

Whakamana
te Waituna

Charitable Trust

Annual Report FY24/25

1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025

Mana oranga: Mana Tangata: Mana ki uta: Mana ki tai: Mana Waituna

*Ensuring the wellbeing of the people, the land, the waters, the ecosystems
and the life-force of the Waituna catchment and lagoon, now and for
future generations through a partnership approach*



Table of Contents

Background	3
Trust Objectives	4
Our People.....	5
Trustees	5
Project Steering Group and Project Office	5
FY24/25 Summary	7
Financial Statements and Assets	8
Delivery of Charitable Objectives	9
Rūnanga Reconnection.....	9
Land Transition.....	11
Waterway Redesign	13
Improving Freshwater	14
Local Community	16
Looking Ahead to 2025/26	19
Nga Mihi – Acknowledgements	19

Background

Waituna Lagoon and its surrounding wetlands and waterways are an area of great importance both environmentally and culturally and provide an internationally significant ecosystem for wildlife. The lagoon and its catchment have faced significant challenges due to land use change and water quality degradation.

The Whakamana te Waituna Trust (the Trust) is a registered Charitable Trust that was formed in 2018, following several years of collaborative work by the local community, agencies, iwi and others to reduce the impacts of nutrient, sediment and biodiversity losses on Waituna Lagoon/Waipārera. Together, the Trust partners (Awarua Rūnanga, Ngāi Tahu, Southland District Council, Environment Southland, Department of Conservation, and Fonterra) were able to secure \$13.6 million of funding through partner contributions and the Ministry for the Environment Freshwater Improvement Fund (FIF), to complete a 5-year programme of work to restore the mana of the Waituna Lagoon and wetlands.

The programme was unique as it included the purchase and retirement of 584 hectares of farmland to create a buffer around Waituna lagoon, with 403 hectares returned to Awarua Rūnanga to establish a mahinga kai pā. Other mahi included trialling a range of tools to reduce contaminants reaching the lagoon and completing a significant demonstration on Waituna Creek to reduce erosion and improve the quality of instream habitat for native freshwater fish.

The Trust is continuing this mahi by re-establishing native biodiversity, improve water quality, and support Ngāi Tahu and Awarua Rūnanga's work to reconnect with the whenua (land). The Trust has a long-term goal of repurposing 10% of the Waituna catchment (2,000 hectares) into other uses that support water quality and biodiversity improvements. This work is foundational for maintaining the health of the lagoon and ensuring its vitality for future generations.

Trust Objectives

The Trust's Charitable Objectives include:

Rūnanga Reconnection

Assist Te Runanga o Awarua in reconnecting with the Waituna whenua and fulfilling their role as Kaitiaki by enhancing the habitats of key taonga species; by utilising traditional Māori knowledge and cultural health indicators and improving access to land for Mahinga Kai gathering and Runanga development.

Land Transition

Enhancement of biodiversity and carbon sequestration via land re-purposing, afforestation and wetland creation (also benefits water quality).

Waterway Redesign

Flood Mitigation, freshwater habitat improvement and sediment reduction through waterway re-design. Includes riparian planting, bank reshaping, two stage channel's and in-stream habitat enhancement.

Improving Freshwater

Protecting and improving freshwater quality and the health of Waituna Lagoon by reducing contaminant (nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment) losses from farming through the implementation of farm system interventions and creating catchment scale wetlands.

Local Community

Supporting a thriving local community by undertaking environmental projects and activities that promote the sustainable future of farming in the catchment.

Administration

Administration and operation of the Whakamana te Waituna Trust and Project, including operation of the Project Management Office, Finance and Auditing, and Reporting.

Our People

Trustees

Up to six Trustees may be appointed to the Trust, with two appointed by Awarua Rūnanga and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, one by Environment Southland, one by Southland District Council, one by Fonterra and one appointed by the Trust as an independent Trustee. A Trust advisor role is appointed by the Department of Conservation.

