Thriving Southland Inspiring Catchment Group Projects

THRIVING SOUTHLAND

Tōnui ana te whenua. Tōnui ana te takata.
A thriving, prosperous land. A thriving, prosperous people.

Introduction

At Thriving Southland, our mission is clear: to give Southland Catchment Groups the support and tools to tackle local issues head-on. With our dedicated team of Catchment Group coordinators, we're here to nurture groups, launch projects and ignite community action.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the farmers and community members who are the driving force behind Catchment Groups – dedicated to driving change and environmental improvements in our very own backyards.

By joining forces, Southland's communities are shaping a brighter future, safeguarding the region's prosperity, heritage, environment and health.

So, what's fueling this inspiring Catchment Group action? The Thriving Southland Change and Innovation project, funded by the Ministry for Primary Industries' Sustainable Land Use Programme, is a catalyst. It empowers Catchment Groups to lead the way in productive and sustainable land use, and to share their valuable knowledge and expertise.

Within this report, we'll delve into eight major projects, four landscape science initiatives, and 12 smaller projects led by Catchment Groups across Southland in 2021 to 2023. Let's explore the incredible work and progress that's shaping our region's future. These are just an example of the projects Southland Catchment Groups are doing, and you can read about even more projects on the Thriving Southland website.

For further information and updates on the projects featured please visit www.thrivingsouthland.co.nz/projects

Major projects

- Aparima Community Environment (ACE) project – Aparima Catchment
- Carbon Neutral Dipton – Greater Dipton Catchment Group
- Aquavan Action – Gore-Waimumu/Waihopai Catchment Groups
- Women's Enviro Evening – Mid Oreti, Hedgehope Makarewa, Makarewa Headwaters Catchment Groups
- Understanding and Improving Catchment with Wetland Development – Between the Domes Catchment Group
- Investigating using LUCI-Ag – Makarewa Headwaters Catchment Group
- Alternative Crop Establishment – Hedgehope Makarewa Catchment Group

Landscape science projects

- Understanding the Land to Drive Change – Hedgehope Makarewa Catchment Group
- Understanding Land and Water to Effect Change – Wendonside Incorporated Society
- Targeted Solutions to Balfour's Environmental Challenges – Balfour Catchment Group
- Understanding the Geology – Orauea Catchment Group

Water quality projects

- Runoff Detainment Bund – Mid Oreti Catchment Group
- What is influencing our water quality – Otama Catchment Group
- Macroinvertebrate Community Index (MCI) testing – Lower Mataura, Mimihau, Tokanui, Waikawa, Waipapa/Haldane Catchment Groups

Unique projects

- Tackling Feral Animals in the Hokonuis – Makarewa Headwaters Catchment Group
- Understanding our International Farming Communities – Mid Oreti, Lower Oreti, Waihopai Catchment Groups
- Recycling – what can you do on farm – Waihopai, Waikaka, Dipton, Three Rivers Catchment Groups
- Biodiversity on Farm – Titiroa Catchment Group
- Wintering Tour – Three Rivers Catchment Group

Engagement, wellbeing and knowledge projects

- Surfing for Farmers – Lower Aparima and Waikawa Catchment Groups
- Oreti bus trip – Mid Oreti Catchment Group
- Community Social and Wellbeing Events – Greater Dipton Catchment Group
- Engagement, Operational and Wellness Grants – Ardlussa and Mokoreta Catchment Groups

MAJOR PROJECTS

Aparima Freshwater Management Unit: Building our future together with our community

Orepuki, Pourakino, Waimatuku, Lower, Mid and Upper Aparima Catchment Groups

Six farmer-led Catchment Groups of the Aparima river catchment came together to develop and implement this project over a three-year period.

The ACE project was funded for **$368,800** and was driven by farmers within six Aparima Catchment Groups. It ran from **January 2021 to June 2023** and had four different workstreams:

1. Community engagement through stream walks and water testing.
2. Working with farmers to manage on-farm environmental risks and implement good practices.
3. Creating a network of sediment traps with expert guidance on cost-effectiveness.
4. Exploring future solutions, alternative farming systems and environmental mitigations.

