



Enduring benefits achieved during and after the programme

Jobs for Nature (JFN) was a \$1.2 billion programme set up in response to COVID-19 to create both nature-based employment opportunities and enduring environmental benefits. It ran from July 2020 to June 2025 and was administered by five government agencies.<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) allocated \$485.3 million over 225 projects across Aotearoa New Zealand. It is estimated that these projects will collectively return more than \$1.97 billion in environmental, social and economic benefits over 30 years.<sup>2</sup>



Increased employment in conservation  
in response to COVID-19

Improved the financial situation and wellbeing of people now and in the future:

- **7,103 people were employed** in meaningful work with more financial stability. This work allowed them to stay local and support their families and communities.
- **Tourism, forestry and other businesses could retain key staff.** They were able to fit conservation work around business demands to retain customers and income.
- **\$485.3 million was invested** across Aotearoa in nature and people.
- **Business and entrepreneurial skills** were developed for future prosperity.
- **46 projects** indicated a ‘high’ or ‘reasonable’ **likelihood of commercialisation**,<sup>3</sup> developing new businesses that contribute to the economy.
- **Wellbeing was increased** for individuals through connecting to nature, undertaking purposeful work and making a difference to their community.

“[JFN] helped through COVID as we had no people coming to our region. It provided meaningful employment for our young people. Our next generation has come through.”  
Project Manager<sup>4</sup>



Delivered additional conservation,  
recreational and heritage gains

Improved biodiversity, increased environmental protection and supported better access to nature for future generations:

- **8.6 million hours** of conservation work was enabled, including nearly **2.2 million hectares of pest control** (animal and plant) and **5 million plantings**.
- **Targeted support was provided for threatened species and ecosystems**, including the Threatened – Nationally Critical kākāriki karaka / orange-fronted parakeet.
- **Restoration of six priority freshwater waterways was accelerated** to protect and improve their biodiversity.
- **6,025 hectares of wetland was restored**, improving wildlife habitat, water quality, flood control and more.
- **243 cultural heritage sites and 618 recreational sites** were maintained and improved, retaining our connection to nature and identity.
- **Local resilience to climate change impacts** was increased.
- **7,060 hectares of land was protected** in perpetuity through QEII covenants **across 265 sites**.

“New Zealanders place high importance on the work required to protect our precious biodiversity. Jobs for Nature has proven to be an invaluable enabler for this work.”  
Penny Nelson,  
Director-General, DOC<sup>6</sup>



Funding supported these outcomes:<sup>5</sup>

- Ensuring prosperity, which is intrinsically linked to a thriving biodiversity.
- Contributing to the financial and physical capital wealth of Aotearoa.

Funding supported these outcomes:<sup>5</sup>

- Supporting thriving ecosystems and working towards a predator-free Aotearoa.
- Contributing to the wealth of the natural environment of Aotearoa.



## Increased opportunities for iwi, hapū and whānau to exercise rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga

### Enabled iwi, hapū and whānau to realise their aspirations for the environment:

- **90 Māori collective entities** received funding totalling nearly \$135 million, allowing them to have a greater influence in local decision making and delivery.
- When surveyed, **91 project partners identified as being whānau, hapū or iwi**, and a further 63 said they have strong engagement with whānau, hapū or iwi.<sup>3</sup>
- Informal feedback noted the benefits of **building capability and capacity to engage**, such as new roles or iwi conservation plans, which enrich our biodiversity system.
- **Enabling mana whenua to realise visions** for their rohe and **exercise kaitiakitanga** improved connection to ancestral lands. 143 partners confirmed that JFN helped improve their ability to exercise kaitiakitanga.<sup>3</sup>
- According to 117 project partners, **Mātauranga Māori was integral**,<sup>3</sup> increasing its use within conservation mahi.
- **93 projects included work on Māori land**, improving the whenua for the future.<sup>3</sup>
- These partnerships are stepping stones towards whānau, hapū and iwi exercising rangatiratanga.