The Trustees are:

- **Nicol Horrell (Co-Chair)** - Nicol is the Chair of Southland Regional Council, is a founding member of the Trust and has been Co-Chair since 2018
- **Gail Thompson (Co-Chair)** – Gail is an Awarua Representative, a founding member of the Trust and was appointed Co-Chair in 2021
- **Julie Keast** – Julie is a Southland District Councillor and a founding member of the Trust
- **John McCarroll** – John is the Te Papa Atawhai/Department of Conservation Operations Manager for Murihiku/Southland and is appointed by DOC to be their Trust Advisor. John has been involved since the Trust was formed in 2018
- **Maarten Van Rossum** – Maarten is an independently appointed Trustee who joined the Trust in 2024. Maarten is a dairy farmer in the Waituna Catchment and recently helped establish the Waituna Catchment Group
- **Robb Stevens** – Robb is the Fonterra appointee and joined the Trust in 2024. Robb is the Local Government and Stakeholder Affairs Manager for Fonterra for the South Island
- **Dean Whaanga** – Dean is an Awarua Representative, a founding member of the Trust and previously Co-Chair. Dean is the Kaupapa Taiao Kaiwhakahaere for Te Ao Marama Inc.

Trust Meetings are held quarterly. Four meetings were held in the 2024/2025 financial year.

Project Steering Group and Project Office

The Trust operational structure includes a Project Steering Group (PSG) made up of representatives from Environment Southland, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Fonterra and The Department of Conservation. A PSG Chair is elected by PSG members to lead the Group and act as the key contact point between Trustees and the Trust's operational work programme.

The PSG meets regularly (every 2 weeks), with its primary function being oversight of the development and delivery of the Trust's work programme.

A Project Manager is employed by the Trust and reports to the PSG Chair. The Project Manager runs the Project Office, which manages the delivery of the Trust's work programme, including planning and project management, iwi and stakeholder engagement, financial management, funding, reporting, and communications.

FY24/25 Summary

FY24/25 was a year of consolidation and momentum building, with the Trust taking over full financial management of the Whakamana te Waituna Project following the transfer of the remaining Freshwater Improvement Fund funding from Environment Southland, employing a full-time Project Manager and securing additional funding from the Ministry for the Environment to participate in a national pilot as part of the Trust's nature credits work.

The following key pieces of work contributed towards the Trust's charitable objectives in FY24/25:

- Resource consent applied for and granted to locate a new prefabricated cultural centre building to Pikiraurahi mahinga kai pā. Currently awaiting Building Consent.
- Re-established an effective predator control trapping network for Pikiraurahi mahinga kai pā.
- Completed investigations into the feasibility of a nature credit (biodiversity and carbon) to provide alternative financing mechanisms for Trust mahi from forest and wetland restoration.
- Joined a national Ministry for the Environment pilot investigating a nature credits system for New Zealand.
- Planning and native plant procurement for the first year of native planting on the Webster Block. Planting is scheduled for Autumn 2026.
- Completed fencing (1.5km) of the Lower Waituna Creek Esplanade Reserve to exclude stock, reinstate legal boundaries and establish a significant riparian buffer between Waituna Creek and adjacent farmland.
- Establishment of an on-farm/community fund to support actions to improve freshwater and biodiversity within the Waituna Catchment. 1.2km of riparian planting was completed on Moffat Creek in collaboration with Waituna Investments Ltd (landowner).
- Continued monitoring of the Jordan Creek sediment trap. Results show the trap is continuing to capture large quantities of sediment during episodic events such as flood flows and upstream weed removal.
- Developed a strategic narrative for the Trust to support future funding pathways.

Financially the Trust continued to be well supported by its partner organisations with funding of \$329,316 received, including a \$20,000 grant from the Ministry for the Environment to support the Trust's nature credits pilot. The remaining Freshwater Improvement Fund funding held by Environment Southland was also transferred to the Trust. The Trust's outgoings totaled \$377,550 and at the end of FY23/24 the Trust's total equity was \$1,852,634.

