

Ngā Awa programme report

2020/2021

The third year of the Ngā Awa river restoration programme saw an increase in momentum, with the full network of river rangers appointed to coordinate work at each of the 14 awa (rivers). Building strong relationships with mana whenua at place has remained a priority. A significant achievement was having rangers working with their communities to develop Jobs for Nature (J4N) projects and secure resources for river restoration activities.

At a glance

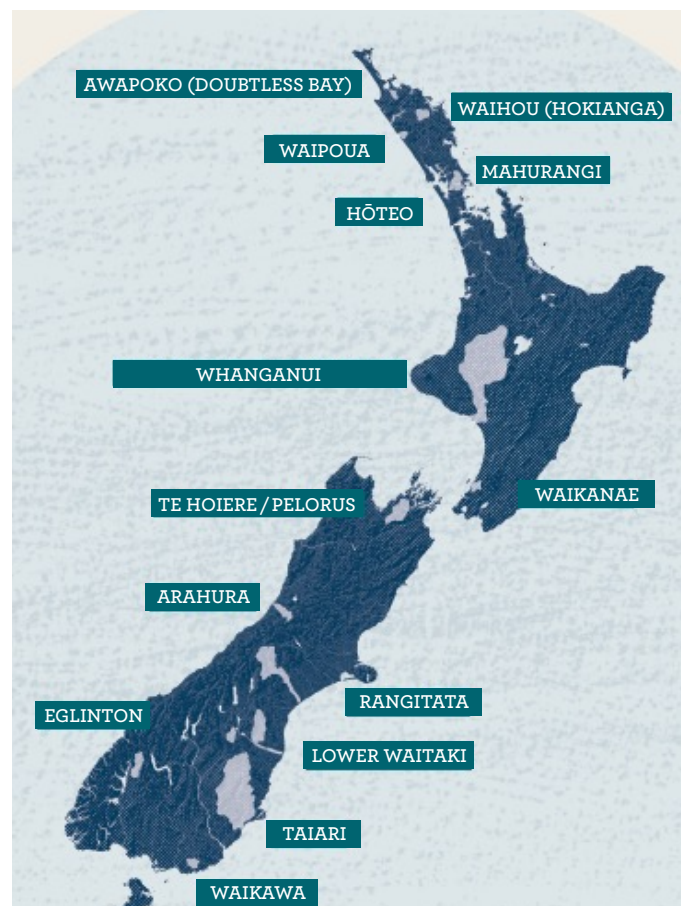
- ▶ We grew our 2020/21 budget of **\$3 million** by supporting J4N applications, resulting in **\$48 million** being available for river restoration in **7** Ngā Awa catchments over the next 4 years.
- ▶ **12** out of a total of **29** biogeographic zones are represented in the **14** Ngā Awa catchments, which range from **10,000** to **2,000,000** hectares.
- ▶ **5** new river rangers, **3** kaitiaki rangers and **1** new technical advisor were appointed this year.
- ▶ **1900** plants went into the ground at **4** Whanganui River inanga spawning sites, and a further **5000** were planted in Te Hoiere and **10,000** in Waikanae. Additionally, **32,000** ecosourced seedlings were grown in Rangitata.
- ▶ **6** more baseline information and values reports for catchments were completed this year.
- ▶ **10** hui with iwi and mana whenua were held in Taiari, including **2** hīkoi with mana whenua and the farming community.
- ▶ **1** LEARNZ virtual field trip for Te Hoiere was created.

“My vision is that we will be together in 10 years meeting on the marae again, as a celebration of what we’ve achieved together – that we really made a difference.”

Steve Bieby, Waikanae River ranger



National Ngā Awa hui held in Waikanae with the DOC network and some mana whenua, reinforcing the importance of partnership, collaboration and co-design. Photo: Philippe Gerbeaux



The 14 Ngā Awa catchments. Note that ‘Taiari’ is the rūnuka-preferred spelling, as indicated in the Ngāi Tahu Atlas.

Programme highlights by river

Arahura

- › **People:** A catchment vision document is being developed with Mawhera and Ngāti Waewae, rangitahi education programmes are being run, and Ngāti Waewae iwi have been trained to carry out cultural health assessment fieldwork.
- › **Research:** A cultural health assessment report has been drafted and a geomorphic study of the catchment has been completed.
- › **Restoration:** The local community is planting natives at Arahura Pā and a plant nursery has been established, where locally sourced seed is being grown for future planting. We also supported a successful Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) project for riparian planting and a J4N application.



