



Te Pū Hono

Cadetship Programme



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

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Photo: Mark Tantrum

About our name

Te Pū Hono is more than just a name — it reflects the heart of the programme.

It speaks to connection with Papatūānuku, to each other, to the mahi and to the learning that happens along the way.

Being great kaitiaki (guardians) means working across networks of knowledge, people and places. It also means being connected with our whenua (land), our people and our stories. Through strong connections, we gain the deep, practical knowledge needed to care for te taiao.

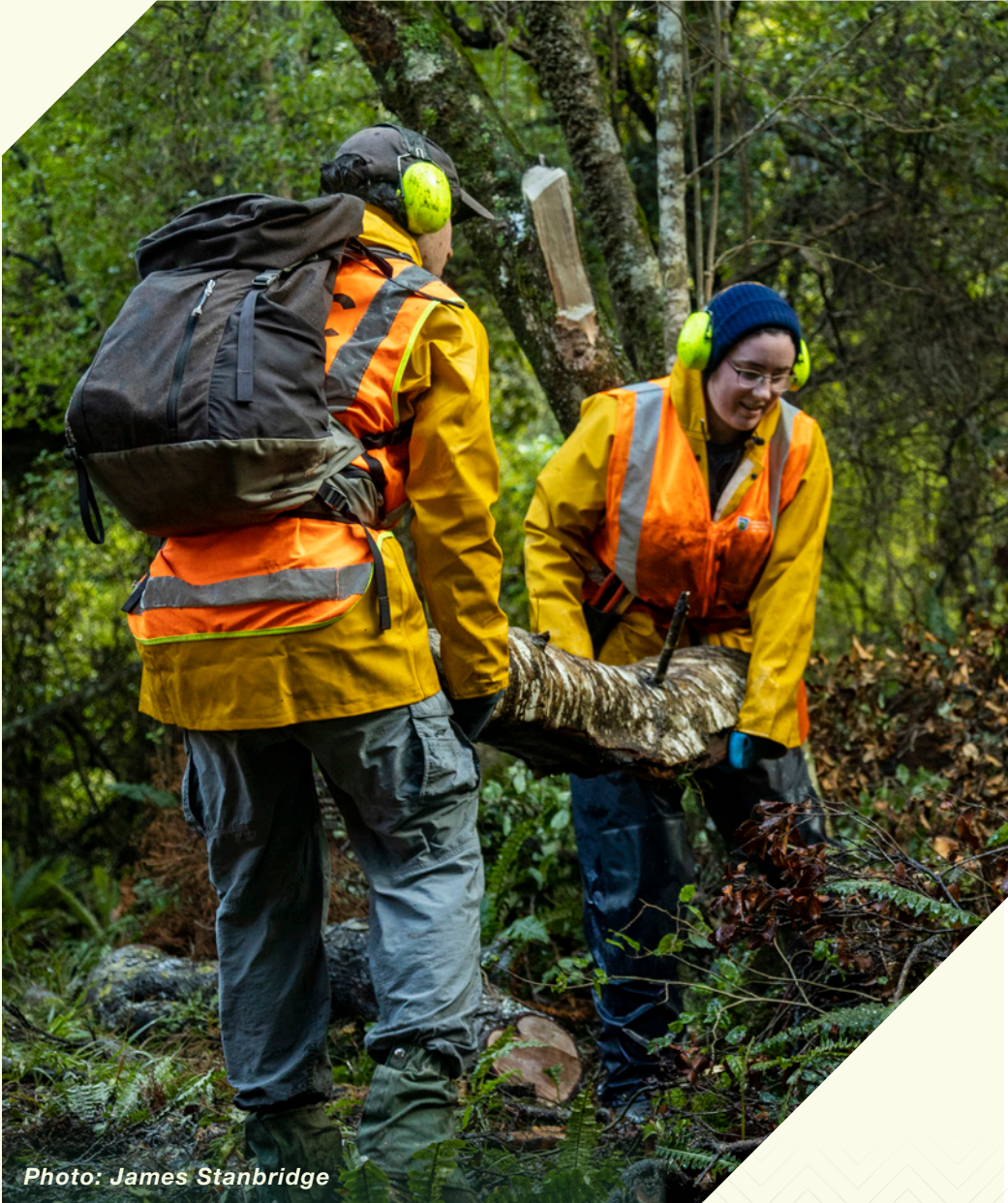


Photo: James Stanbridge

How the programme works

Te Pū Hono is a hands-on, full-time work programme that sets Kaihonoa Taiao (cadets) up for a career in conservation.