Financial Statements and Assets

The Whakamana te Waituna Charitable Trust had revenue in the form of donations and grants of \$329,316, including \$20,000 from the Ministry for the Environment for the Trust's nature credits pilot. The transfer of the remaining \$1,221,972 Freshwater Improvement Fund funding from Environment Southland to the Trust also occurred in the 24/25 financial year. In addition to donations and grants the Trust also earned \$58,169 in interest, taking overall revenue to \$1,609,457. Expenses for the Trust totalled \$377,550 resulting in a surplus for the year of \$1,231,907.

At the end of FY24/25 the Trust's total equity was \$1,852,634.

Statement of Financial Performance

Whakamana Te Waituna Charitable Trust
For the year ended 30 June 2025

	NOTES	2025	2024
Revenue			
Donations, fundraising and other similar revenue	1	1,496,972	675,000
Revenue from providing goods or services	1	54,316	-
Interest	1	58,169	4,422
Total Revenue		1,609,457	679,422
Expenses			
Volunteer and employee related costs	2	115,943	335
Costs related to providing goods or service	2	254,974	55,142
Other expenses	2	6,632	3,228
Total Expenses		377,550	58,706
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year		1,231,907	620,716

For a detailed financial report please contact the Trust: projectmanager@waituna.org.nz

Delivery of Charitable Objectives

Rūnanga Reconnection

Awarua Rūnanga and Ngāi Tahu continued to be actively involved in the Trust, holding a Co-Chair position and roles within the Project Steering Group.

Pikiraaurahi Cultural and Education Centre

Te Wai Parera Trust is establishing a cultural and education centre to support cultural reconnection and restoration activities at Pikiraaurahi Mahinga Kai Pā as well as the wider Whakamana te Waituna project.

The Whakamana te Waituna Trust has been assisting Te Wai Parera Trust in project managing this mahi. Final architectural plans have been developed for the building, resource consents granted and quotes for completing the building received and accepted.

It was intended that the prefabricated building, built by Southern Institute of Technology (SIT) students, would be moved to site and completed in FY24/25 but delays with gaining building consent prevented this occurring. The building is now planned to be on site and complete in late 2026.

