

2025 IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT PLAN 2026



RUAMAHANGA
RESTORATION TRUST



TRUSTEES STATEMENT

One of the highlights of 2025 was being recognised as a finalist in the Wairarapa Awards in the Not-for-Profit category. This recognition raised awareness of our work and reinforced our role as a valued contributor to the local community.

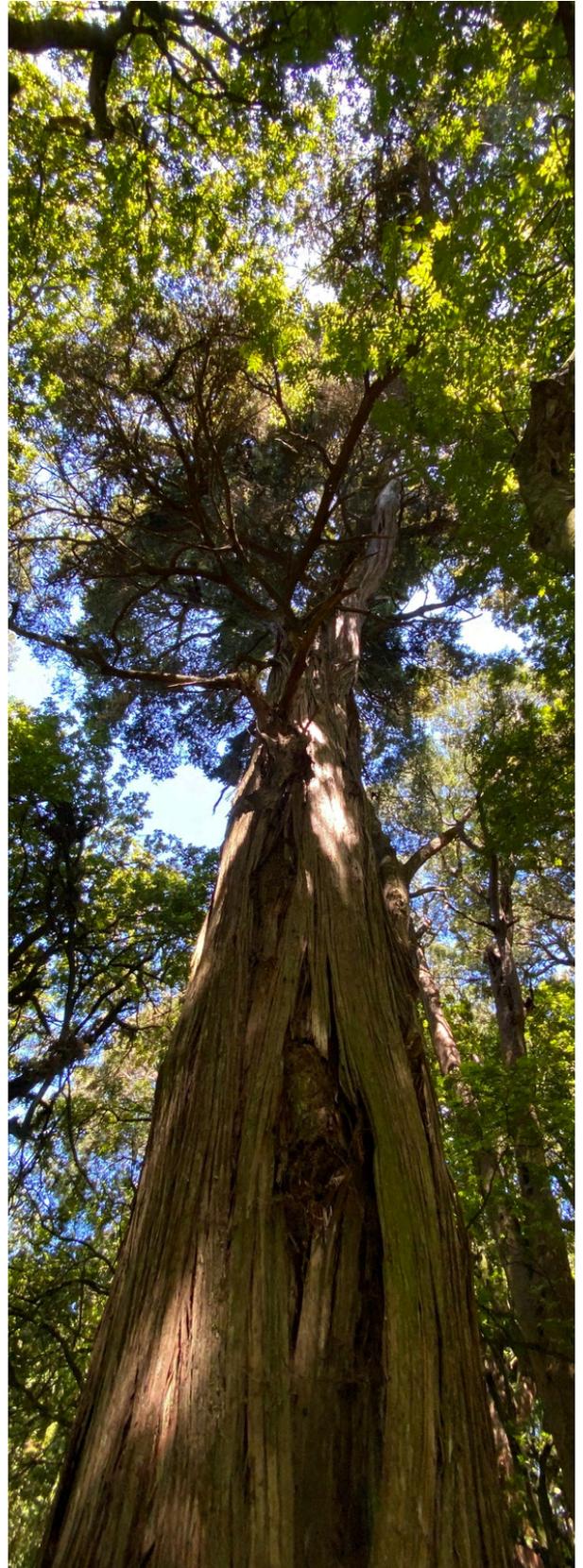
Although fewer schools took up our offer of free native plants, nine participating schools planted just under 2,000 trees. SCHOOLS BEHIND OUR RIVER continues to support teachers and students with Tracking & Trapping workshops, Noticing Nature workshops, and access to two House of Science kits – valuable learning opportunities that many schools could not otherwise afford.

The Trust also fully-funded a visit to the Wairarapa by naturalist and educator Ruud Kleinpaste. Ruud visited six schools and appeared in a film about the Ruamāhanga.

Building on our support for community plantings across several QEII National Covenant sites, we launched the UPPER REACHES project. This initiative delivers integrated ecological weed control, predator trapping, and native planting across sites of high ecological value. Designed as a long-term programme, UPPER REACHES will continue to expand in both reach and ecological impact over the coming years.

Thanks to your support, we look forward to continuing this important work in 2026.

Chris Morrison (Chairman)
Michael Birch
Campbell McLean





ABOUT US

Established as a charitable trust in 2019, the Ruamahanga Restoration Trust is governed by its three founding Trustees: Chris Morrison (Chair), Campbell McLean, and Michael Birch.