This project installed suitably designed sediment traps in the Aparima region and teamed up with farmers to explore and test forward-thinking farming systems, innovative techniques and on-farm strategies, all with a focus on revitalising freshwater ecosystems, boosting soil health, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from a practical and humane standpoint.

The ACE project aimed to engage and motivate the community by clarifying the challenges ahead, and to support all farmers in creating and implementing cost-effective management practices through Farm Environment Plans (FEPs). The project used five sediment traps as demonstration sites for the wider farming community to learn from.

During its three-year run, the project achieved the following milestones:

- Conducted 18 stream walks.
- Established 20 new water testing sites.
- Designed and built six new sediment traps, with six more in progress.
- Implemented innovative tools on five demonstration farms to tackle future challenges.
- Ran six workshops in 2022 to support the implementation of farm plans.

In June 2023, the ACE project wrapped up its three-year journey with a celebration that featured engaging discussions about the latest updates and insights gained from the project's four main workstreams.

Through one-on-one interactions, the project fostered better engagement, leading to a more proactive and engaged community that now works positively ahead of regulation. It also achieved various small wins, which resulted in significant nitrogen reductions over a year with minimal changes to farm systems.

Carbon Neutral Dipton: Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Sequestration Journey

GREATER DIPTON CATCHMENT GROUP

Dipton is on a journey to become carbon neutral. The Greater Dipton Catchment Group, in collaboration with local farmers and community members (buddies), brainstormed strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions during the project, which spanned from **November 2022 to May 2023** and was estimated to cost **$92,080.**

The Carbon Neutral Dipton project had several objectives:

- Work closely with consultants to model 4-5 farms, verify existing GHG emissions, create viable reduction and sequestration options using relevant software, and design sustainable and profitable multi-land use models for these farms, with the goal of achieving carbon-neutrality within 20 years.
- Introduce carbon farming concepts and share project learnings with catchment residents, offering various options to reduce GHG emissions.
- Create a high-level overview of the catchment's current GHG reduction and sequestration status.
- Explore options for achieving carbon neutrality and enhancing biodiversity while maintaining a vibrant livestock production system.

Throughout the project, field days were hosted to share learnings, resulting in the following outcomes:

- Farmers and landowners within the catchment gained insights into available options to implement for GHG reduction and carbon sequestration.
- Enhanced understanding of GHG in farming businesses, carbon farming, and the use of trees with Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and/or He Waka Eke Noa (the Primary Sector Climate Action Partnership).
- Identified changes required for achieving carbon neutrality within the next 20 years and assessed their impact on farm systems and financial performance.
- Improved farmer and community well-being by raising awareness and knowledge of carbon neutrality.
- Developed a local support network of knowledge.

In May 2023 consultants prepared their final reports based on the confirmed mitigations. The project concluded with a successful community field day in July.

Aquavan Action

Gore-Waimumu and Waihopai Catchment Groups

The Aquavan is a purpose-built vehicle owned by the New Zealand Marine Studies Centre (University of Otago), which transports marine animal and plant collections for teaching and research out in the community.

Its chilled seawater and mobile touch tanks allow hands-on learning and to create awareness of the link between river health and the coastal environment. It offers students an opportunity to explore the impact people have on coastal and freshwater environments and to enhance their science skills through hands-on learning.

Working with the New Zealand Marine Studies Centre Education Team, the 'Discovering our Catchment and Coastal Connections Education Programme' was created and brought to Southland. The project cost **$39,650** and took place from **February to December 2021.** More than 1,350 students, teachers, and parents from 21 schools in Southland participated in this exciting initiative.

Alongside the educational programme, three successful community events allowed members of the public to meet Catchment Group representatives and other agencies involved with looking after Southland's waterways.

This project aimed to improve the understanding of connections between inland and marine ecosystems among school students and the wider community. It focused on helping students from inland and urban areas discover the direct link between land activity in their catchment and how it affects the overall health of rivers, estuaries, coasts and oceans. The ultimate goal was to empower them to take meaningful action to protect these vital ecosystems, all while fostering environmental skills and community bonds. It was a huge success, with local Catchment Groups and schools regularly using the education kits created by the project.

Overall, this project successfully increased the understanding of catchments, indigenous biodiversity, waterway interconnections, ecosystem services, and the ecological and cultural values of freshwater and coastal environments among young people and the wider community.