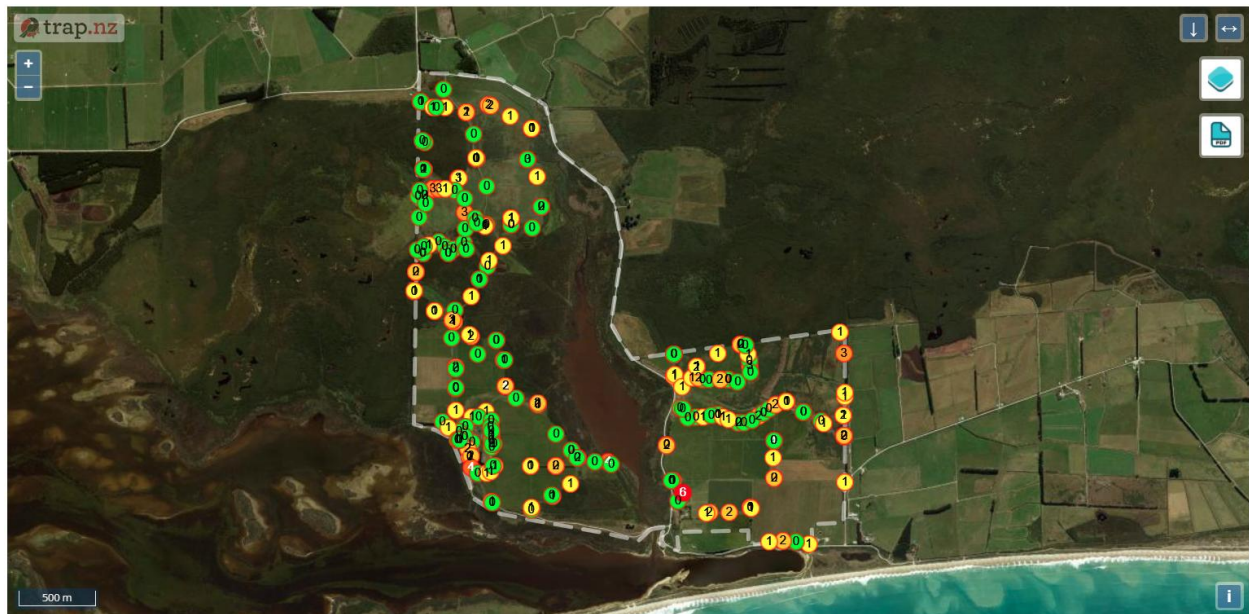


Artist's impression of the cultural centre building on site, overlooking Waituna Lagoon and the mahinga kai ponds

Pikiraurahi Pest Animal Control Programme

With the completion of the Jobs for Nature contract in June 2024, management of the animal pest control programme at Pikiraurahi transitioned back to Te Wai Parera Trust. Whakamana te Waituna supported the reestablishment of a comprehensive control programme in FY24/25, with an experience trapper contracted from December 2024 to audit, clean, calibrate, update and manage the trap network.

The following map and table show the locations of Te Wai Parera Trust's traps at Pikiraurahi, and the number of pests trapped between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025. The colours represent the number of catches per trap (green = 0, yellow = 1, orange = 2, etc.)



Month	Bird	Cat	Hedgehog	Mouse	Possum	Rabbit	Rat	Stoat	Weasel	Subtotal
Jul-24	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Aug-24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dec-24	2	1	0	4	0	0	4	2	0	13
Jan-25	4	0	1	6	2	0	2	2	4	21
Feb-25	1	2	2	4	9	1	9	2	5	35
Mar-25	3	2	1	3	8	0	10	3	2	32
Apr-25	0	5	2	5	6	0	8	0	1	27
May-25	1	1	1	4	2	0	9	0	1	19
Jun-25	2	4	3	8	3	0	4	0	3	27
Subtotal	13	15	10	35	30	1	46	9	16	175



Photo of a possum trap, a cat trap and a DOC200 trap along a fenceline at Pikiraurahi, after vegetation clearance and trap servicing.

Land Transition

Voluntary Nature Credits Pilot

In FY24/25 the Trust completed the first phase of work to investigate the feasibility of a voluntary carbon/biodiversity credit investment proposition. The aim is to have the scheme, including the biodiversity uplift it will achieve, verified under a nationally or internationally recognised standard (i.e. Verra or Ekos). This will enable long term revenue generation from the Trust's restoration activities on land owned as part of the Whakamana te Waituna Project (including future land purchases).

The Trust investigated different types of carbon/biodiversity credit schemes, how they could operate in a Waituna context and the possible returns that could be achieved. Work was undertaken on concept development and investor engagement and draft documentation developed to submit to a preferred nature credit standard organisation. An advisory group comprised of experts in sustainable finance, biodiversity and carbon trading was also established to support the project.

The feasibility assesment confirmed there was potential to register restoration projects and generate credits that could accelerate land-use transition and restoration outcomes.

The next steps for the Trust are to complete baseline ecological assessments, develop a monitoring framework, engage with potential early investors and partners to test market interest and select a standard and complete the required project documentation.

Through this initial work, the Waituna nature credits project has been selected as a participant in a national pilot investigating the Government's role in a Biodiversity Credit System (BCS) for New Zealand. This follows initial public consultation run by the Ministry for the Environment and Department of Conservation at the end of 2023. An output from the consultation was that a pilot approach would be valuable for testing how a BCS could work in New Zealand and to provide an opportunity to identify issues, refine approaches, instill early confidence in a scheme to encourage broader uptake, and ensure real benefits to biodiversity. The 6-12 month pilot, being run by Ministry for the Environment, will shadow 10 projects that are at various stages of investigating nature credits to better understand the development process, risks, costs and benefits of participating in a voluntary biodiversity credits scheme.