Campbell McLean manages fundraising and communications, and Michael Birch provides local support and provides website development and maintenance. Karin Stillberg, in her role as part-time Environmental Education Lead, manages liaison with schools, community groups, and collaboration partners. Local QEII Regional Representative Trevor Thompson provides advice and support for restoration plantings, ecological weed control, and predator trapping.

MISSION

The Trust remains committed to promoting the restoration and protection of waterways and ecosystems that support indigenous flora and fauna within the Ruamāhanga catchment.

This is achieved by providing schools with native plants, non-curricular educational activities, and practical learning materials that encourage students to respect and protect their local environment and biodiversity.

The Trust also supports rural landowners and community groups through the provision of native plants and by promoting awareness of the need to protect and restore indigenous flora and fauna along the length of the Ruamāhanga River.

“*The Ruamahanga Restoration Trust makes a vital contribution to Wairarapa through environmental restoration, education, and a strong focus on awa and ecosystem health.*

The team’s efforts unite community, science, and care for the land, evident in projects like planting trees and fostering sustainable environmental practices.

Judges recognised visionary leadership, partnership building, and inspiring future plans to expand awareness and restore the river for generations to come.”

**Business Wairarapa
The Wairarapa Awards
2025**

Not-For-Profit Finalist





2025: FUNDING DELIVERABLES

1



Part-time Environmental Education Lead

1,990



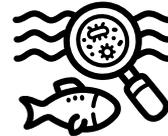
Gifted 1990 native plants gifted to 9 schools

1



Part-time Ecological Restoration Support

2



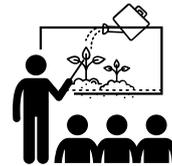
Sponsored two House of Science Kits

1



Part-time Mātauranga Māori Educator

23



Engaged with 23 schools

5



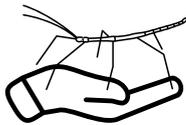
Delivered 5 multi-school workshops

20



Delivered predator tracking gear to 20 schools

6



Funded Ruud Kleinpaste to visit 6 schools

3



Produced 3 educational videos

19



Awarded 19 Conservation Award certificates

2,500



Planted 2,500 native plants on 4 QE2 covenants

11



Supplied 21 Predator Traps to 11 schools

790



Contributed over 790 volunteer hours

CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



RESTORATION PROJECTS

in 2025, students and community volunteers planted close to **3000 native trees** across four QEII National Covenant sites, in addition to several school properties and one council reserve.

The Trust successfully applied to Trees That Count for 1,000 native trees for the **Hidden Lakes** site adjoining the Ruamāhanga River near Ōpaki. In addition, a further 500 plants were planted at the same location in over several school planting days. Hidden Lakes, which is a privately owned property that includes a QEII National Trust covenant, has become one of our key restoration sites, and is a place of historical and cultural significance for local iwi.



The Trust also supported volunteers for the South Wairarapa Veterinary Services restoration planting day by providing 500 native plants for the **Ahiaruhe QEII** site.

Other non-school sites that received plants in 2025 included **Solway Showgrounds QEII** and **Waihinga QEII** block on the outskirts of Martinborough. The Trustees along with several volunteers also returned to **Percy Reserve** for a third year, planting 70 native trees and shrubs on a riparian margin of the Ruamāhanga River close to Masterton.



South Wairarapa Veterinary Services volunteers at the Ahiaruhe QEII site.

UPPER REACHES - BIODIVERSITY CORRIDORS

The Upper Reaches project was created with the long term aim to identify and protect resilient conservation zones along the Ruamāhanga River

The Trust has launched a short term achievable goal introducing a planned programme of predator control, ecological weed control, biodiversity assessment, and restoration plantings on a number of QEII blocks and forest remnant sites along the upper reaches of the Ruamāhanga River, including a Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) site at Dunvegan Station

This work includes recording rare plants and native bird species, repairing canopy gaps, creating edge vegetation, allowing native plants to have a secure seed production base, and reintroducing plant species that play a key role in the area's ecosystem.

In 2025, with the help and guidance of Trevor Thompson, the Trust began work on six key sites identified as having significant ecological value, including the well-known Hidden Lakes,



The Trust plans to continue this work in 2026, carrying out quality pest control targeting rats and possums over the entire area, controlling ecological weed species in the planting area, identifying and protecting rare flora, and planting appropriate species for the area over time with the aim of producing closed canopies capable of regenerating naturally .