You will work alongside other cadets and Department of Conservation (DOC) teams across the motu, gaining hands-on experience in conservation delivery, across the core field skills needed to thrive as a ranger.

The work is varied, physical, and often remote - and it's designed to build capability, confidence, and resilience.

The programme is roughly divided into three years and is structured around modules that combine practical work with targeted training. You will complete core modules, take part in placements with other teams, and explore electives based on your interests.

There are three types of modules:



Core

These are mandatory modules and cover essential skills and standards for conservation work

FOR EXAMPLE:

Predator trapping, weed control, using a chainsaw, or monitoring species.



Placement

Experience working with different DOC teams across the motu.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Track and hut maintenance, monitoring hoiho in the Caitlins or restoration planting with your team and volunteers.



Elective

These are optional modules to give you an opportunity to try out a range of conservation mahi.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Carpentry, abseiling, wildlife health, operational planning and reporting, species translocation.



Who can apply

We're looking for people from all walks of life — whether you're just starting out, thinking about a career change, or already have some experience under your belt.

You might have a degree, some work experience, or simply be passionate about conservation and the outdoors. If you're ready to take on a challenge, work hard and grow your skills, we'd love to hear from you.

This programme is best suited to people who are already living and/or working independently, can handle time away from home and take on physically demanding fieldwork. It's a great fit for those who are looking for their next step and are ready to commit to a full-time development opportunity.

Eligibility checklist

You need to:

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- ☐ Have achieved at least NCEA Level 2 literacy and numeracy
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 - ☐ Be in excellent health and have a high level of fitness
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 - ☐ Be able to commit to field work and travel (up to three months away from your home base at a time)
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 - ☐ Be comfortable working in challenging environments (for example, travelling in helicopters, working at heights and in remote areas)
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 - ☐ Be willing to live and work in different parts of the country
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 - ☐ Hold a full and clean New Zealand driver license
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 - ☐ Be a New Zealand or Australian citizen or permanent resident

Selection criteria

When we assess and shortlist applications, we're looking for a mix of skills, experience, and people with a great attitude.



Photo: Mark Tantrum

Here's what we're looking for:

A strong interest in conservation

You care deeply about nature and want to be part of protecting and restoring it.

Reliability and resilience

You show up, work hard, and stay positive – even when things get tough or plans change. You're open to learning and keen to grow.

Literacy, numeracy and attention to detail

You have sufficient ability in reading, writing and working with numbers to carry out the work of a Kaihonoa Taiao, with a high level of accuracy and attention to detail. This is important for reliable and precise data collection.

Relevant skills and experience

Experience in conservation or related fields is a bonus. Skills like 4WD driving, first aid or chainsaw use are helpful but not essential.

Flexibility

You're ready to be deployed anywhere in the country, including spending up to 40 days in the backcountry or up to three months in other DOC regions around Aotearoa New Zealand.



Photo:
James Stanbridge

How to apply

For more information on how to apply, visit the Te Pū Hono Cadetship Programme page on the DOC website. Applications open each October.

We want to get a good sense of who you are, what drives you and why you're keen to be part of Te Pū Hono. There are a few things you'll need to prepare, so give yourself plenty of time to pull everything together.



Photo: Yang Gan

What you'll need:

DOC application form

Take your time, answering honestly and thoughtfully.

CV

Keep it clear and simple. Tell us what you've done so far – work, study, volunteering, hobbies. Highlight anything that shows your interest in conservation or the outdoors.

Cover letter

Use your cover letter to explain why you're keen to join Te Pū Hono and what makes you a great fit.

Academic transcript or NCEA certificate

If you're not sure how to get your NCEA certificate or transcript, contact your school/tertiary provider or NZQA.

Two referees

Choose people who know you well and can speak honestly about your skills, character, and experience.

- One referee should be able to comment on your ability in reading, writing and working with numbers (for example, a teacher, employer, tutor).
- The other should be a character referee (not a family member) who can speak to your commitment to conservation, fitness and outdoor experience.