Inspecting new riparian planting in the lower Arahura River.
Photo: Philippe Gerbeaux

Awapoko

- › **People:** We are building partnerships and establishing synergies between a number of agencies and groups working in the catchment. Connections are also being built between newly recruited freshwater staff across other Department of Conservation (DOC) programmes in Northland and Northland Regional Council to collectively increase capability.
- › **Research:** A baseline literature review of values, monitoring, freshwater restoration programmes and research needs has been drafted, and an inanga salt wedge and spawning survey has been completed. Wetland mapping work is also underway and environmental DNA (eDNA) baseline sampling has begun.
- › **Restoration:** The catchment inanga spawning survey showed variability between sites and informed the process of defining sites in the Northland Regional Plan.

Eglinton

- › **People:** Discussions were held with Ōraka Aparima rūnaka to identify whether this awa is their priority for restoration and to inform a review of this catchment selection.
- › **Research:** A baseline report on catchment values and information has been completed.

Hōteō and Mahurangi

- › **People:** The kaitiaki ranger is contributing to a cultural health index framework led by kaitiaki through the Hōteō sediment reduction project. We have supported training with Wai Care for kaitiaki and Ngāti Manuhiri kaimahi, and maramataka training and wānanga planning has been resourced. A hīkoi took place with mana whenua to a public conservation land (PCL) restoration site.
- › **Research:** The wetland delineation project is close to completion and a report on PCL sites has been completed, with planning for PCL site surveys now underway. An archaeology report for the restoration project has also been completed, along with a desktop geomorphological assessment, and a literature review has been scoped for Mahurangi. A review of fish passage data is underway and an iwi interests report has been completed.
- › **Restoration:** The Hōteō Gorge PCL site restoration plan has been prepared and waterway habitat surveys are planned. We also contributed to restoration activities undertaken by wider project partners. Goat control has been carried out in riparian and wetland areas, and three fencing projects are underway.

Rangitata

- › **People:** A partnership has been formalised with Arowhenua rūnaka through a funding deed and rūnaka capacity during field work has been built. Engagement workshops were held with Arowhenua and others.
- › **Research:** Year 1 of the hāpua (coastal lagoons) fish survey, research on Stokell's smelt (with mana whenua and agencies), and an upland longjaw galaxiid survey and report have been completed. Additionally, a scholarship supported a summer internship for social science research with upper Rangitata landholders and river sediment research by a PhD student has continued.
- › **Restoration:** Restoration plans have been completed for six sites and willows have been removed at McKinnon's Creek in preparation for restoration. Considerable support has been provided to get two J4N projects worth \$16 million up and running in the catchment.

Taiari

- › **People:** A Deed of Grant to resource mana whenua was signed, and collaboration, partnership and co-design with mana whenua and catchment stakeholders were a focus. Meetings were held with 66 individuals or groups about the project, including 10 hui with mana whenua. A successful hīkoi was also held with mana whenua and the farming community to learn about restoration planned by the Tiaki Maniototo group in the upper catchment.
- › **Research:** A review of values, freshwater restoration programmes and research needs in the catchment has been completed.
- › **Restoration:** Ōtākou rūnaka successfully secured a \$5 million J4N project for Te Nukuroa o Matamata, which will deliver restoration activities in the Waihola and Waipōuri catchments.

Te Hoiere / Pelorus

- › **People:** Governance and a steering group formed in partnership with the community, mana whenua and agencies are leading a large-scale project, resourced by a variety of funding. DOC's contribution funded a virtual field trip, and a funding deed with Ngāti Kuia and Rangitāne enabled iwi to contribute to the steering group. An integrated catchment plan has been developed, funded by the Ministry for the Environment (MfE), and whānau and community engagement events were held to seek input for this plan.
- › **Research:** A geomorphology desktop review has been completed, and a wider project has carried out baseline monitoring and catchment condition surveys funded by MfE, as well as a community water quality monitoring programme supported by Landcare Trust.



Project co-chair Waihaere Mason and Lewis Smith Ngāti Kuia at the launch of the integrated catchment plan for Te Hoiere. Photo: Melissa Banks

- › **Restoration:** Wider project partners are undertaking restoration activities (not directly funded by DOC) involving a number of planting days. The Te Hoiere / Pelorus project successfully secured \$7.5 million J4N funding for restoration work in the catchment and for establishing a native plant nursery on Ngāti Kuia land.

