controlling them. |
| Technical | Biodiversity<br>• Scaling conservation effort, big data information management & mapping, impact metrics and indicators.<br>Waterways<br>• We need better support from Council to characterise these two large rivers and to develop an integrated catchment management plan to inform farm plans. As part of this we need GIS support, robust scientific data gathering tools for hydrology and instruments for water quality monitoring. |

# 9. FUTURE PRIORITIES

The survey asked groups about their future activities, using two questions. For the first question, using the same list as Question 24 (see Section 5.4 above) about current activities, the survey asked respondents to identify projects or initiatives their group would like to undertake *if sufficient resources were available*. From these data, we identified the activities for which groups wanted to do 'more of the same' and activities that they have not done in the past but would like to initiate. The results are shown in Table 21. Not included in this table are activities of six groups that had a focus other than biodiversity or waterways (e.g. cycle trails).

Of the 148 groups focusing primarily on biodiversity, future priorities are mostly to continue and perhaps expand the same activities, i.e. pest and weed control, planting and environmental monitoring, but 13% of groups want to start cultural monitoring and 9% want to start environmental monitoring.

For groups that have a dual focus on biodiversity and water, of activities they would initiate if they had sufficient resources, environmental monitoring is the most frequently mentioned at 16%.

Of groups that have a primary focus on waterways, most notable are the number of groups that would like to initiate environmental monitoring (21%) and cultural monitoring (12%), and the 17% of groups that would like to help members with farm plans (in addition to the 29% that are already doing so; refer Table 14 on page 31).

Other activities mentioned as future priorities included gaining and sharing knowledge with their members, species transfers and related work, plant nurseries, marine restoration, carbon planning and collaborating with other groups, along with recruiting more people and developing catchment management or pest management plans. One catchment group said it wanted to initiate:

> phosphorus risk mitigations with dung beetles… currently compiling catchment wide plan of existing fencing, riparian plantings and sediment traps etc so that we have information in one place and can measure ongoing work/achievements.

The following sections provide more detail on groups' plans for the next 12 months and the obstacles they are facing.

Table 21. Future priorities of groups, by groups' main focus. 'Continue' indicates an activity that is both currently undertaken (Q24) and a future priority (Q41); and 'new' indicates that the activity is not currently undertaken but is a future priority (Q41). Darker cells indicate higher percentages: dark grey > 25%, light grey is > 10%. See the Appendix for full wording of the activities as presented in survey Questions 24 and 41.

| | Biodiversity n = 148 | | Biodiversity & Water n = 44 | | Waterways n = 42 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | continue | new | continue | new | continue | new |
| Pest/weed control | 63% | 3% | 52% | 5% | 29% | 12% |
| Planting | 33% | 5% | 59% | 9% | 33% | 14% |
| Monitoring – environmental | 29% | 9% | 32% | 16% | 19% | 21% |
| Wetland restoration | 22% | 3% | 34% | 2% | 26% | 5% |
| Amenities | 11% | 5% | 23% | 5% | 7% | 5% |
| Advocacy | 6% | 2% | 16% | 0% | 10% | 7% |
| Soil conservation | 1% | 2% | 14% | 2% | 7% | 5% |
| Fencing | 4% | 8% | 14% | 9% | 17% | 12% |
| Collective purchasing | 1% | 2% | 5% | 2% | 2% | 0% |
| Wetland construction | 3% | 2% | 9% | 5% | 2% | 7% |
| Monitoring – cultural | 3% | 13% | 11% | 7% | 0% | 12% |
| Collective management of water quality | 1% | 5% | 27% | 5% | 31% | 5% |
| Land use change | 1% | 1% | 5% | 5% | 2% | 2% |
| Collective management of water takes | 1% | 0% | 2% | 5% | 0% | 5% |
| Farm plans | 1% | 2% | 18% | 2% | 12% | 17% |
| Resource consents | 0% | 0% | 2% | 7% | 0% | 5% |
| Good farming/management practices | 1% | 2% | 14% | 2% | 12% | 2% |

# 10. GROUP PLANS FOR NEXT 12 MONTHS

The second question about future activities was open-ended. It asked groups what activities they planned to undertake over the next 12 months. Planned activities ranged from 'more of the same' to scaling up in terms of personnel, extent or area covered, or undertaking new types of activities. The activities also spanned domains ranging from pest management and riparian restoration through to track maintenance and engagement with communities. Group plans also made explicit mention of funding, administrative capacity building, and lobbying roles.

## 10.1. Scale of planned activities

For initial analysis, we grouped responses into four categories: No Answer (N/A), Initiate, Same, and Scale Up. Results are shown in Table 22.

Table 22. Scale of activities planned for next 12 months.

| | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| N/A | 11 | 5 |
| Initiate | 17 | 7 |
| Same | 175 | 73 |
| Scale up | 37 | 15 |
| Total | 240 | 100 |

'Initiate' responses (7%) indicated that the group has just formed and therefore their activities over the next 12 months are new. Among other things, newly initiated groups planned to:

- conduct manual control of pest plants for targeted areas
- carry out baseline stream monitoring
- recruit a team and begin planning to spend newly-acquired funding
- acquire new sources of funding, and
- plan activities as a group.

'Same' responses (73%) either explicitly or implicitly signalled a continuation of the group's previous activities. In many cases 'more of the same' was explicitly signalled by respondents, but in other cases specific activities were described. In these latter cases we compared the described activities against the 'main achievements of the group' as described in Q39 and decided whether the response constituted a

continuation or a qualitative shift in activities. Same responses included, among other activities:

- more weeding and planting
- pest eradication and trap replacement/maintenance
- recruiting more volunteers
- continuing community engagement with schools
- undertaking biodiversity and water quality monitoring
- obtaining funds
- undertaking new species translocations
- sharing success stories
- raising seedlings
- maintenance of walking tracks and biking trails
- working with government and other agencies to shape environmental priorities
- fledging native birds
- holding government agencies to account.

'Scale up' responses (15%) signalled a significant shift in the spatial extent or qualitative range of activities being pursued. These included, among others:

- increasing trapped or planted area
- acquiring or retaining paid staff through acquisition of funding
- recruiting more volunteers
- starting new activities such as monitoring stream water quality or planning as a group
- acquiring a facilitator/coordinator or other administrative support
- becoming a formal entity such as a charitable trust
- establishing an umbrella organisation with other groups
- identifying new opportunities for species translocations
- building Farm Environment Planning skills among members of the group, including considering whole-of-catchment FEPs
- identifying critical source areas and working with landowners on mitigations
- lobbying government agencies on water, biodiversity, and restoration goals.