Webster Block Restoration

In conjunction with the voluntary carbon/biodiversity credit pilot, the Trust is establishing a restoration project on the Webster Block, one of three strategic farm blocks purchased in 2020 as part of the Whakamana te Waituna Freshwater Improvement Project.

The project seeks to deliver a lower cost restoration model that is transferable to other sites and landowners in the catchment. The model is based off the Timata method of planting that was developed through the National Science Challenges but has been adapted to suit coastal Southland conditions. In FY24/25 a high-level planting plan was developed and detailed planning and plant procurement completed for the first two planting areas (Autumn 2026).

The Trust has been working towards transferring the ownership of the Webster Block from Environment Southland to the Trust. Environment Southland has agreed to the transfer, and this is expected to be completed next financial year.



Webster Block – Artistic representation of current state – Year 0



Webster Block – Reforestation and biodiversity project – 100-year vision.

Waterway Redesign

Esplanade Reserve Fencing – Lower Waituna Creek

FY24/25 saw the Trust and Southland District Council complete the re-fencing of approximately 1.5km of Esplanade Reserve and boundary fencing along Waituna Creek.

The previous fence had been erected on the edge of Waituna Creek, well inside the legal boundary of the Esplanade Reserve. The area has had ongoing issues with unauthorised stock access to the Reserve and Waituna Creek, due to the condition of the previous fence.

Negotiations were carried out with landowners and a fencing agreement signed clarifying responsibilities for erecting the fencing and ongoing maintenance. The agreement has resulted in approximately 2ha of land, that was previously being grazed, returning to public reserve, and the legal boundary of the Esplanade Reserve being clearly defined.





Completed fencing

Improving Freshwater

On-farm and Community Support Fund

In FY24/25 the Trust established a fund to support landowners in the Waituna catchment to complete projects to enhance water quality and biodiversity. The Trust will fund up to 50% of projects, which includes riparian and wetland planting, projects identified in Farm Environment Plans and other projects that will directly improve water quality.

A riparian planting project along 1.2km of Moffat Creek was completed in FY24/25 in collaboration with Waituna Investments Ltd (landowner). A further project to reduce erosion in lower Moffat Creek was scoped for advancement in FY25/26.



Riparian Planting at Waituna Investments, May 2025

Jordan Creek Sediment Trap

In FY22/23 the Trust constructed a large-scale sediment trap on the Jordan Creek (main tributary of Waituna Creek). This is being monitored every six months to understand the effectiveness of the trap at capturing sediment and the size of sediment being captured.

Monitoring is showing promising results for the capture of sediment, preventing this from moving downstream into Waituna Lagoon. Sampling results show significant volumes of sediment have accumulated in the trap since the first monitoring event in April 2024. In some locations over 2m of sediment has now accumulated. Sediment appears to be accumulating following episodic events like high flows or upstream drain cleaning rather than it being a consistent input during normal day to day flows.

No significant maintenance has been required on the trap to date despite several high flow events. Monitoring will continue into 2026, along with the first cleaning out of the trap.



Sediment trap under construction March 2023

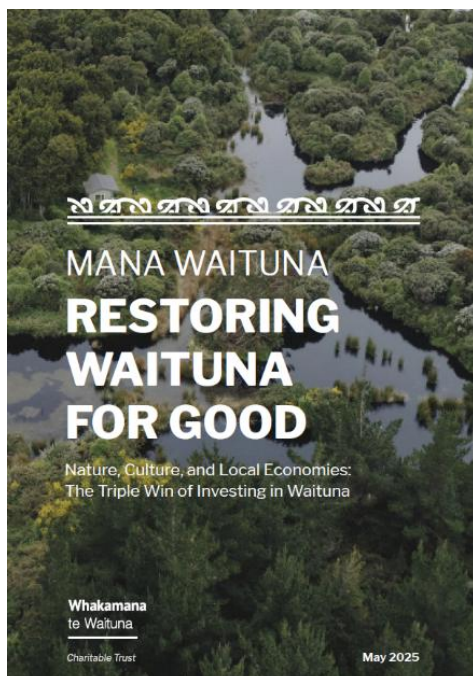


Sediment trap monitoring April 2024

Local Community

Strategic Narrative for the Trust

In FY24/25 the Trust engaged a strategic communications and engagement specialist to develop a strategic and visual narrative for the mahi of the Trust, based on the Trust's vision and objectives. This work is to support Trust members and partners to be able to clearly articulate the Trust's objectives and key work with funders, the community and stakeholders.