Women's Enviro Evening

Mid-Oreti, Hedgehope Makarewa and Makarewa Headwaters Catchment Groups

This project hosted two events that brought together women from across Southland, fostering a diverse network with the common goal to improve the environment, build strength and collaborate. It cost **$27,321** and ran from **March 2020 to March 2022.**

The first event was attended by 80 women from different Catchment Groups, who came together to start building a network. Philippa Cameron from 'What's for Smoko' inspired the group with stories of her journey and network through social media, rural communities and connection. Event attendees worked together in groups, sharing ideas, plans, concerns and opportunities in the environmental space.

The second event aimed to inspire women to connect and work together for environmental change. Hosted by Sarah Perriam, the evening was attended by 200 women and featured speakers like Dan Steele from Blue Duck Station, Kaapua Smith from Contact Energy, and Kristy McGregor from Shepherdess Magazine. Despite having different environmental journeys, they all shared a deep passion and drive for their direction.

This project successfully engaged women who might not usually attend Catchment Group events, bringing new people and potential leaders to the table. It led to the launch of The Southern Womens Facebook page, where Southland women continue to support and connect across communities and Catchment Groups, forming an empowered network to drive change in the community. This initiative leveraged existing community groups, making information more accessible and inviting, and encouraging women to take on leadership roles in their Catchment Groups.

Understanding and Improving Catchment with Wetland Development

BETWEEN THE DOMES CATCHMENT GROUP

This project was the Catchment Group's main focus from **September 2021 to May 2022**, costing **$65,700** and consisting of three workstreams.

1. **Catchment Landholder Survey**

   A survey was conducted to understand the diversity of land use in the catchment and to build engagement with landholders, land managers and residents of Lumsden and Mossburn. It also served as a blueprint for the Catchment Group's upcoming work.

   The survey's main objectives were to engage with catchment landholders, raise the Catchment Group's profile, and create a targeted mailing list. It also aimed to establish an accurate baseline of the current catchment attributes in terms of land use and environmental features.

2. **Working with the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA)**

   The Catchment Group collaborated with wetland experts from NIWA to conduct a catchment overview and identify areas of focus. This involved restoring existing wetlands, establishing new strategically located small to medium-scale wetlands, and implementing small-scale wetlands or edge-of-field mitigations to address tile drains and paddock sediments.

   Working with NIWA, the project sought to develop a clear plan to assess wetlands and explore other edge-of-field mitigation options. This would reduce sediment and nutrient loss to local streams and the Oreti River. It allowed for targeted pricing, consenting, and installation of wetlands and other mitigations to meet catchment environmental objectives.

3. **Between the Domes catchment booklet**

   A booklet was created to offer a comprehensive overview of the catchment and its features in relation to land and water. Several field days took place, covering topics like wintering, rapid habitat assessment, wetlands and winter well-being.

   The electronic and physical booklet aimed to connect with less engaged members of the community, and to serve as a tool to prioritise the efforts of the Catchment Group for the next decade.

Investigation using LUCI-Ag

MAKAREWA HEADWATERS CATCHMENT GROUP

Land Utilisation Capability Indicator (LUCI-Ag) is a modelling tool that illustrates the impacts of land use on various ecosystem services. For this project, the Makarewa Headwaters Catchment Group worked with Ravensdown Environmental to model six farms within the catchment to identify nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment hotspots that have an impact on water quality.

This work centred on finding ways to decrease agricultural contaminant losses in the catchment by understanding their causes and making improved farm-level decisions. The project cost **$68,115** and ran from **June 2021 to March 2022.**

Across the six farms, the project team used OverseerFM and LUCI-Ag farm modelling, aerial photos and databases to predict land use and farm attributes across the catchment. The modelling helped identify areas that could benefit from nitrogen, phosphorus and soil loss mitigation actions. The results served as a guide for decision-making and prioritisation of mitigation actions.

The main goal of the project was to help the Catchment Group gain a better understanding of water quality issues specific to their catchment. The project's success allowed for clear guidance on the best mitigation scenarios to achieve environmental objectives, benefiting the catchment and potentially extending to other Catchment Groups.