While we applied careful judgement to differentiate responses into 'same' and 'scale up' categories, it is important to note that these judgements are difficult to make in a consistent way with the information provided. Some groups operate at a much larger spatial scale than others, some have funding while others do not, some are new while others are older, and so on. Activities such as planting 5,000 ha with native plants might be a massive scale shift for a small group requiring additional skills and

personnel, yet for a large and established group that has already planted 13,000 ha this might be easily achievable with existing capacities.

Furthermore, some groups conduct routine activities that are anchored in a place—such as pest trap replacement/maintenance, whereas other groups conduct activities that constantly move across space. For example, one group that previously established a scenic walking track and a boardwalk plans to establish more tracks and a mountain biking park in a recreational reserve area. For these reasons, while our broad categorization provides useful information, there is significant diversity within the 'initiate', 'same' and 'scale up' categories.

## 10.2. Content of planned activities

The content of planned activities largely fell into four broad categories: pest management, restoration, group organisation, and community engagement.

Pest management activities included things like:

- weed control
- pest trapping – new traps, replenishment and maintenance of old traps
- plant and animal pest monitoring.

Restoration activities included things like:

- investigation of tile drain water quality
- planting native plants
- wetland restoration
- riparian fencing and planting
- developing a catchment management plan
- stream water quality monitoring
- biodiversity monitoring
- walkway enhancement, monitoring, and maintenance
- community planting days
- community rubbish clean up days.

Group organisation included things like:

- meetings
- planning – setting goals, develop long term vision, strategic plan to guide expenditure
- recruiting volunteers and/or members

- hiring staff, e.g. facilitator, project manager, proposal writer
- writing proposals and acquiring funding
- become an incorporated society or charitable trust.

Community engagement included things like:

- working with councils and landowners to target key areas for action
- working with the Department of Conservation on a restoration plan
- advocating for improvement in hydrological regime
- ensuring regional plan is “fair to dairying”
- lobbying for deer control
- sharing information and input into lake consent
- organising submissions on plans
- inviting speakers on estuary issues
- organising community information days
- engaging with landowners and schools to collaborate on future activities
- organising a symposium on water issues to share progress with community
- developing stronger relationships with mana whenua
- joining forces with other groups to advocate for water quality improvement.

Funding was explicitly mentioned as part of future plans in 27 responses (11%). Funding, either recently obtained or hoped to be acquired, was indicated as needed to:

- increase number of traps and procure consumables for traps
- expand pest control operations by 5,000 ha
- reintroduce seabirds into an ecosanctuary
- continue annual planting
- undertake wilding pine removal projects with a government agency
- do riparian planting in a new location
- employ a specialist or coordinator
- link up different projects in the same area
- create a catchment component or Farm Environmental Planning
- increase capacity of backyard nurseries
- organise volunteer planting days
- retain staff through Jobs for Nature funding.

# 11. WHAT IS GETTING IN THE WAY?

Of the 240 survey responses, 223 completed Question 42, which asked respondents to identify key obstacles that are preventing their group from achieving their objectives. To summarise this discussion, we classified these responses into several key themes, though we recognise that there is overlap between themes. Since our aim is to provide exposition of these different areas, the following includes some repetition.

## 11.1. Funding constraints

Nearly half of the 240 responses (n = 112; 47%) explicitly mentioned that a lack of funding was preventing them from achieving more. Groups listed a range of things that they needed the funding for, including:

- weeding – sprays, equipment, labour
- fencing – materials and labour
- riparian planting – materials and labour
- a coordinator for the group
- community engagement staff
- someone to recruit and organise volunteers
- contracting relevant expertise/advice, e.g. horticulture, species reintroductions, wetland restoration, farm planning, environmental education, catchment critical source area analysis
- environmental monitoring – water quality, stream biodiversity, forest health, pest abundance and location
- subsidies so that native tree planting can become an economically efficient form of carbon capture
- equipment, e.g. trapping gear, to use Jobs for Nature labour
- contractors to prepare restoration sites for planting
- capital expenditure – e.g. water reticulation systems, new facilities to support growth in staff/volunteers.

Specific administrative and labour needs are described in more detail by theme below.

## 11.2. Funding system

In addition to identifying inputs in need of funding, respondents also identified challenges with the funding system.

Six groups bemoaned ‘proposal fatigue’ that resulted from spending a large amount of scarce volunteer time on funding applications, with a small chance of success, and often for only small amounts of funding. Respondents reported feeling demotivated through the funding process, and one group found it difficult to recruit a volunteer willing to take on task of proposal writing because of this negative sentiment. One group found it “too hard” to procure even $20k to restore a wetland, so they opted to raise the funds themselves through producing and selling a small bird booklet for $5 each.

Several groups identified the competitive nature of the funding process as a constraint. One said that the competitive funding approach undermines collective action, and three groups said this prevents sustained progress. Without reliable funding and financial certainty for the group, it can be difficult to recruit new staff. Furthermore, activities such as planting require multi-year planning horizons, with two years to age seedlings and time to clear and prepare the land.

Other aspects of the funding system also pose constraints for groups. Complex budget and reporting requirements impose additional expenses on groups. One respondent mentioned that since funders all work on different calendars, it is difficult for groups to keep track of deadlines and therefore opportunities often fall through the cracks. Furthermore, calendar asynchrony can make it difficult to reap economies of scale and plan continuity across projects.

The narrow scope of funding initiatives was also identified by groups as a constraint. Lifestyle blocks, for example, are often excluded from funding mechanisms (e.g. for pest management). Two respondents identified that for projects on public land, funding is scarce, and where it is available it is often not sufficient. In other cases, where funding is provided but limited to materials (i.e. not labour), this can add pressure to already time-limited volunteers to do even more.

Some funding arrangements, such as those through local government, will require that contractors needed for specific restoration work are contracted to the council rather than the project leads. This can lead to a disjuncture between the accountabilities of the contractor, and result in distrust between the group and the contractor who is meant to help them achieve their goals.

## 11.3. Time and labour constraints

### *11.3.1. Limited volunteer time and recruitment*

Many groups (n = 49) explicitly identified ‘time’ as a key constraint preventing them from achieving more. For 28 responses, this was focused on the volunteers or members not having enough time themselves to do the work; e.g. “We are very busy

farmers and don't have huge amounts of spare time or resources to be working in DOC marginal strips."

For 30 groups, their ability to recruit and sustain volunteer participation was considered a key constraint. Groups found it hard to build a consistent volunteer network when "we don't have lists of people", and one group said they found it difficult to engage even their own trustees. For one group, landowner participation in trapping dropped off when catch rates were low. For those groups that managed to drum up sufficient volunteer support, there was also hesitance to ask too much of them, lest it create 'volunteer fatigue.'

