

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Leveraging Science and Indigenous Knowledge
to Protect Natural Resources at Scale

The Nature Conservancy in Aotearoa New Zealand has aligned to a Māori whakataukī (proverb) as its vision for Aotearoa New Zealand:

Toitū te marae a Tāne Mahuta,
Toitū te marae a Tangaroa, Toitū te Tangata
(If the land is well and the sea is well, the people will thrive)



"We believe that the world is 'Papatūānuku'. The work The Nature Conservancy does across the world is really really important so even though we may be down here at the bottom of the Earth these wee projects and all of the projects being done across the world are really going to help the wellbeing of the planet."

Dean Whaanga, Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Co-Chair



Since 2018,
The Nature Conservancy
has accomplished great things for
nature and people in
Aotearoa New Zealand.
Your support is what drives
this important progress.

Aotearoa¹ New Zealand is known for a 100 percent pure ethos that draws international tourists and a rapidly growing number of investors each year. The landscape of this island country down-under belies its size, containing a wide variety of topographies, from glaciers to fiords, mountains to plains, farmland to beaches, rolling hillsides to subtropical forests, subtropical and sub-Antarctic islands, and even active volcanic and thermal areas. Aotearoa NZ's beef and dairy production are known the world over; its fertile, alluvial plains are home to productive farmlands; and it has the fourth largest marine territory with rich fisheries. And Aotearoa NZ's estimated 80,000 endemic species found nowhere else in the world contribute significantly to global biodiversity.

Yet this enchanted country whose pristine beauty has become renowned worldwide is facing dire consequences stemming from both climate change and its use of natural resources. Runoff from the growing agricultural and dairy sectors has impacted waterways across the country. Intensive fishing operations and soil erosion have degraded shellfish beds that once cleaned water and provided abundant fish habitat in New Zealand's bays and harbors. Almost two-thirds of rare ecosystems are threatened by collapse and almost 4,000 of our native species are at risk of extinction. Nowhere is the loss of biodiversity more pronounced than in Aotearoa NZ: we have the highest proportion of threatened indigenous species in the world. We are losing species and ecosystems faster than nearly any other country.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) established its Aotearoa NZ chapter in 2018 because of the country's global conservation significance and the ability it afforded to test new ideas. Since then, TNC has worked with government officials, local communities, indigenous (Iwi²) leaders, businesses and local conservation groups to restore and preserve the country's precious land, marine and freshwater resources. In the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand's busiest body of water, we're supporting efforts to restore shellfish reefs that have been damaged by decades of sediment runoff, trawler fishing and extensive dredging.

¹ Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand.
² The Māori-language word "Iwi" means "tribe," "people" or "nation."

We are introducing market-based approaches to help reduce freshwater pollution and have joined an inspiring and ambitious new initiative to restore the health of over 2.5 million hectares (approximately 6.1 million acres) of land and water across the top of Aotearoa NZ's South Island. TNC has also contributed to the development of an electronic monitoring (EM) program for Aotearoa NZ fisheries and supported the establishment of Fish Mainland, an organization bringing a new approach to managing Aotearoa NZ's recreational fisheries.

We are also conscious of the greater Pacific Islands Community we are a part of and have been working with women's groups in Solomon Islands to help develop alternative livelihoods for communities that support and benefit nature—such as an ecotourism venture focused on critically endangered hawksbill turtles.

And never far from our minds are the original stewards of Aotearoa who are our partners in the work we do here. For centuries, the Māori people governed the country's epic lands, rivers and coastlines through *Kaitiakitanga*—an intricate cultural system founded on the belief that we are all guardians of nature, not mere consumers of its bounty. This indigenous world view guided how fish were caught, crops were planted, land was preserved and wildlife was protected. Guided by Māori in applying the principle of *Kaitiakitanga*, TNC is bringing to our work here our science, global expertise, financial tools and a commitment to engaging diverse stakeholders around common goals.

The size and isolation of Aotearoa NZ make it an epicenter in which to implement conservation strategies at scale for preservation and recovery work globally. What we do here can create blueprints that can have big impacts elsewhere. I hope that you will join us in helping Aotearoa NZ preserve and restore its pristine natural resources through conservation work that will help this country and the world at large.

Rob Morrison
Chair of TNC's Aotearoa New Zealand
Advisory Board
The Nature Conservancy

Here are some of our most impactful projects.

Since 2018, TNC in Aotearoa NZ has accomplished conservation achievements in freshwater, marine and land. TNC has worked with the government, Iwi, private industry and other environmental NGOs. Here are a few of the projects we are working on.