LUCI-Ag catchment modelling found that farm system intensity impacted nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) loads. Dairy farms on free-draining brown soils had the highest N-loads, while sheep/beef/deer farms had lower N-loads, and forestry had the lowest. P-loads were highest on sloped dairy land. Mitigation options included waterway fencing, land-use management, and intensive winter grazing (IWG) measures.

Alternative crop establishment methods for better wintering outcomes

HEDGEHOPE MAKAREWA CATCHMENT GROUP

The initial idea for this project came from an experiment carried out at the Southern Dairy Hub (SDH) in 2020 that studied how cows graze and the condition of the soil when using different winter crops in Southland. The Hedgehope Makarewa Catchment Group was keen to work with SDH and expand this trial to farms with alternative crops. The project cost **$138,650** and ran from **March 2021 to February 2022.**

The Catchment Group members volunteered for the trial and selected paddocks on ten commercial farms across Southland. In the spring of 2020, the farmers decided on different crop establishment methods to compare. During winter 2021, they grazed the crops using various methods at the same time to remove any influence of weather conditions on the results. The comparison lasted 4-6 weeks and was dependant on crop yields and mob sizes.

The main goal was to see if using alternative crop establishment methods (like direct drilling, strip tillage, air seeding, etc.) for fodder beet, swedes and kale could improve the soil structure and strength, thereby reducing pugging and improving animal welfare during winter grazing. The researchers wanted to gather practical on-farm information in Southland conditions related to winter grazing, cultivation, crop choices, soil condition and animal welfare.

This data would help farmers in Southland and across New Zealand meet the upcoming Essential Freshwater Regulations. The team also wanted to provide valuable information to support further research on different aspects of winter grazing and give the farming community and others the chance to see winter grazing trials on Southland farms and have their questions answered.

To achieve these goals, the project hosted a field day/crop tour during winter 2021 for farmers to see the different crop establishment methods and observe the grazing practices. They also developed communication resources to keep the Southland farming community and other interested parties updated on the progress and results of the trial. In addition, the project provided guidelines on how crop establishment methods can affect factors like dry matter yield, cost per kilogram of dry matter, crop quality, utilisation, and soil conditions during grazing.

LANDSCAPE SCIENCE PROJECTS

Understanding the Land to Drive Change

Hedgehope Makarewa Catchment Group

Working alongside Land & Water Science, the Hedgehope Makarewa Catchment Group used science and local knowledge to understand how variation in landscape characteristics drives water quality outcomes.

Using radiometrics to create high-resolution hydrological layers helped landowners understand their catchment and develop practical solutions to meet upcoming regulatory changes. This project cost **$151,796** and ran from **March 2021 to June 2023.**

Close collaboration with Land & Water Science aimed to help people better understand their catchment and how variations in landscape characteristics can impact water quality and GHG emissions. They utilised advanced technology, including airborne radiometric data to refine soil maps, drone surveys for high-resolution hydrological data, and on-site validation of radiometric data across four farms.

The team developed an accessible online platform, offering information on seven sub-catchments and cost-efficient mitigation options to improve water quality. The project now shares its results through local events and online resources, empowering farmers and landowners with valuable insights for informed decisions on future farm mitigations.

Understanding Land and Water to Effect Change

Wendonside Incorporated Society

Wendonside Incorporated Society teamed up with Land & Water Science to learn more about the physiography – the science of geography – of the area. With the help of Macroinvertebrate Community Index testing (MCI), they developed long-term mitigation strategies at both catchment and farm level.

The project covered the entire 27,000-hectare catchment of Wendonside and was designed to provide findings across the catchment and at paddock scale to guide farmers when making environmental decisions on their property. Radiometric and satellite layers were used to study the variability in nutrient losses, surface and groundwater quality, and the timing of aquifer recharge. This project cost **$169,000** and ran from **July 2021 to June 2023.**

The main goal was to help Catchment Group members understand how different parts of the landscape and unique features of the catchment affect water quality. The project team wanted to empower group members to contribute to the scientific understanding of the catchment by doing the MCI tests and verifying the results on the ground. With help from the physiographic team and a farm systems specialist, farmers will have the knowledge and tools to find practical ways to protect the water quality in their areas.

Thanks to this project, a useful framework was created for other catchments to explore. The science they gathered provided an understanding of the land and water resources, leading to targeted actions to protect the environment. Physiographic mapping and a report specific to the Wendonside catchment capture the hydrogeology, land use pressure, conceptual modelling of water quality and the risks they face.