Groups reliant on volunteer effort must adjust the work they can do to the availability of volunteer labour. When volunteer labour is scarce, patchy, and unreliable, groups cannot guarantee that a particular project will be completed to a specific standard by a designated time.

For groups in small rural communities, recruiting volunteers can be especially challenging. Without a throughput or growth of residents, the pool of possible volunteers does not grow. The rural setting of much environmental work can also be an issue for paid contractors when there is funding available, as there may not be suitable contractors who live in the vicinity (or who are prepared to travel).

### *11.3.2. Volunteer workforce skills and abilities*

Groups identified a mismatch in volunteer abilities and the group's environmental work as another key constraint. For 19 respondents, the physical ability of volunteers was identified as a constraint, since their volunteer base is often elderly and retired people, with many volunteers unable to undertake strenuous physical activities such as digging and planting.

Many groups (n = 21) considered that specialist expertise was needed to advance their work, and yet was often missing among volunteers. Expertise needed includes:

- skills to operate machinery, e.g. chainsaws
- education/outreach skills
- hydrologist to map the river and issues
- knowledge of local planning rules and their application
- volunteer recruitment and coordination
- writing Farm Environment Plans
- mātauranga Māori support
- communication skills, e.g. social media
- design and evaluation of monitoring results to assess performance of interventions
- knowledge of the funding landscape, with bid-writing skills

- technical advice on, for example, willow removal in complex terrain and spraying methods
- forming and managing a legal entity
- how to organise a planting day
- ability to estimate the cost of different interventions
- contractors to prepare sites for planting
- critical source area analysis
- biodiversity specialists to oversee species reintroductions
- advice on wetland restoration.

#### *11.3.3. Administrative capacity*

Many groups (n = 32) identified a lack of administrative capacity as inhibiting their ability to achieve more. The following administrative needs were identified:

- a lack of a system for recording pest catches and conveying statistics/outcomes to public
- need to synthesise disparate information to tell the full story of group achievements
- lack of software to manage activities and report achievements in a streamlined way
- facilitator/administrator for group
- trapping coordinator
- a designated engagement officer whose role is to recruit land owners/volunteers
- help with land retiring processes
- link up with other groups—an umbrella
- working through red tape to access government land
- coordinating communication—e.g. lists of volunteers
- it is difficult to 'employ' someone from a legal/tax perspective
- write and administer (e.g. report on) funding proposals.

## 11.4. Government/agency constraints

Many groups (n = 33) identified that actions of local and central government agencies were often a source of constraint for groups' work.

In relation to regional councils, both general and specific issues were identified. At a general level, five groups reported finding government agencies (including councils) unresponsive or unhelpful, and one group felt council ignored them when consulting

on relevant issues. Several respondents put forward some explanations for this: one respondent felt that “big money interests [have] undue weight in lobbying council”, another claimed councils have an “extractivism mindset”, and another said their council and the Department of Conservation have “limited knowledge and dubious agendas trying to make changes based on narrowly focused science.” Another respondent, in contrast, cited a lack of communication with council as a constraint but felt that it was their group’s responsibility to initiate such communication.

Respondents also identified specific actions (or lack of actions) by councils that inhibited group progress. These included:

- lack of support from council for retiring land
- councils refused to support specific projects for funding
- council reluctant to help control weeds in council-owned land, prevents biodiversity gains from being secured
- council unable to provide simple funding model for conservation work, raises the administrative burden for groups
- council discontinuity in staff—no single point of contact for the group, meaning that no one at council knows what the group does and needs
- council overloaded—cannot support groups
- lack of access to catchment data held by council
- council not providing funding promised
- council rules say ‘no herbicide’; this prevents meaningful pest management
- councils need to class certain things as weeds so groups can all get on top of it
- requiring permission from councils, government agencies, and landowners to work the land.

Groups also pointed to other government bodies, such as district councils and central government agencies, as in some way constraining their work. One group said there was too much ‘red tape’ inhibiting access to and restoration of government land. Another said there was a lack of support from government agencies for things like environmental monitoring, and yet another said that they were unable to access expertise that they requested from the Department of Conservation. Two groups indicated that when multiple government agencies have jurisdiction over an issue—such as regional and district councils—if neither is strongly supportive of a project it can slip through the cracks and not receive formal support of either.

A difference in values and objectives between groups and central government was also mentioned. One group said the need to align with government objectives required effort and was therefore a key constraint on their work. One group felt that central government had not consulted meaningfully with them on policy, leading to feeling demoralised. Another group felt that since freehold land is “not of interest” to

government agencies, that they felt isolated and unsupported. Another group cited "limited interest" by Predator Free 2050 and the government in non-lethal management methods as constraint to pursuing more humane methods of pest management.

## 11.5. Group dynamics constraints

Groups (n = 20) identified group membership and group dynamics as key constraints to achieving more.

Membership was identified as a key point by several groups (n = 9) who said they found it difficult to recruit and maintain farmer/landowner involvement in the group and its activities. One group said they had to start searching for new landowners to recruit into membership. Two groups expressed a need for people from the forestry sector to come to meetings and help the group secure gains and scale up. One respondent reported that their membership was disinclined to connect with local urban people, which they felt was a missed opportunity. More broadly, three respondents identified that the diversity of their groups posed a challenge because different people brought different motivations to the table. They highlighted that "not everyone feels compelled to act," and "trying to encourage landowners with large blocks of land (mostly farmers) to adopt good management practices is tricky when you aren't a farmer."

For these reasons, "keeping everyone together as a team" was identified as important to prevent members going "doing their own thing." For two groups, "deciding where is the best place to start" was an immediate challenge confronting them, while for four others, keeping momentum going was an enduring challenge.

## 11.6. Policy constraints

The existing policy settings, which are often changing, were cited by 9 groups as a constraint on their work. Most of these groups (n = 6) said that there was significant uncertainty about what new freshwater policy and regulations mean for them, which meant they could not proceed with confidence about whether their actions were cost effective or helping them to comply. For instance, one group said they need to know what data modelling information would be needed to satisfy new Farm Environment Plan requirements under new regulations. Another group said that with all the changes, it was unclear what role environmental non-governmental organisations can most effectively play in the new system, and therefore where they should be focusing their efforts.

Other types of policy settings also featured. One group said they were waiting on the resolution of an iwi claim to a restoration site before they could proceed, and another

group said there was uncertainty about whether the government was going to sell areas with high conservation value ("nesting areas") to enable housing development.

## 11.7. Community constraints

Groups (n = 22) identified constraints relating to the relationship of group activities with the wider community. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and various states of lockdown across Aotearoa New Zealand, seven groups identified the lockdowns as a key constraint on their work.