1. Hauraki Gulf: Shellfish Restoration to Recover Thriving Marine Ecosystems.

Shellfish are ocean-ecosystem engineers: cleaning water; supplying food and habitat for fish, crabs and birds; and providing coastal protection against climate-related storm surges and rising seas. Approximately 1,500 square kilometers of the Hauraki Gulf's seabed used to be covered with shellfish beds, the vast majority of which have been destroyed by dredging, sedimentation and habitat degradation. Having already deployed over 270 tonnes of mussels to different sites in the Hauraki Gulf, TNC continues this marine work with key partners.

- We launched the Hauraki Gulf Challenge Fund in partnership with Foundation North, who will match each dollar we raise up to NZ \$3 million for restoration efforts.
- In partnership with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, University of Auckland and The Mussel Reef Restoration Trust, we successfully deployed the first 60 tonnes of mussels into the gulf at Okahu Bay, and we are monitoring the survival and health of the restored mussel reefs.
- Our latest partnership with Ngāti Manuhiri aims to establish a new 250-tonne mussel reef in key locations across Kawau Bay.

2. Investing in Resilient Waikato Catchments

The Waikato River is Aotearoa NZ's longest river at 425 kilometers and is impacted along its length by agricultural, industrial and urban run-offs. Of great cultural significance to Waikato-Tainui and other river Iwi, the river has also become a highly modified system due to drainage, flood protection, hydro-generation activities and land clearance. Given these challenges, TNC in Aotearoa NZ is working with Iwi, partners and stakeholders to understand and explore how innovative conservation tools, collective action and finance mechanisms might be used to complement existing initiatives to enhance freshwater in the Waikato River Catchments. We are also looking to establish or support a governance or advisory mechanism for water security in the Waikato catchments; engage in information gathering and technical studies; and develop a portfolio of interventions, a strategic plan and communications and engagement options.

3. Pacific Islands Community: Women-Led Conservation in Solomon Islands

Aotearoa NZ is part of the broader Pacific Islands Community and is committed to supporting other Pacific countries. The first opportunity to do so has been a program—financed by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade—in Solomon Islands where TNC is supporting local women's collectives to establish and operate an eco-tourism and education venture centred around the largest rookery of critically endangered hawksbill turtles in the Southern Hemisphere. TNC in Aotearoa NZ will continue to work with



TNC's Pacific Islands program to identify further opportunities to help Pacific Island communities protect the land and water on which all life depends.

4. Hawke's Bay: Regenerative Agriculture

Hawke's Bay is an important agricultural hub where current land use has significantly accelerated natural erosion and increased its impact. Approximately 250,000 hectares of Hawke's Bay hill country is at high risk of erosion, and about 6.8 million tonnes of sediment eventually enters the region's waterways every year, impacting water quality and aquatic life.

TNC is partnering with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council to scale up the Right Tree Right Place project. Tree planting on pastoral lands can stabilize soil, capture carbon, provide forestry revenue and support alternative sources of income like honey production and credits for carbon sequestration. Paired with other regenerative agricultural practices, this project will support profitable, sustainable farming that reduces waterway pollution and fights climate change.

5. Reclaiming Coastal Wetlands through Carbon Credits

Coastal wetlands capture and store billions of tons of carbon from our atmosphere at concentrations up to five times greater than terrestrial forests. These areas and associated ecosystems also provide habitat for hundreds of species, such as the endangered Australasian Bittern, and other benefits like sediment control and recreation opportunities.

Despite the numerous benefits these ecosystems provide, Aotearoa NZ has lost 90 percent of its wetlands, including in coastal areas. TNC New Zealand is part of a global TNC pilot to create voluntary carbon and climate resilience credits from the restoration of these coastal habitats. Carbon credits—which represent the stored carbon value of the restoration work—can be purchased by businesses looking to decrease their carbon footprint. This revenue can, in turn, support future restoration and protection, turning conservation into sustainable and profitable livelihoods for local communities. We are incorporating six Aotearoa NZ sites in a global, feasibility assessment, which will build a proof of concept and evidence base to bring blue carbon credits to market after 2023.