“[JFN is] about active kaitiakitanga, ... creates connection back to whenua, employment and training, learning, and having our own conservation workforce. ... [JFN] makes sense of our Iwi values, and helps us to return home, to our whenua.”

Kaimahi, Manawatū Whanganui<sup>7</sup>



Tree planting as part of the JFN Ki Ngā Motu, Ki Tai, Ki Uta project. Photo: DOC

### Funding supported these outcomes:<sup>5</sup>

- Supporting Treaty partners, whānau, hapū and iwi to exercise their roles as rangatira and kaitiaki.
- Contributing to the human capability & cultural wealth of Aotearoa.



## Increased conservation effort through learning and collaboration

### Improved New Zealanders' knowledge, capability and confidence to act for nature:

- **Regional decision-making groups** developed and grew, leading to more collaboration to optimise opportunities and make the most of funding.
- **New partnerships and connections** were formed between community groups, landowners, iwi, whānau and hapū, science organisations, and government organisations to share knowledge and enhance conservation.
- **957 people completed formal training**, gaining a wide range of qualifications and increasing their confidence and knowledge about biodiversity.
- Most participants received informal training, **building their capability and confidence to respond to future environmental issues**. These skills helped the community response during severe weather events.
- Projects reported providing training or education to a further **28,559 members of the wider community**,<sup>3</sup> who are now more informed and engaged on local issues, such as kauri disease.

“We’re a diverse community and every one of those people have had access to the fund. So we’ve upskilled and became connected. We are closer, more connected.”

Project Manager<sup>4</sup>



Wetland restoration work at Lake Ellesmere / Te Waihora as part of the JFN Kahuria Te Waihora Restoration project. Photo: DOC

### Funding supported these outcomes:<sup>5</sup>

- Ensuring people's lives are enriched through their connection with nature.
- Building the human capability & social cohesion wealth of Aotearoa.

See also the Jobs for Nature 'Investment profile', 'Lessons learned' and 'Sustaining the gains' summaries. Data as at June 2025.

#### Notes:

1 The JFN agencies are DOC, the Ministry for the Environment Manatū Mō Te Taiao, the Ministry for Primary Industries Manatū Ahu Matua, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand and the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment Hikina Whakatutuki.

2 Webber J, Steen-Jones C. 2024. Jobs for Nature impact assessment. Prepared for the Jobs for Nature Secretariat. Wellington: MartinJenkins. [www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Final-report-2024-Q4-J4N-impact-results-2024.pdf](https://www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Final-report-2024-Q4-J4N-impact-results-2024.pdf)

3 DOC. 2022. Regional Investment Review – Survey undertaken by DOC of 193 projects to identify delivery risks and opportunities, transition requirements and regional alignment (unpublished).

4 Kereama J, Stevenson B. 2024. Jobs for Nature evaluation: Year two report. Wellington: Allen + Clarke. [www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/J4N-Evaluation-Year-Two-Report-Final-17-Sept-2024.pdf](https://www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/J4N-Evaluation-Year-Two-Report-Final-17-Sept-2024.pdf)

5 Enduring benefits are supporting Te Mana o te Taiao – Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and the Living Standards Framework (Wealth of Aotearoa).

6 Jobs for Nature Secretariat. 2022. Jobs for Nature: Annual review – year two. Prepared for the Jobs for Nature Interagency Secretariat. Wellington: Ministry for the Environment. ME 1687: 38. [www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Jobs-for-Nature-Annual-Review-Year-Two.pdf](https://www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Jobs-for-Nature-Annual-Review-Year-Two.pdf)

7 Kereama J, Stevenson B. 2024. Te Ao Māori evaluation: Jobs for Nature. Wellington: Allen + Clarke. [www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/J4N-Evaluation-Te-Ao-Maori-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/J4N-Evaluation-Te-Ao-Maori-Report_Final.pdf)