Groups also highlighted the need to gain and sustain buy-in from local organisations and the local community in order to implement a backyard trap network. One respondent noted that landowners do not have much incentive to seek out partner organisations to design and implement catchment restoration.

Public attitudes were also cited as a constraint. One respondent said that some locals do not see benefit from removing pests from their own land "even if it costs them nothing", while another said that negative public attitudes toward pests increased "social license for cruelty" against mammals including pet cats. Two groups said that pet owners not controlling dogs/cats constrained the outcomes of their work, and one group reported that someone has sprayed herbicides on regenerating forest, damaging plants and traps. In another domain, one respondent said they felt there was a lack of will in the community to control coastal erosion.

The need for community buy-in was brought into focus by two groups, who reported that upstream practices undermined their work. In one case, sediment from forestry operations buried new plantings downstream. In another, the lack of weed management upstream meant that a group's weed control was undone fairly quickly.

## 11.8. Tangata whenua context constraints

Eleven groups identified that limited engagement and relationships with tangata whenua was a key constraint to achieving more. Groups expressed a need to engage better with tangata whenua in the future, while noting that engagement was time consuming for them, tangata whenua are often capacity-strained, and there are other legitimate priorities for tangata whenua capacity. For these reasons, one respondent said that engagement therefore needs to happen "at the speed of trust."

## 11.9. Environmental constraints

Environmental contexts and conditions also constrain groups from achieving more (n = 7). As explained above, upstream land uses such as forestry and weed management can impinge upon and undo the work of environmental groups downstream. Temporary environmental conditions such as drought can harm new plantings and prevent them from growing as fast or being as robust as they would otherwise be. Invasive weed species are a constant threat for other groups, as they cannot be completely controlled, e.g. privet, Taiwanese cherry, jasmine, honeysuckle, blackberry, woolly nightshade.

The unique environmental contexts of a place also constrain what groups can achieve. Local environmental conditions can shape the types of plants that are able to be planted (and therefor the environmental gains that might be realised). Land that is steep, with dams, or which is difficult to access, only has a small suite of restoration options. Furthermore, human infrastructure matters: for remote areas without rental accommodations, phone reception, and roading access, restoration is much more difficult and therefore is de-prioritised.

# 12. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS REGARDING FUNDING AND SUPPORT

At the end of the survey, 164 respondents took the opportunity to make further comments about funding or external support. Many of these made observations about the challenges of securing consistent funding. Other common themes were the importance of coordination and connections between groups, and about relationships with local and central government, including appreciation for the funding many groups have received. We coded these into the following categories; Table 23 shows the number of times each theme was mentioned:

- Resourcing/funding: The adequacy/inadequacy of funding; challenges with accessing funding; funding timeframes
- Coordination and connections: Coordination with other groups; support with coordinating activities across groups; need for/value of coordination; relationships and connections with other groups/entities
- Councils/government: Relationship with councils or government departments; contending with ‘bureaucracy’ and ‘red tape’
- Volunteers: Recognition of volunteer effort; need to encourage more volunteers; challenges with voluntary work
- Administrative support: Support with running the group (meetings, admin, communication, etc.); internal administration of group
- Outreach: Public awareness raising/education/outreach; engaging with the community
- Information and data: Need for access to/assistance with/coordination of data and information; need for technical information/advice
- Outcomes monitoring: Need to track and monitor outcomes/impacts of group’s activity
- Iwi engagement: Need for support with iwi engagement.

Table 23. Number of comments about various themes in final comments about funding and support.

| Theme of comments | Biodiversity | Biodiversity & Waterways | Waterways | General | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Resourcing/ funding | 45 | 15 | 11 | 1 | 72 |
| Coordination & connections | 21 | 14 | 7 | 2 | 44 |
| Councils/government | 27 | 10 | 7 | 0 | 44 |
| Volunteers | 19 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 28 |
| Administrative support | 9 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 18 |
| Information & data | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| Outreach | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 7 |
| Outcomes monitoring | 6 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| Iwi engagement | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |

Below are selected comments, in respondents' own words, that provide special insight into the challenges facing catchment and community environment groups.

Groups with a biodiversity focus commented:

> The current system of fragmented annual grants is very inefficient. More substantial multi-year operational funding would be game changing. Whilst the groundswell of interest in conservation (due in part by the PFNZ movement) is exciting, it is compounding the funding problem with more and more groups competing in a limited pool. Our focus is how do we build sustainable funding streams for the future. There is so much to be gained from regional conservation groups delivering shared services.
>
> We are fortunate to be fully supported by [the] Regional Council, who fund most of our requirements. We also enjoy regular contact with other local groups.
>
> The funding process is difficult, consumes huge amounts of time, and mostly achieves nothing for small volunteer groups. We have to compete in the same arena with organisations employing funding specialists. Small groups are left discouraged and unvalued.
>
> We have relied on funding from business until last year when sponsors took flight. We were successful with a Te Uru Rākau 1BT grant. But disappointingly, native plantings now come under the Govt's 'Jobs for Nature' programme. We have been unsuccessful in funding applications as we employ very few people. It seems most funding goes to iwi/council/catchment groups. As we plant where

> environmental restoration is the outcome, we also miss out on community grants.
>
> If Councils are serious about reducing pest numbers (they say they are), they need to provide a better and simpler funding model for groups with a proven track record. I spoke to people running street barbecues to raise funds to buy trees for planting on council (ratepayers) land. How stupid it that?
>
> Recently there has been a lot of funding provided for restoration projects. However because of the lack of ongoing financial support for such activities in the past and the reliance on volunteers, there are not enough people who have been able to work professionally in this area to develop the skills to manage these projects. So there is a need for more technical advice for keen volunteers to ensure any funding is spent well.
>
> The organisations we would like more support from – such as Regional Council and Dept of Conservation – don't have the capacity to provide technical assistance.