KEY FOCUS AREAS

We have a clear plan of how we can achieve our vision centered around five key objectives:



Restore
wetlands and
lowland forest



Redesign
drains and waterways
to reduce sediment
and weed growth



Reduce
nutrient losses through
on-farm mitigations



Realise
the benefits of
biodiversity and carbon
for sustainable financing



Reconnect
iwi with the whenua

LONG TERM GOAL

Central to our key focus areas is repurposing approximately 10% of the catchment (2000 hectares) into other uses that support the water quality and biodiversity improvements but are also profitable and self sustaining*. 584 hectares has been secured, so we are 30% of the way there.

* The Waituna catchment has had the benefit of a number of studies and research to determine what needs to happen to maintain and improve the health of the lagoon.



Waituna Lagoon Health Scorecard

The Trust started producing a quarterly health scorecard for Waituna Lagoon in late FY23/24, drawing together data from Environment Southland, LAWA and the Department of Conservation. In FY24/25 the scorecard was updated to refresh its visual look and make it more accessible and readable.



This document has been compiled by Whakamana te Waituna. It presents a selection of data sourced from Environment Southland (ES), LAWA and Department of Conservation, indicating the water quality and ecosystem health of Waituna Lagoon.

Lagoon water quality and ecosystem health indicators

Indicators		Indicator levels*		Data from ES green – better than warning level yellow – worse than warning level orange – worse than critical level			Data from LAWA**		
				April 2025	May 2025	June 2025	5-year median	State	10-year trend
Bacteria	<i>E. coli</i> (<i>Escherichia coli</i>)	Prolonged level of <i>E. coli</i> > 260 CFU/100ml and not human source	Prolonged level of <i>E. coli</i> > 1,200 CFU/100ml	2 CFU/100ml	70 CFU/100ml	53 CFU/100ml	14 CFU/100ml	A	Very likely degrading trend
Nitrogen	Total nitrogen concentration	≥ 0.75 and < 1.5 g/m ³	≥ 1.5 g/m ³	0.2 g/m ³	0.7 g/m ³	1.2 g/m ³	0.82 g/m ³	D	Very likely degrading trend
Phosphorus	Total phosphorus concentration	≥ 0.05 and < 0.1 g/m ³	≥ 0.1 g/m ³	0.01 g/m ³	0.02 g/m ³	0.03 g/m ³	0.029 g/m ³	C	Very likely degrading trend
Clarity	Secchi disc depth	≥ 0.5 m and < 1 m	< 0.5 m	No data	No data	0.93 m	1.15 m	C	Likely improving trend
Algae	Chlorophyll <i>a</i>	0.012 - 0.06 mg/l	≥ 0.06 mg/l	0 mg/l	0 mg/l	0.01 mg/l	0.0027 mg/l	C	Very likely degrading trend

Note: Environment Southland collects data from 4 lagoon sites each month. For the sake of simplicity, only data from Waituna Lagoon at Lagoon Centre is shown here.

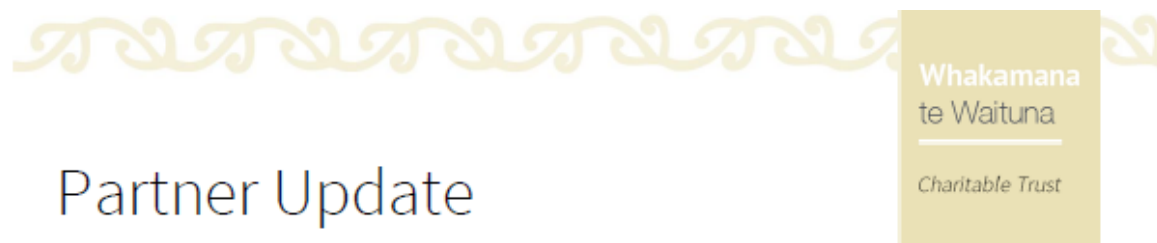
Sources: * Indicator levels from [Technical review of conditions for opening Waituna Lagoon](#) (Robertson et al. 2024);