Targeted Solutions to Balfour's Environmental Challenges – Phase 1

BALFOUR CATCHMENT GROUP

The Balfour fan is known for having high levels of nitrate in its groundwater, which exceeds safety standards set by New Zealand and The World Health Organisation for drinking water. To address this issue, the Balfour Catchment Group partnered with Land & Water Science to create a detailed soil map of the area using radiometric and digital terrain modelling.

The project had two workstreams, with the first looking at nitrate challenges on the flats where well-drained, highly weathered soils result in very high groundwater and surface water nitrate levels. The second workstream looked at the hill country and lowland areas with poorly drained soils and diverse land use, which led to high levels of nitrate in surface water due to runoff carrying sediment, phosphorus, and e-coli from groundwater bodies.

With a total cost of **$159,700**, the project took place from **April 2022 to June 2023.**

Its main goal was to find solutions for the challenging nitrate issues in these two areas of the catchment. The group wanted to bring the community together through focus groups, field days, and sharing the project's findings to increase awareness and promote environmental education and behaviour change. They aimed to equip land managers with scientific information and tools so they can make better decisions and take action to improve the environment.

As a result, this project provided land managers with science-backed information and tools to reduce groundwater nitrate levels and manage episodes of runoff. Catchment Group members became more engaged and experienced a greater sense of well-being as they worked together and took proactive action to protect the environment. The project also created multiple user-friendly platforms to share the learnings, encouraging practical actions beyond the Balfour Catchment Group.

Targeted Solutions to Balfour's Environmental Challenges – Phase 2

BALFOUR CATCHMENT GROUP

The Balfour Catchment Group sought Thriving Southland's support to expand their project, 'Targeted Solutions to Balfour's Environmental Challenges'. With a total cost of **$173,010**, this initiative will run from **June 2023 to June 2024.**

Teaming up with Clint Rissman from Land & Water Science, the group will delve into the landscape to uncover the root causes of historical N-loss issues on the Balfour fan. While the first phase of the project shed light on the problem, questions remained about how nitrogen loss found its way into the Waimea and Longridge Streams.

Phase 2 is all about exploring different pathways, including surface water and artificial drainage like open drains, tiles, seeps and groundwater, to pinpoint the sources of N-loss. This in-depth research will pave the way for targeted interventions that connect areas of the landscape which are highly susceptible to N-loss with natural nitrate removal sites.

Understanding the Geology

ORAUEA CATCHMENT GROUP

A notable feature of the Orauea catchment is the abundance of mudstone rock in the landscape, which is highly unusual in the Southland region. The aim of this project was to help land users understand the challenges posed by this unique geology, its impact on water quality, and to provide potential ways to address these issues.

The Catchment Group worked with Land & Water Science to complete a high-resolution stocktake of environmental data and map layers using radiometric and satellite data.

From this data, a catchment prioritisation map was developed, with Catchment Group members verifying the information on the ground. Mitigation options were collated into an online resource, and community field days are being held to share the learnings. The project cost **$151,000** and ran from **July 2022 to June 2023.**

The main goal was to give land users access to valuable information about mudstone-based geology and soils, helping them gain a deeper understanding of the cause and effect of erosion and overland flow.

The project aimed to provide farmers with practical tools to mitigate erosion and overland flow on their properties and in the Orauea River and its tributaries. Another key objective was to enhance the engagement of Catchment Group members and increase their sense of well-being.

This project successfully equipped land users with scientific information and guidance to make on-farm improvements that benefit the Orauea River and its tributaries, particularly in reducing sediment and E. coli.

WATER QUALITY PROJECTS

Runoff Detainment Bund and Nursery Field Day

Mid-Oreti Catchment Group

Farmers strive to retain essential sediment and nutrients, and the Mid-Oreti Catchment Group aimed to highlight ways to achieve this. Members of the Catchment Group were invited to AB Lime to see the runoff detainment bund they built and to discuss ways to manage sediment and runoff. They also had the chance to visit AB Lime's native tree nursery and learn about their impressive success in growing over 10,000 trees in a year from seed.