Groups focusing on waterways made the following comments:

> [The] Thriving Southland model in Southland has been a huge success. Without this support from Catchment Group Co-ordinators and the funding of the ACE project the results would be half to date.
>
> Support for engaging and incorporating iwi within the catchment group. Funding for water reticulation, bridges, river crossings. Funding to help involve forestry particularly pest control and sediment control.
>
> People want to do this. Let them. Don't let bureaucracy stifle innovation and passion. Provide a good pathway. Funding would be very useful but let those who know their areas do the work. Don't let anyone from Wellington get involved.
>
> Criteria and prioritisation for funding do need to be predicated upon what investment actually delivers desired outcomes. Purely commitment to process or tikanga should not be sufficient. Outcomes may be socioeconomic as well as biophysical.
>
> [Our group] has recently been awarded a large funding boost from MPI SFFF. This will provide a lot of opportunity for the catchment groups in our region. Both the Regional Council and District Council have funds that have criteria that are difficult to meet for catchment group

> activities. Lots of cooks in the kitchen in this space: B+LNZ, Regional Council, MPI, MFE, can provide support, and careful co-ordination is required to make sure maximum results are achieved.
>
> Having funding would allow us to bring in experts to help give advice on where we should start as best use of our resources.
>
> Degraded rivers seem to be given priority. Our water quality is excellent, thus bumping us down the list. Invasive weeds are a nightmare for us, but accessing funding is challenging.
>
> Yes, having been involved in several rounds of funding supplied by SFF, which were amazing, I believe that the 3 year funding rounds are too short, a five year window would be more fit for purpose. Another option could be for successful groups who have worked hard to and have delivered, to have the possibility to extend funding. In addition we found that projects and ideas change over time, so it is important to allow flexibility when preparing a funding application, for a project such as ours.

Comments from groups doing both biodiversity and freshwater work included these:

> Having advisory support available within regional councils is hugely valuable, especially for upskilling group members in [the group's] formative stages.
>
> Good to have support from Landcare Trust.
>
> Operational funds to [our umbrella group] would ensure ongoing positive environmental progress. This allows maximising of resources, sharing of experts, coordination of testing, sharing of knowledge.
>
> Many Catchment and community groups are skilled at what they do. After 25 years of writing successful funding applications, managing the finances and reporting on the funding - it's not sustainable for the people involved. If landowners and business sponsors partner together, then they can employ groups to deliver an end product. It's way quicker to send an invoice than write a grant application :)
>
> Overall we are happy with the success of our funding applications. However it would be better if there was a standardised system to apply and report as this part of the process is too time consuming. The best progress we make is when the funders have a close relationship with us and know we deliver. They then let us have discretion on the best

way to spend their funds. Collaboration between groups should be rewarded as it can make progress much more efficient. Good to see this overdue survey.

# 13. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of this survey provide insight into the composition, organisation, objectives, activities, experiences and needs of 240 community environment and catchment groups working in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although the total number of groups in the country is unknown, our sample size is equivalent to 27% of the number of groups known to NZLT and PFNZT.

These findings confirm, refine, and extend what is known about community environment groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. To conclude, here we distil our findings in relation to the literature and existing knowledge and, as requested by MfE, we offer some recommendations on how to better support the work of community environment groups in light of these findings.

## 13.1. Who are community environment and catchment groups?

This survey showed that community groups are continuing as an important feature of local conservation efforts, with new groups emerging since previous studies (e.g. Peters 2015). About two-thirds of biodiversity groups, but only one-third of waterways groups, have existed for at least six years. The more recent emergence of groups focused on waterways appears to coincide with national freshwater policy developments, which is also reflected in their membership; farmers—especially sheep and beef and dairy—account for most of those involved. Town residents comprise the vast majority of those involved in biodiversity groups, though many groups with a dual biodiversity-waterways focus involve significant numbers of farmers.

Biodiversity groups include both very small groups (25% with 10 or fewer members) and very large groups (4% with over 1000 members), whereas waterways groups are clustered around 20 people—78% of such groups have between 11 and 50 members.

Forestry operators, though involved in some groups, were most often mentioned by respondents as a type of land user that had little representation in their group. Farming was often mentioned by biodiversity groups. About two-fifths of all groups have local tangata whenua as members and 69% report interacting with Māori entities such as iwi, hapū, marae and Māori land trusts. Some groups asked for help to improve relationships with tangata whenua, and a number of groups indicated that they would like to start cultural monitoring of their area.

Though the survey did not ask about the age of members, 19 groups commented that they rely on older volunteers who are not always able to undertake the physical labour required. Other groups commented on the difficulty of recruiting new volunteers in rural areas.

## 13.2. What do community environment and catchment groups do?

Activities reported by groups are consistent with those reported previously by Peters (2015): pest and weed control, planting, monitoring, wetland restoration or protection, and advocacy. Waterways and dual-focus groups also sometimes do collective management of water quality, help members with farm environment plans and investigate land use change or land retirement.

Most groups, some 81%, monitor progress toward their objectives in some way. Biodiversity groups mostly use activity reporting, although 47% also reported monitoring biodiversity outcomes such as pest kills and bird counts. Water quality is being monitored by 22% of the groups with a waterway health focus.

About 20% of groups said their purpose had changed over time. Groups have diversified into other types of ecological restoration, expanded networks of collaborators, and developed a focus on education and awareness-raising. This suggests a general growth in the activity and momentum of these groups. Groups may of course also narrow their focus or curtail their work for various reasons. One group reported having lost faith in their ability to succeed in the face of challenges and having lost one of their key group members. Groups that lose momentum and fizzle out are almost certainly underrepresented in our survey, perhaps because they are less motivated or have less time to respond to a survey.

With more resources, biodiversity groups would expand their current activities, i.e. pest and weed control, planting and environmental monitoring. However, 13% of these groups want to start cultural monitoring and 9% want to start environmental monitoring. A number of waterways groups would like to initiate environmental monitoring (21%) and cultural monitoring (12%). Another 17% of these groups would like to help members with farm plans (in addition to the 29% that are already doing so), for example, by identifying critical source areas and working with landowners on mitigations.

## 13.3. What funding and support do groups receive?

Community environment and catchment groups obtain funding and non-financial support from a wide variety of sources, including local and regional councils, charitable foundations and trusts, and central government. This extends the findings of McFarlane et al. (2021) about funding to a large number of community environment groups. Roughly half of biodiversity groups and waterways groups reported receiving less than $10,000 during the past three years while, at the other end of the spectrum, about 10% of groups have received more than $500,000 during the same period.

Local and regional councils, the Department of Conservation, and NZLT are the main sources of non-financial support for groups. Technical support was the most common type of support received by biodiversity groups, whereas assistance with meetings, with environmental monitoring and, to a lesser degree, writing funding applications were common forms assistance to waterways and dual-focus groups.

## 13.4. What obstacles do groups face?

Our results update, refine, and extend Brown's (2018) analysis of community conservation funding issues and needs. Listing obstacles facing their group, nearly half of the groups explicitly mentioned a lack of funding for, e.g., materials and labour for weeding, fencing and planting, group coordinators, volunteer coordinators, and environmental monitoring, among other things.

Respondents also identified challenges with the funding system, including the financial uncertainty arising from spending large amounts of scarce volunteer time on funding applications with a small chance of success, and often for only small amounts of funding.