6. Conservation Coaches: Building the Capacity of Conservation Leaders

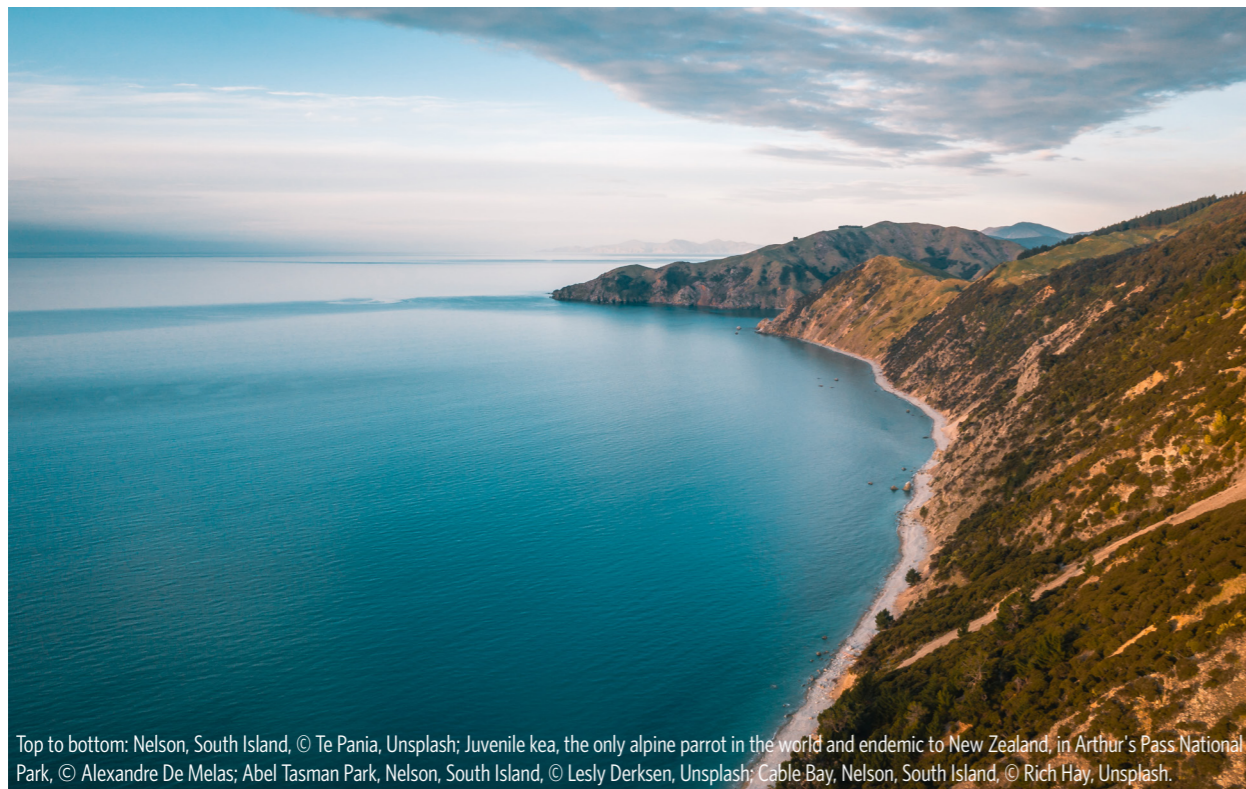
With the help of our partners, TNC is building the capacity of Aotearoa NZ's conservation and natural resource management leaders to achieve even greater conservation impact. By 2023, we aim to train up to 140 conservation and natural resource management leaders from across the country in the internationally recognized Conservation Action Planning approach, as well as assist up to 30 people to become qualified Conservation Coaches. These conservation leaders will be equipped to deliver landscape-scale projects that achieve impacts at a level that affects whole ecosystems and will empower others to lead similar projects.

7. Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance: Collective Action for Our Nature and People

The Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance (“collective action for our nature”) implements landscape-scale conservation projects with wider social, cultural and economic outcomes across Te Taihū, the northern part of the South Island. Working to protect 2.5 million hectares of land, the Alliance includes the New Zealand Department of Conservation, local councils, Iwi and other community groups and partners. TNC is supporting the Alliance by delivering impact and conservation outcomes at scale. The following are two of several projects that TNC is involved in with the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance.

Native Plant Restoration: As the managing partner of the “Restoring and Protecting Flora” project, TNC is working with Alliance members to control weeds at ecologically and culturally important sites across the Buller, Tasman, Nelson and Marlborough Regions. This work will help restore native, natural ecology over large areas, including where people live, by planting both to enrich key missing species and to reduce weed re-invasion risk. Through this project, we will add another layer of protection in the ongoing work to eradicate invasive weeds and add much-needed resilience to areas of strategic conservation importance.

Wasp Control: A threat to biodiversity in the northern part of the South Island is the introduced species of vespid wasps that destroy beehives and compete with native bees, birds and reptiles for food. TNC is piloting an innovative wasp biocontrol method to improve the resilience of native forest species. In conjunction with the Alliance and biocontrol scientists, we are using a hover-fly and wasp-nest beetle to cost-effectively control populations of vespid wasps. The benefits of wasp eradication have a full-circle effect on the ecosystem, from flourishing native species to healthy functioning of native forests.



Top to bottom: Nelson, South Island, © Te Pania, Unsplash; Juvenile kea, the only alpine parrot in the world and endemic to New Zealand, in Arthur's Pass National Park, © Alexandre De Melas; Abel Tasman Park, Nelson, South Island, © Lesly Derksen, Unsplash; Cable Bay, Nelson, South Island, © Rich Hay, Unsplash.

For more information on The Nature Conservancy's Aotearoa New Zealand Program, and how your support can make a real difference, please contact:

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