NŌ TE AO TŪROA NGĀ RONGOĀ

CHOOSE NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Investing in smart sustainable ideas for resilient, healthy communities and a thriving natural world

Forest & Bird
TE REO O TE TAIAO
Giving Nature a Voice

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WHY INVEST IN NATURE?

The towering Kaimai Mamaku native forest in the Bay of Plenty is a lived example of a nature-based solution in action. Led by the Manaaki Kaimai Mamaku Trust, the landscape-scale restoration covers 260,000ha of podocarp forest, salt marshes, wetlands, and lowland rivers. It is supported by iwi, hapū, councils, and communities.

The annual value of the ecosystem services provided by the Kaimai Mamaku restoration area was estimated at $568 million (about $2,180 per hectare) in May 2025. These essential services include flood regulation, water supply, pollination, and recreation.

Investing in nature-based solutions can help communities become more resilient and adapt to climate impacts, including severe weather events, flooding, landslides, wildfires, coastal inundation, and biodiversity collapse.

FOREST & BIRD ASKS

Forest & Bird is calling on councils, the government, and private landowners to urgently accelerate the delivery of nature-based solutions. We'd like to see the government establish a $300 million national contestable fund, similar to the successful Jobs for Nature programme, and make it available to councils, iwi, community groups, and private landowners throughout the country. We encourage councils to increase their investment in nature-based solutions and ensure they are prioritised in regional policy statements and in regional, district, and long-term plans. If we look after nature, it will look after us.

WHAT IS A NATURE-BASED SOLUTION?

Nature-based solutions are defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as actions that protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems to address societal challenges while benefiting human wellbeing and biodiversity.

MOUNTAINS AND FORESTS

PROBLEM Intense rainfall causes landslides, soil loss, erosion.

SOLUTION Restore native forests and shrublands with native planting, weeding, and pest control to stabilise soils, slow water run-off, and store carbon.

PROBLEM Forest wildfires lead to loss of life and essential infrastructure.

SOLUTION Replace pine plantations with more fire-resistant native forests. Restore wetlands to create natural wildfire breaks and buffer zones.

RIVERS AND STREAMS

PROBLEM Flooding of residential and farmed areas causes risk to life and loss of assets.

SOLUTION Make room for rivers by restoring natural flood plains. Restore wetlands and plant native species to absorb floodwaters and filter run-off.

PROBLEM Drought and over-extraction risks water supply.

SOLUTION Sustainably manage catchments from mountains to sea to restore natural water flow. Restore wetlands and plant native species to slow water evaporation.

REASONS TO CHOOSE NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

1. They protect built infrastructure with multiple co-benefits for communities and nature. No negative consequences.
2. They align with natural ecosystem processes and use nature's innate capacity to restore itself. Don't require intense human intervention.
3. They are adaptable to New Zealand conditions. Can be co-designed with mātauranga Māori. No harm to native habitats.

FARMLAND

PROBLEM Removal of indigenous vegetation leads to landslides, erosion, water pollution.

SOLUTION Restore waterway margins, fence remnant native bush, plant natives, manage pests, and carry out browsing mammal control to stabilise vulnerable hillsides.

PROBLEM Flooding or drought leads to loss of assets, crop yield reduction, and business disruption.

SOLUTION Rewet and restore drained wetlands, plant native bush, and use restorative farming techniques to improve climate resilience and slow water run-off.

CITIES AND TOWNS

PROBLEM Intense rainfall causes flooding and stormwater run-off.

SOLUTION Make space for water to flood safely, daylight streams, use porous surfaces. Construct urban wetlands, bioswales, and rain gardens to capture and filter stormwater run-off.

PROBLEM Urban heat islands lead to heat stress for people and nature.

SOLUTION Expand green spaces in and around cities with native plantings, and create urban forests, suburban canopies, and living roofs.

COASTS AND OCEANS

PROBLEM Rising sea levels, storm surges, and coastal erosion cause loss of land, livelihoods, and assets.

SOLUTION Restore coastal dunes, wetlands, and rocky reefs to buffer coasts and protect communities.

PROBLEM Degraded coastal ecosystems are leaving communities vulnerable to flooding.

SOLUTION Restore mangroves, seagrass meadows, and salt marshes to capture blue carbon, protect infrastructure, and boost biodiversity.

AUCKLAND

ROOM FOR RIVERS

By investing in nature-based solutions, Auckland Council is taking significant steps to protect Tāmaki Makaurau residents and businesses from the future impacts of climate change while boosting biodiversity and fostering community wellbeing. Following devastating floods in early 2023, it is building a blue-green network of waterways and parks that will give stormwater space to flow and help reduce flooding where people live. In April 2025, the first sod was turned on the Te Ararata Creek Flood Resilience Project, in Māngere, one of two inaugural projects under Auckland Council's $2bn Making Space for Water programme, co-funded by central government.

Inundated homes, Māngere, 2023. 📷 Auckland Council

CHRISTCHURCH

EVERY WETLAND COUNTS

During torrential rain, Te Kuru's extensive wetlands play a critical role in Ōtautahi Christchurch's flood management system. They capture, store, and treat sediment-laden stormwater, channelling it away from surrounding neighbourhoods, reducing the risk of flooding. Called Te Kuru after the name historically used by mana whenua to refer to the area, construction of the $50m stormwater facility was completed in October 2024. This welcoming 109ha green urban space features large areas of native plantings, including 150,000 trees and 650,000 plants. There are also 11km of shared recreational paths, including bridges, for walkers, runners, and cyclists.

Te Kuru. 📷 Christchurch City Council

Coastcare Waikato. 📷 Stacey Hill

CARING FOR COASTS

Healthy dunes act as a natural buffer between the ocean and the land. By working together to restore our beaches and coastal wetlands, we are preserving their beauty, bringing back biodiversity, and laying the foundations for a resilient future for people and wildlife.

Restored native forest. 📷 Tahi

NATIVE FORESTS FOR CLIMATE

Thriving native forests store carbon, stabilise soils, and slow water run-off, protecting downstream communities from flooding. Browsing mammal and predator control leads to ecological and cultural revitalisation while supporting Aotearoa New Zealand's nature-based economy.

Te Kūkūwai o Toa. 📷 Rob Suisted

GREENING URBAN SPACES

Te Kūkūwai o Toa is a constructed urban wetland in Porirua, north of Wellington. It treats stormwater run-off from 40ha of commercial and residential areas, reducing flooding and acting as a natural filtration system protecting Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour from pollution.