Other constraints included:

- labour issues, including administrative capacity, specialist expertise and staff to recruit and sustain volunteer participation
- unresponsive or unhelpful government agencies and councils
- difficulty maintaining involvement of farmers and other landowners
- uncertainty about policy and regulations, e.g. freshwater standards and rules
- insufficient support from local organisations and local community
- limited engagement and relationships with tangata whenua.

## 13.5. Recommendations

Although many biodiversity groups have been established for over a decade, new groups, especially those with a waterways focus, are still getting established. Groups at all stages of development require support to maintain their activities, and some would expand their reach if they had sufficient resources.

Ad hoc, short term funding is problematic. As well as more funding, community groups would like to see a funding system that is simpler and more reliable. They also want access to more technical expertise and administrative support.

Groups are seeking many kinds of technical support, ranging from machinery operators, species recovery experts and hydrologists to volunteer coordinators,

planners, mātauranga Māori experts and legal advisors. Expertise could be provided by local councils, Department of Conservation staff, research organisations and Māori entities if they were sufficiently resourced, while administrative support could be provided through collectives or, for larger groups, paid staff funded by government grants.

Specific recommendations for MfE:

- Work with other funders e.g. Department of Conservation, Predator Free NZ, and councils, and with representatives of community groups, to design a streamlined funding process for groups and increase total funding if possible.
- Explore how to address labour shortages, e.g. by funding volunteer coordinators and providing certainty of funding for contract teams.
- Provide funding for group administration, through collectives or NZLT for small groups and through direct grants for larger groups with a track record of performance and accountability. Small groups should also be able to access funds for administration if they can show need and accountability.
- Support groups to develop management plans, including identifying measurable indicators of progress toward outcomes. Technical experts from the Department of Conservation, councils, research institutions and/or Māori entities could be funded to assist groups on request.
- Provide funding for environmental and cultural monitoring, including technical and cultural advice to establish monitoring and ongoing technical support for groups to maintain monitoring and interpret results.
- Support groups with objectives for both biodiversity and waterways, recognising that these issues are often linked and that a broader focus is more likely to attract a mix of rural and town members.

# 14. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank all the community environment and catchment groups working to look after the many environments and special places of Aotearoa. We thank the participants of this survey for additionally gifting us their time and knowledge to help researchers, the wider public, and relevant agencies better understand their experiences and needs.

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Thanks also to Dr Kiely McFarlane (Cawthron Institute) and Dr Kiri Joy Wallace (University of Waikato) who shared helpful insights on research design and the literature from their survey study of community environment collectives undertaken through the Biological Heritage National Science Challenge.

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# A1. FULL SURVEY WORDING

- The full wording of the survey instrument is presented on the following pages.

CAWTHRON | 100 YEARS OF CAWTHRON

* Required Information

# Survey of Catchment and Community Environment Groups

## Welcome!

**This is the first nationwide survey of environmental restoration groups, catchment groups, and other community groups working on environmental initiatives.**

**We plan to use survey responses to produce a publicly available report to funding agencies and to update online maps, maintained by New Zealand Landcare Trust and Predator Free NZ Trust, to show groups' locations, goals and activities. The aim is to provide a stronger evidence base for support from industry and government organisations, and make it easier for groups to contact each other through these online resources.**

**The survey has been commissioned by the Ministry for the Environment in connection with the Jobs for Nature programme.**

**Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. For each of the first 300 completed surveys submitted by 30 September, we will donate $20 to the Rural Support Trusts or Predator Free New Zealand Trust. At the end of the survey, you will be asked which of these two organisations should receive a $20 donation for your completed response.**

**For this survey, we are seeking replies from:**

1. **Community groups engaged in environmental protection or restoration**
2. **Catchment groups**
3. **Local land or water user groups**
4. **Umbrella groups or collectives of any of the above groups**

**If your group fits one of these categories, please scroll to the bottom of this screen and click Next. (*Unsure whether your group fits these criteria?* Scroll down for more detail on each category.)**

**If your group does not fit one of the categories of interest, you can close your browser window and exit the survey - thank you for your interest!**

**Note: We are seeking one response per group, preferably the chair or coordinator.**
Tip: If you think someone else from your group is better placed to complete the survey, please consult with them and decide who will do it, or perhaps do it together.

**Here is more information to help you decide if your group should complete this survey.**

**We are seeking replies from the following types of groups:**

1. **Community groups whose primary focus is on restoration or protection of *local public or community land or waterways*, that is, mostly or entirely volunteers working on land they do not own or manage (for example, XXX Landcare Group, Friends of XXX Reserve)**
2. **Catchment groups, that is, groups of *land owners/users in a defined area* who are addressing shared issues on their own land and associated water bodies for which they have *some legal or moral responsibility* (for example, XXX Catchment Group, XXX Water Care, XXX Pest Management Group)**
3. **Groups that manage a shared resource such as an irrigation company, or drainage or flood control scheme (for example, XXX Irrigation Company, XXX Drain Incorporated Society)**
4. **Umbrella groups that are collectives of one or more types of the groups above within a specific region (but are not national industry bodies)**

**We are not seeking replies at this time from:**

- **Groups that are only engaged in education and/or advocacy (such as making submissions, holding rallies, etc).**
- **Multistakeholder advisory groups whose primary purpose is to provide advice and/or overall strategy on a catchment or defined local environment, typically to government or councils (for example, zone committees or similar)**
- **Industry or sector-based groups of land users in same industry, coordinated by an industry body (unless they fit one of the descriptions of groups 1-4)**
- **Maori entities (for example, iwi/hapu/marae authorities, land trusts, co-governance authorities, etc) – a separate engagement process is being developed for these entities.**

**Still not sure? Contact alaric.mccarthy@cawthron.org.nz.**

# Survey of Catchment and Community Environment Groups

## Confidentiality and consent

**Survey headings indicate whether the information requested will be made publicly available or kept confidential.**

**The first part of the survey asks for general information about your group: for example, name of group, region, catchment or other area of focus, primary goals, and contact name and email address. We plan to share this general information with the Ministry for the Environment, NZ Landcare Trust, and Predator Free NZ Trust, and it may be made publicly available on their websites so that others can find you.**

**You may elect to have the contact person's name and email address withheld from any public websites and have enquiries directed to the NZ Landcare Trust or another address of your choice, to be forwarded on to your group.**

**Later parts of the survey request information that will remain confidential to the research team. This information will be summarised in a publicly available report, but we will not attribute any responses to an individual or specific group.**

**Survey responses will be retained by Cawthron in a secure online database for further research on catchment and community groups to, for example, assess changes over time.**

*** 1. Please choose an option below: (Select one option)**

Tip: If you would like more information about confidentiality or anything else concerning this survey, please contact Alaric McCarthy at Cawthron: alaric.mccarthy@cawthron.org.nz or 021-177-6444.