This project cost **$250.43** and ran from **October to November 2020.**

The Field Day successfully educated people about controlling sediment and runoff, as well as teaching them how to propagate native trees from seed. It inspired the implementation of sediment retention bunds and other measures on farms and communities, including encouraging them to grow their own natives.

What is influencing our water quality?

Otama Catchment Group

The Otama Catchment Group hosted an event with speakers who shared valuable information about water, soil and geology relevant to the land managers and community in the Otama catchment. The group discussed their goals and initial actions. Land and Water Science provided handouts and a video summarising the background research and essential information for the catchment.

The project cost **$1,840** and ran from **January to March 2023.**

Its main aim was to equip the Otama Catchment Group with a solid understanding of their catchment, helping them identify their challenges and explore possible solutions. The specialist speakers provided science-based insights to help the group comprehend the factors influencing water quality and the key landscape settings affecting their area.

As a result of this project, farmers, land managers, and community members gained a better understanding of the interactions between soil, geology, water and land-use in their catchment. They learned how water moves through the area, including the impact of modified watercourses. The Catchment Group now feels more confident in making decisions related to environmental improvement, and has identified current and future issues and possible mitigation pathways.

MCI Introduction, Scoping and Sampling Events

Lower Mataura, Mimihau, Tokanui, Waikawa and Waipapaihaldane Catchment Groups

Cawthron Institute's Freshwater Ecologist Robin Holmes, and Craig Simpson from Landcare Trust NZ, introduced Macroinvertebrate Community Index (MCI) testing and rapid habitat assessment during a practical hands-on field event. The purpose was to help the five Catchment Groups understand the health of their streams and learn how to conduct their own MCI sampling in the future.

The project took place from **March 2021 to March 2022**, with costs ranging from **$2,826 to $22,952** for different catchments.

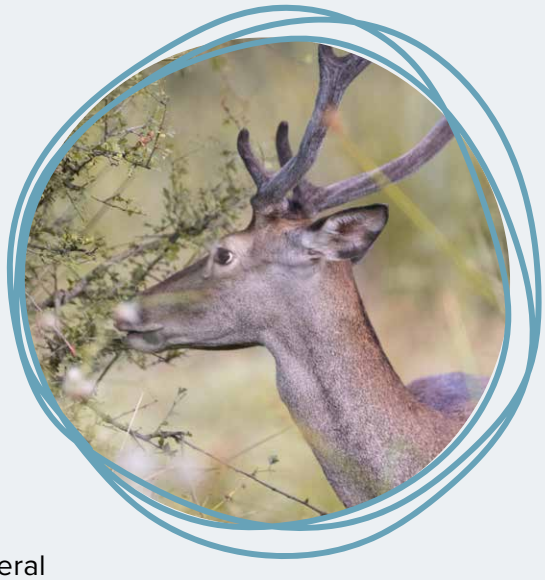
The main goal was to build knowledge, engagement and ownership of stream health in each catchment. Another key objective was to empower farmers to take their own samples and use MCI testing results to improve stream health for the benefit of the community. The events were well-attended, resulting in increased engagement with landholders and recognition of local groups working towards better waterways.

Having independent local testing sites owned by the catchments now provides a solid scientific foundation to build upon in the future. As a result of this project, landowners have gained more confidence in supporting on-farm changes that promote better land management.

UNIQUE PROJECTS

Revival Project: Phase 1 – Tackling Feral Animals in the Hokonuis

MAKAREWA HEADWATERS CATCHMENT GROUP



This project is looking to understand the extent of the feral animal problem (including deer, pigs, goat, wild merino, wallabies – ungulate pests and those with cloven hooves) in the Hokonuis. Project cost is **$48,500** and it ran from **August to November 2023.**

The first phase is to understand the extent of the problem through a landowner survey. The study will tell us the scale of the problem, the impact, what control methods are currently being used, and what forms of control works for us. It will give the community and landowners a baseline of the number of pests, the state of the bush now, identified threatened species and eco-systems, and show the impact of large feral animals in the catchment.

The next step is to use the study to apply for funding and look at opportunities to reduce populations, and explore markets and opportunities for pest products.