** Median, state and trend data from www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/southland-region/lakes/waituna-lagoon/waituna-lagoon-lagoon-centre.

For additional environmental data, visit Environment Southland's Maps and Data website and select [Waituna River Data](#).

Quarterly Update for Partners

In FY24/25 the Trust introduced quarterly reporting on the activities of the Trust for partners and other interested stakeholders. The update provides a short summary of progress against the Trust's charitable objectives and project highlights for the quarter.



Partner Update

Welcome to the quarterly update of the Whakamana te Waituna Charitable Trust, keeping partners informed about the mahi of the Trust.

May 2025

The Trust has a long-term vision and intergenerational aspirations. The vision for Waituna is:

Mana oranga: Mana Tangata: Mana ki uta: Mana ki tai: Mana Waituna

Ensuring the wellbeing of the people, the land, the waters, the ecosystems and the life-force of the Waituna catchment and lagoon, now and for future generations through a partnership approach.

Progress Summary

CHARITY OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY AREA	DESCRIPTION	PROGRESS Q3 (JAN-MAR)
Rūnanga Reconnection	2.1 Mahinga Kai Pā Predator Control	Ensuring restoration success through effective predator management	Predator control trapping network is in place and being regularly monitored
	2.2 Mahinga Kai Pā cultural centre	Establishing a cultural and education centre to support cultural reconnection and restoration activities at Pikiraurahi Pā Mahinga Kai	Building has been completed by SIT students. Architect appointed and resource consent granted. Building consent application has been made to move the building on site
	2.3 Marshall Road Executive Mai Mai Repairs	Establishing a base for hosting visitors at Marshall Road site	This project will be deferred to next financial year
Land Transition	3.1 Nature Based Financing Pilot	Investigating options for financing restoration through carbon and nature credits	Feasibility assessment has been completed of a biodiversity credits market and possible credit standards. Trust is now implementing the next phase of work to finalise the project design ready for registration with a credit standards agency
	3.2 Webster Block Restoration Programme	Restoring lowland and wetland habitat on purchased land blocks	Planting plan and procurement for plants for the first two planting blocks has been completed – approx. 5 ha / 9000 plants to be planted in Autumn 2026 Application to DOC Community Fund unsuccessful

Looking Ahead to 2025/26

The Trust is well-positioned to continue its efforts to support restoration, cultural reconnection, and freshwater enhancement within the Waituna catchment. Key priorities include:

- Completing the relocation of the cultural and education centre building to Pikiraaurahi mahinga kai pā
- Completing the transfer of ownership of the Webster Block from Environment Southland to the Trust
- Delivering Phase 2 of the biodiversity/nature credits project, to register the Waituna project with a credit standards agency
- Completing baseline assessments and establish a monitoring framework for project sites
- Implementing a consolidated maintenance contract for weed control and planting for project sites
- Participating in a study being led by The Nature Conservancy that is investigating how voluntary carbon markets might support and finance peatland restoration as part of an integrated land use system in New Zealand
- Developing a plan for Lower Waituna Creek to address streambank erosion below White Pine Road
- Continuing to support landowner efforts to improve water quality and biodiversity
- Continuing to improve the Trust's engagement and communication with stakeholders and the community.

Ngā Mihi – Acknowledgements

The Trust extends its gratitude to Te Rūnaka o Awarua, Ngāi Tahu, Environment Southland, Southland District Council, Fonterra, Department of Conservation, Ministry for the Environment and the many community members, landowners, partners and contractors whose commitment and contributions make this work possible.