- ○ I understand the above information about confidentiality and AGREE to do the survey
- ○ I do NOT understand the information about confidentiality and DO NOT AGREE to do the survey
- ○ I understand the information but DO NOT AGREE to do the survey.

**NOTE :** IF ANSWER TO **Q1** is
**I understand the above information about confidentiality and AGREE to do the survey** Go to Page No. 3
**I do NOT understand the information about confidentiality and DO NOT AGREE to do the survey**
Stop, you have finished the survey
**I understand the information but DO NOT AGREE to do the survey.** Stop, you have finished the survey
If Did Not Answer Then Go to Page No. 3

*** 2. Who would you like to have listed as the contact person and email address for your group?**

**(Select one option)**

Tip: NZ Landcare Trust is a not-for-profit entity that supports catchment and community environment groups, with trustees from both farming and environmental groups. Find out more on their website: www.landcare.org.nz

- ○ Your group contact (you will be prompted to provide a name and email address)
- ○ A NZ Landcare Trust staff person from your region
- ○ Other (we will confirm that they are willing to be your delegated contact)

**NOTE :** Answer the below question only if answer to Q#2 is Your group contact (you will be prompted to provide a name and email address) OR Other (we will confirm that they are willing to be your delegated contact)

**3. Your group contact:**

(a) Name of contact person

_____

(b) Email address

_____

**We recommend doing the survey when you have at least 20 minutes available. If you need to pause part way through, click "Save and continue later" at the bottom of the screen. Your data will be saved and you will be sent a new link so you can return to complete the survey later.**

# Survey of Catchment and Community Environment Groups

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR GROUP

**[Responses to this section may be made public.]**

*** 4. What is the name of your group?**

_____

*** 5. What region are you in? (Select one option)**

- ○ Auckland
- ○ Bay of Plenty
- ○ Canterbury
- ○ Chatham Islands
- ○ Gisborne
- ○ Hawkes Bay
- ○ Manawatu-Wanganui (Horizons)
- ○ Marlborough
- ○ Nelson
- ○ Northland
- ○ Otago
- ○ Southland
- ○ Taranaki
- ○ Tasman
- ○ Waikato
- ○ Wellington
- ○ West Coast
- ○ More than one region (please list them) _____

**6. Describe the local area(s) covered by the work of your group.**

Tip: If possible, describe the area in such a way that we can identify the boundaries on a map. For example, if it is an entire catchment, simply write "XXX catchment"

_____

**7. Would you be willing to draw the approximate boundaries on an online map if we send you a link to do this? (Select one option)**

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

*** 8. Which of the following best describes your group?**

**(Select one option)**

Tip: More detail on the types of groups 1. Community groups whose primary focus is on restoration or protection of local public or community land or waterways, that is, mostly or entirely volunteers working on land they do not own or manage (for example, XXX Landcare Group, Friends of XXX Reserve) 2. Catchment groups, that is, groups of land owners/users in a defined area who are addressing shared issues on their own land and associated water bodies for which they have some legal or moral responsibility (for example, XXX Catchment Group, XXX Water Care, XXX Rabbit Management Group) 3. Groups that manage a shared resource such as an irrigation company, or drainage or flood control scheme (for example, XXX Irrigation Company, XXX Drain Incorporated Society) 4. Industry- or sector-based group, all involved in same type of farming and do not fit into 1, 2 or 3 above. 5. Umbrella groups that are local or regional collectives of one or more types of the groups above (not national industry bodies)

- ◯ Community group engaged in environmental restoration mostly on public land
- ◯ Catchment group: Land owners/users (and possibly others) working mostly on private land in the same catchment
- ◯ Local land or water user group that manages a shared resource
- ◯ Industry- or sector-based group that is not 1, 2 or 3
- ◯ Umbrella group or collective of any of the above groups
- ◯ Other (Please specify) _____

**9. What year was the group started?**

Tip: Use the year of the first group meeting, even if the group became formally established as a legal entity at a later date.

_____

**10. What type of legal entity is your group?**

- ☐ Informal – no legal status
- ☐ Incorporated society
- ☐ Charitable trust
- ☐ Company
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

**11. If your group is part of a larger umbrella group or collective, please provide the name of the collective.**

_____

**12. Regarding your group's members (or participants, if you do not have formal members), how many are in each of the following categories? Count everyone who paid membership fees or participated in activities at least twice in the past 12 months.**
**If your group is a collective of groups, use "Other" to indicate how many groups are in your collective.**

Tip: For members whose main livelihood is from rural land, please count them in the category that best reflects their largest source of income.

(a) Sheep & beef farming

(b) Dairy farming

(c) Arable farming

(d) Horticulture or viticulture

(e) Forestry

(f) Lifestyle block residents

(g) City and town residents

(h) Other

**13. How many people regularly participate in decision-making by the group?**

**14. Are there any significant land uses in your group's area that don't have much participation in your group? (for example, a large area of commercial forestry but the owner/operator is not involved with the group) (Select one option)**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

**NOTE :** Answer the below question only if answer to Q#14 is Yes

**15. If yes, please describe these:**

# Survey of Catchment and Community Environment Groups

## ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

**[Responses to this section may be made public.]**

**16. What were the main reasons for starting the group? (list up to 3)**

(a)

(b)

(c)

**17. Has the group's purpose changed over time? (Select one option)**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

**NOTE :** Answer the below question only if answer to Q#17 is Yes

**18. If so, how?**

**19. What are the main *environmental* outcomes your group is working towards? Please include specific targets if you have any. (List up to 3)**

(a)

(b)

(c)

**20. If your group has other objectives, please list up to 3.**

(a)

(b)

(c)

**21. Is progress towards these objectives being monitored or measured? (Select one option)**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

**NOTE :** Answer the below question only if answer to Q#21 is Yes

**22. If so, how?**

**23. Is there a management plan (for example, that states what, when and where activities will be done) that is used to prioritise your group's work, and if so, who developed the plan?**

**(Select one option)**

- ◯ There is no management plan for our area
- ◯ Yes, our group developed a plan
- ◯ Yes, someone else developed a plan (please specify who) _____

# Survey of Catchment and Community Environment Groups

## ACTIVITIES

**[Responses to this section may be made public.]**

**24. What activities does the group undertake or coordinate? (tick all that apply)**

Tip: Do not include activities undertaken by individual members that have not been planned or coordinated by the group.