International Farming Communities to improve understanding of GMPs

MID ORETI, LOWER ORETI AND WAIHOPAI CATCHMENT GROUPS

Southland has a strong international farming community, and sometimes it can be challenging to promote meaningful change, share ideas and align all farm team members with essential actions, when cultural and linguistic differences come into play – especially when English is not the primary language.

This project cost **$3,000** and ran from **December 2021 to March 2021.**

Its main goal was to find out what support farm workers for who 'English is a second language' and needed to improve their understanding and implementation of wintering Good Management Practices, for improved environmental outcomes.

The project also aimed to find ways to assist the 'English as a second language' farming community and employers by providing appropriate materials, methods and support. A study was conducted and by March 2022 the findings revealed successful approaches in international farming, identified existing barriers and highlighted future opportunities.

Recycling – what can you do on your farm, household and in your community

Waihopai, Waikaka Stream, Greater Dipton and Three Rivers Catchment Groups

Trish Rankin from Taranaki was invited by four Catchment Groups to share practical on-farm, household, and community recycling solutions. Rural communities often have limited recycling choices. Therefore, the project's objective was to help people in the Oreti and Mataura catchments learn about ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle on their farms, in their households and communities, and share their top tips and ideas.

The project cost **$3,832** and took place in **April 2022.**

As a result of this joint Catchment Group project, farmers and the wider community now have a clearer understanding of recycling options. They can take appropriate actions to reduce, reuse, and recycle both individually and collectively.

Biodiversity on Farm

Titiroa Catchment Group

The Titiroa Catchment Group partnered with expert Prof David Norton to learn about on-farm biodiversity and local bush blocks. Prof David Norton, who specialises in New Zealand's native biodiversity, taught about the importance of biodiversity and what kinds of biodiversity might exist on farms. Participants had the chance to explore established native bush blocks, learn how to care for them on a commercial farm, and discover ways to enhance biodiversity through tree lanes, small plantings and riparian areas.

The project cost **$3,750** and ran from **April 2022 to April 2023.**

Its main aim was to equip participants with knowledge about the biodiversity in local bush blocks and on farms, how to protect existing biodiversity, and how to increase biodiversity on their properties.

Thanks to this project, Catchment Group members now have a better understanding of biodiversity, having gained valuable knowledge about the biodiversity present in their catchment. They have also learned how to care for it properly and take steps to promote long-term biodiversity.

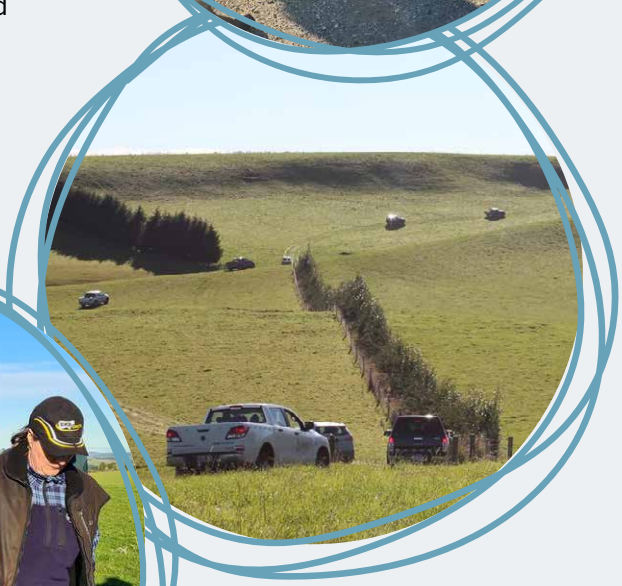
Wintering Tour

THREE RIVERS CATCHMENT GROUP

Farmers from the Three Rivers Catchment Group went on a special bus tour to explore different wintering systems, including sheep wintering and a baleage, grass, barn and cropping system.

The project cost **$768.69** and took place from **July to September 2021.** Its main purpose was to show farmers new wintering options and discuss smart ways to manage their farms.

As a result of this project, farmers had great discussions about making positive changes and finding ways to access the information they needed to make changes. They learned practical tips and insights from each other, talking with fellow farmers about the challenges of intensive winter grazing. It was a valuable opportunity for learning and sharing experiences.