Waihou

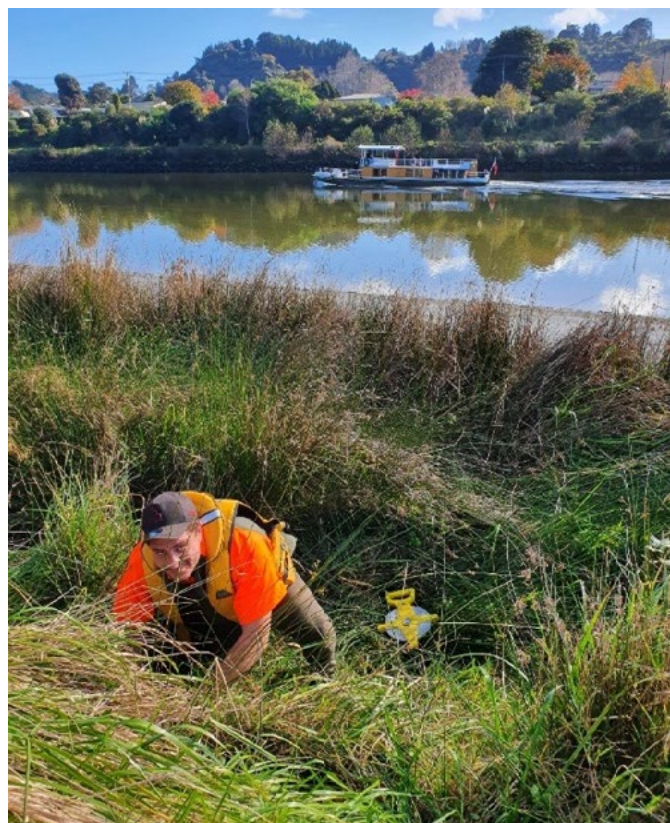
- › **People:** A DOC kaitiaki ranger has been employed to work with Ngāti Tara and build relationships with other kaitiaki. Field work and wānanga were held with Ngāti Toro kaitiaki and kuia, and aspirations for awa and forest health were set with Puketī Forest rōpū. A hapū engagement plan is underway, and synergies between Puketī Forest rōpū and J4N funding are being established (eg predator control to protect inanga eggs). Connections are being built across Northland DOC freshwater programmes and with Northland Regional Council.
- › **Research:** A baseline literature review of values, monitoring, freshwater restoration programmes and research needs is being drafted, and an inanga salt wedge and spawning survey has been completed. Wetland mapping work is underway and eDNA baseline sampling has begun.
- › **Restoration:** The catchment inanga spawning survey showed variability between sites and informed the process of defining sites in the Northland Regional Plan.

Waikanae

- › **People:** The Waikanae ki Utu ki Tai Project (WKUKT) has been structured as a Treaty house partnership between mana whenua Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, Kāpiti Coast District Council (KCDC), Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) and DOC. The Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai Kaitiakitanga Plan is a foundation document for the project. The third year of the Deed of Grant (from DOC, GWRC, KCDC) provided support for Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai involvement. A draft restoration action plan based on shared values and priority objectives agreed by iwi and community representatives is now ready for engagement with the Waikanae community.
- › **Research:** A desktop geomorphological assessment has been completed. Proposals are being developed for new geographic information systems (GIS).
- › **Restoration:** A 4-year \$8.5 million Waikanae J4N project has been developed by WKUKT partners. The first 6 months of operation was celebrated with a graduation of the first kaimahi crew at Whakarongotai Marae.



Waikanae ki Uta ki Tai Steering Committee iwi and community representatives in a workshop. *Photo: Steve Bielby*



DOC ranger Wanihi Tamakehu-Butler surveying Whanganui riverbanks for inanga spawning habitat. *Photo: Rosemary Miller*

Waikawa

- › **People:** We held discussions with Waikawa whānau to establish a foundation for our relationship, and a picture is being built of work being undertaken by others in the catchment.
- › **Research:** A baseline literature review and values report has been completed, and a report exploring options for an assessment of fish diversity is being drafted.

Waipoua

- › **People:** Kaitiaki were involved in fish monitoring and a stream survey, and we supported a Te Roroa documentary on the awa.
- › **Research:** An erosion investigation of the lower reaches of Waipoua and a spotlight fish survey in the middle reaches have been completed, and a wetland mapping report has been drafted. Significant progress has been made towards the design and implementation of a monitoring framework for the awa.
- › **Restoration:** We supported a Te Toa Whenua project to establish a restoration planting nursery in ex-pine forest, as well as a Te Roroa-led riparian planting project (more than 2000 plants) and possum control. A deed has been signed with Te Roroa to improve fish passage past an existing river ford.

Whanganui

- › **People:** An inanga wānanga was held with Tupoho iwi, and a planting day was hosted with a Pasifika early childhood centre.
- › **Research:** A report on fisheries and biodiversity has been drafted and an inanga spawning habitat survey has been completed.
- › **Restoration:** Four inanga spawning habitat restoration projects have begun with Horizons Regional Council. We also supported a successful bid by Ngā Tāngata Tiaki for a \$7.8 million riparian restoration J4N project.

Programme-wide research completed

- › Socioeconomic assessment of factors affecting river restoration in Northland.
- › Desktop geomorphological assessment of three catchments (Te Hoiere, Waikanae and Mahurangi).
- › Monitoring review and design to support an assessment of biodiversity gains achieved through J4N projects.