- ☐ control of pests or weeds
- ☐ riparian or biodiversity planting
- ☐ erosion control / soil conservation
- ☐ fencing
- ☐ improving local amenities, such as building walkways, cleaning up litter
- ☐ wetland restoration or protection
- ☐ wetland construction
- ☐ environmental or ecological monitoring
- ☐ cultural monitoring using matauranga Maori
- ☐ sharing information about good farming or forestry practices
- ☐ writing or coordinating farm environment plans
- ☐ land use change or land retirement
- ☐ managing resource consent(s) on behalf of members
- ☐ advocacy, such as making submissions to council and/or government, speaking to media, open farm days
- ☐ collectively managing water quality issues
- ☐ collectively managing water takes or levels
- ☐ coordinating members' purchasing from suppliers (such as contractors, equipment)
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

# Survey of Catchment and Community Environment Groups

***Information in the remainder of this survey will remain CONFIDENTIAL to the research team conducting the survey. Only anonymous responses or summaries will be included in publicly available reports.***

**25. Are any local tangata whenua (that is, Maori with ancestral connections to the local area) members of your group?**

**(Select one option)**

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know / not sure

**26. Does your group involve or interact with local Maori entities (for example, iwi, hapu, marae, trust)?**

**(Select one option)**

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

**NOTE :** Answer the below question only if answer to Q#26 is Yes

**27. If yes, what type of entity (tick all that apply)**

- ☐ iwi
- ☐ hapu
- ☐ marae
- ☐ trust
- ☐ not sure
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

**28. How many group activities (such as planting days, meetings, etc.) occurred in the past 12 months? (tick one)**

**(Select one option)**

- ○ 0
- ○ 1-3
- ○ 4-6
- ○ 7-10
- ○ 11-20
- ○ more than 20

**29. Does the group record volunteer hours or in-kind contributions?**

**(Select one option)**

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

# Survey of Catchment and Community Environment Groups

## Funding and Support

**[Responses to this section will remain CONFIDENTIAL.]**

**30. From what organisations (if any) has your group received funding of more than $10,000 in the past 3 years?**
Tip: Do not include any "in-kind" support such as facilitation or technical advice etc - we ask about that below.

_____

_____

_____

**31. How much funding from such sources has your group received in the past 3 years (approx.)? (Select one option)**

- ○ None
- ○ $1 - 10,000
- ○ $10,000 - 20,000
- ○ $20,000 - 50,000
- ○ $50,000 - 100,000
- ○ $100,000 - 500,000
- ○ More than $500,000

**32. Which of the following organisations (if any) provide advice or non-financial support to your group? (tick all that apply)**

- ☐ City or district council
- ☐ Unitary authority (incl Auckland, Gisborne, Nelson, Tasman, Marlborough)
- ☐ Regional council
- ☐ NZ Landcare Trust
- ☐ Beef + Lamb New Zealand
- ☐ Dairy New Zealand
- ☐ Fonterra
- ☐ Horticulture NZ
- ☐ Ministry of Primary Industries
- ☐ Private company or sponsor
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

**33. What type of advice and support do these organisations provide? (tick all that apply)**

- ☐ coordination or facilitation of meetings or activities
- ☐ administration, such as meeting notes, finances
- ☐ technical advice
- ☐ environmental monitoring
- ☐ preparation of funding applications
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

**34. What type of additional advice and support do you *most need*? (tick one) (Select one option)**

- ◯ coordination or facilitation of meetings or activities
- ◯ administration, such as meeting notes, finances
- ◯ technical advice
- ◯ environmental monitoring
- ◯ preparation of funding applications
- ◯ Other (Please specify) _____

**35. Who chairs or convenes your group? (tick one)**
**(Select one option)**

- ◯ Member of the group
- ◯ External person paid by group
- ◯ External person paid by outside entity
- ◯ Other (Please specify) _____

**36. If your group is supported by a paid facilitator or administrator, how is that person paid? (tick one only)**
**(Select one option)**

- ◯ No paid facilitator
- ◯ By our group, with funds contributed by members
- ◯ By our group, with funds received via grants
- ◯ By industry body
- ◯ By NZ Landcare Trust
- ◯ By an umbrella body or collective
- ◯ Other (Please specify) _____

**37. Do group members pay a subscription or levy to the group? (Select one option)**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

**NOTE :** Answer the below question only if answer to Q#37 is Yes

**38. If so, how much do members pay?**
Tip: For example, every member pays $xx per year OR Members pay $x per hectare up to max of $XX per year, etc

**39. What do you consider the main achievements or successes of your group?**

**40. What are your group's plans for the next 12 months?**

**41. Identify up to three projects or initiatives your group would like to undertake if sufficient resources were available? (tick up to 3)**

Tip: These may include activities you are already doing but would do more of if funding were available.

- ☐ animal pest or weed control
- ☐ riparian or biodiversity planting
- ☐ soil conservation
- ☐ fencing
- ☐ improving local amenities, such as building walkways, cleaning up litter
- ☐ wetland restoration
- ☐ wetland construction
- ☐ environmental or ecological monitoring
- ☐ cultural monitoring using matauranga Maori
- ☐ sharing information about good farming or forestry practices
- ☐ writing or coordinating farm environment plans
- ☐ land use change or land retirement
- ☐ managing resource consent(s) on behalf of members
- ☐ advocacy, such as making submissions to council and/or government, speaking to media, open farm days
- ☐ collectively managing water quality issues
- ☐ collectively managing water takes or levels
- ☐ coordinating members' purchasing from suppliers (such as contractors, equipment)
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

**42. What are the biggest obstacles to your group achieving its goals? What is holding you back?**

**43. Do you have any other comments about funding or external support for catchment and community environment groups?**

**44. Do you have any final comments on the topics covered in this survey or on the survey itself?**

# Survey of Catchment and Community Environment Groups

## Demographic info

**Finally, just a bit of information about you, the person completing this survey.**

***this information will remain CONFIDENTIAL to the research team conducting the survey. Only anonymous responses or summaries will be included in publicly available reports.***

**45. What is your name (if different than the contact name provided above), and email address (if different than the email address provided above)**

(a) First Name : _____

(b) Last Name : _____

(c) Email Address : _____

**46. Your role in the group? (Select one option)**

- ◯ Chair
- ◯ Non-chair coordinator / facilitator
- ◯ Other committee member
- ◯ Other (Please specify) _____

**47. Would you be willing to be involved in an interview or focus group to help government to understand the needs of catchment and community environment groups in greater depth? (Select one option)**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Maybe - you may contact me and I will decide at the time

**48. For each of the first 300 surveys completed by 30 September, we will donate $20 to one of the following organisations. Please indicate which one you would like to receive this donation. (Select one option)**

- ◯ Rural Support Trusts - National Council
- ◯ Predator Free New Zealand Trust

**Thank you for your time!**
**Please click "Submit" at bottom right to submit your responses.**