ENGAGEMENT, WELLBEING AND KNOWLEDGE PROJECTS

Surfing for Farmers

Lower Aparima / Waikawa Catchment Groups

The Surfing for Farmers project was designed to support Southland farmers who may be under a lot of pressure, leading to increased anxiety and well-being challenges. The idea is to get farmers off-farm to have some fun through physical and social activities.

The project cost approximately **$1000-$2000** and took place from **December 2020 to March 2021 for the Lower Aparima Catchment Group**, and from **November 2022 to March 2023 for the Waikawa Catchment Group.**

The main goal of the project was to give farmers a break from their daily worries, release the pressure they feel, and reconnect with nature. By participating in surfing and engaging with the community, they could learn new skills, meet new people, and spend time away from the farm. The project also aimed to improve their mental well-being and raise awareness of the farmers' relationship with water and local resources.

As a result of this project, farmers learned a new skill – surfing, which improved their mental health and overall well-being. It also helped them create new networks, build relationships, and have meaningful discussions with others. It was a great opportunity for farmers to take a break, have fun, and improve their social connections.

Oreti Bus Trip

Mid-Oreti Catchment Group

The Oreti Catchment Group organised a bus trip to raise awareness and understanding of the New River Estuary, and to educate about the conservation efforts in the mid and lower Oreti catchment, including wetlands, native biodiversity, and sustainable farming practices. The trip included visits to four sites, where Catchment Group Members and local experts provided valuable insights and answered questions.

The project cost **$2000**, and the bus trip took place in **March 2023.**

The main goal was to bring the wider Oreti community together and increase their knowledge and understanding of the health of the New River Estuary. The trip aimed to create connections, share information, and learn about initiatives taken to protect the estuary, encouraging catchment-wide solutions.

As a result of this project, many attendees were inspired and learned about the accomplishments of the Oreti Catchment Groups. The trip strengthened the bond between Oreti and the wider community, raising awareness and understanding of the estuary's health and the conservation efforts carried out by the groups. A booklet was created to showcase the achievements of the Mid and Lower Oreti Catchment Groups and the information from the visited sites.

Community Social and Wellbeing Events with guest speakers Wayne Langford and Bailley Unahi

GREATER DIPTON CATCHMENT GROUP

The Greater Dipton Catchment Group host special well-being events featuring guest speakers such as Tyler and Wayne Langford and Bailley Unahi. Wayne shares an inspiring story of how changing his perspective transformed his farm, family, and community for the better. Bailley talks about her journey towards becoming New Zealand's first female sit-skier at the 2026 Paralympics, how she's setting new life goals, and her determined efforts to achieve them. Also present at the events is Thriving Southland's Project Lead Richard Kyte who discusses various projects undertaken by Catchment Groups across Southland to spark ideas for the Greater Dipton Catchment Group.

The project cost approximately **$1,485-$1,635.**

The main purpose of these events is to bring the Greater Dipton community together for informative and social gatherings centred around farmer and community well-being. The speakers aim to inspire individuals, families and communities to lead healthier, happier and more productive lives.

The events also provide an opportunity to celebrate the catchment's achievements in recent years and announce future plans. People are encouraged to share new ideas for the group to pursue in the future.

These community events provide farmers with a better understanding of mental well-being and ways to support each other personally and collectively.

Engagement, Operational and Wellness Grants

THRIVING SOUTHLAND

Thriving Southland offered **grants of up to $500** to Catchment Groups, aiming to help them connect with their communities, increase engagement, boost morale, and improve well-being. The funding also supported basic operational costs to support these groups in gaining momentum.

Catchment Groups made the most of this opportunity by organising social get-togethers, inviting specialist speakers, and hosting workshops on topics of interest, among other activities.

For example, the Ardlussa Catchment Group held an event with a guest speaker covering the various ways to determine stream health within a catchment, while the Mokoreta Catchment Group organised a water quality event using eDNA kits.

Another group used their $500 to create a prize pool for an on-farm Christmas decoration competition. This idea turned out to be very popular across Southland and even caught the attention of the TV show Seven Sharp, where it was featured in a story.

Overall, these grants empowered Catchment Groups to connect with their communities, create meaningful social events, and make a positive impact on the well-being of their members.

GET IN CONTACT

For more information about your catchment and to contact your local catchment coordinator

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THRIVING SOUTHLAND

Tōnui ana te whenua. Tōnui ana te takata.
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