**IN TOUCH
WITH
NATURE**



SCHOOLS BEHIND OUR RIVER

As our long-term signature project, SCHOOLS BEHIND OUR RIVER continued to expand its reach and effectiveness throughout the school year. In 2025, the Trust engaged with 23 local schools providing a combination of native plants, Predator Trapping workshops and equipment, Noticing Nature workshops, a Teacher workshop, conservation awards, planning for future restoration work, and outdoor classroom experiences with Ruud Kleinpaste.

RESTORATION PLANTINGS

Two groups of students from **Chanel College** between them planted 560 native trees at Hidden Lakes.

This was followed by another two groups from **Douglas Park School** who together planted a further 500 trees at Hidden Lakes.

Lakeview School received 80 plants for the council reserve wetland located on their school boundary

Enviro Team students at **Fernridge School** continued previous years work rewilding their school grounds, while **Solway Primary School** students returned to their favourite QEII site at the nearby Solway Showgrounds to plant 75 native trees.

Featherston School students returned to the Waihinga QEII block to plant 50 trees, while students from **Ōpaki School** returned to their favourite KNE site at Dunvegan Station to plant 155 trees.

Masterton Intermediate School continued their good work planting 200 natives along the Kuripuni Stream that runs alongside the school grounds.

Newcomers to our program, the **Tūranga Rau** (Rangitāne school) planted 50 trees on school grounds..





LEARNING RESOURCES & WORKSHOPS

In 2025, the Ruamahanga Restoration Trust added a new program 'Mātauranga and Climate Change' with Joseph Potangaroa. These free sessions designed for use by local schools include a strong emphasis on local iwi knowledge of the river and discussions around protecting biodiversity that is unique to the Wairarapa.

Support and funding for these resources allows schools to save on costs, supports teachers, and provides students with access to fun, practical, materials that engages their curiosity for outdoor learning and environmental conservation.



PREDATOR TRAPPING WORKSHOPS

IN COLLABORATION WITH **ENVIROSCHOOLS WAIRARAPA** THESE PREDATOR AWARENESS WORKSHOPS INCLUDE FREE TRACKING RESOURCES SUCH AS INK CARDS ALONG WITH FREE TRAPS FOR SCHOOLS



NOTICING NATURE WORKSHOPS

IN COLLABORATION WITH **ENVIROSCHOOLS WAIRARAPA** AND **REINO GRUNDLING** THESE WORKSHOPS INCLUDED AN INTRODUCTION TO INDIGENOUS SKINKS AND GECKOS LIVING IN LOCAL HABITATS



MĀTAURANGA AND CLIMATE CHANGE

IN COLLABORATION WITH **POTANGAROA EDUCATION** AND **ENVIROSCHOOLS WAIRARAPA** THESE HALF-DAY SESSIONS RAISE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF LOCAL IWI KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OUR RIVERS, LAND, AND INDIGENOUS FLORA AND FAUNA



HOUSE OF SCIENCE KITS

IN COLLABORATION WITH **HOUSE OF SCIENCE WAIRARAPA** THIS ANNUAL SPONSORSHIP INCLUDES ONE **WATER ANALYSIS KIT** AND ONE **FOREST HEALTH KIT** SHARED BETWEEN PRIMARY SCHOOLS ACROSS THE WAIRARAPA

EXPLORING THE OUTDOORS



In 2025, the Trust focused on funding a week-long visit to the Wairarapa by the renowned naturalist and entomologist **Ruud Kleinpaste AKA “The Bugman”**. Ruud engaged with six schools, two of which included visits to Waihinga and Dunvegan Station.



A key part of our education programme is service — encouraging our students to understand and actively contribute to our community. Participating in the planting and restoration of significant waterways, particularly the culturally significant Hidden Lakes area, is a meaningful and authentic way for our students to live this value.

Through this partnership, our students will not only be giving back to an area that enhances their outdoor learning but the school will also have the unique experience of seeing the positive, long-term impact of their work over the years to come.

*The environmental knowledge and planting skills our students gain through the **Schools Behind Our River** programme will be invaluable and will strengthen their ongoing service work.*

This project also offers rich links to traditional curriculum learning. Students will deepen their understanding of plant life cycles, environmental conditions needed for growth, sustainability practices, and ecosystems.

Shaun Hakness
Deputy Principal
Douglas Park School



EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

The Trust continued filming the UNDERSTANDING NATURE video series in 2025 interviewing students from **Rathkeale College** and **Chanel College**.

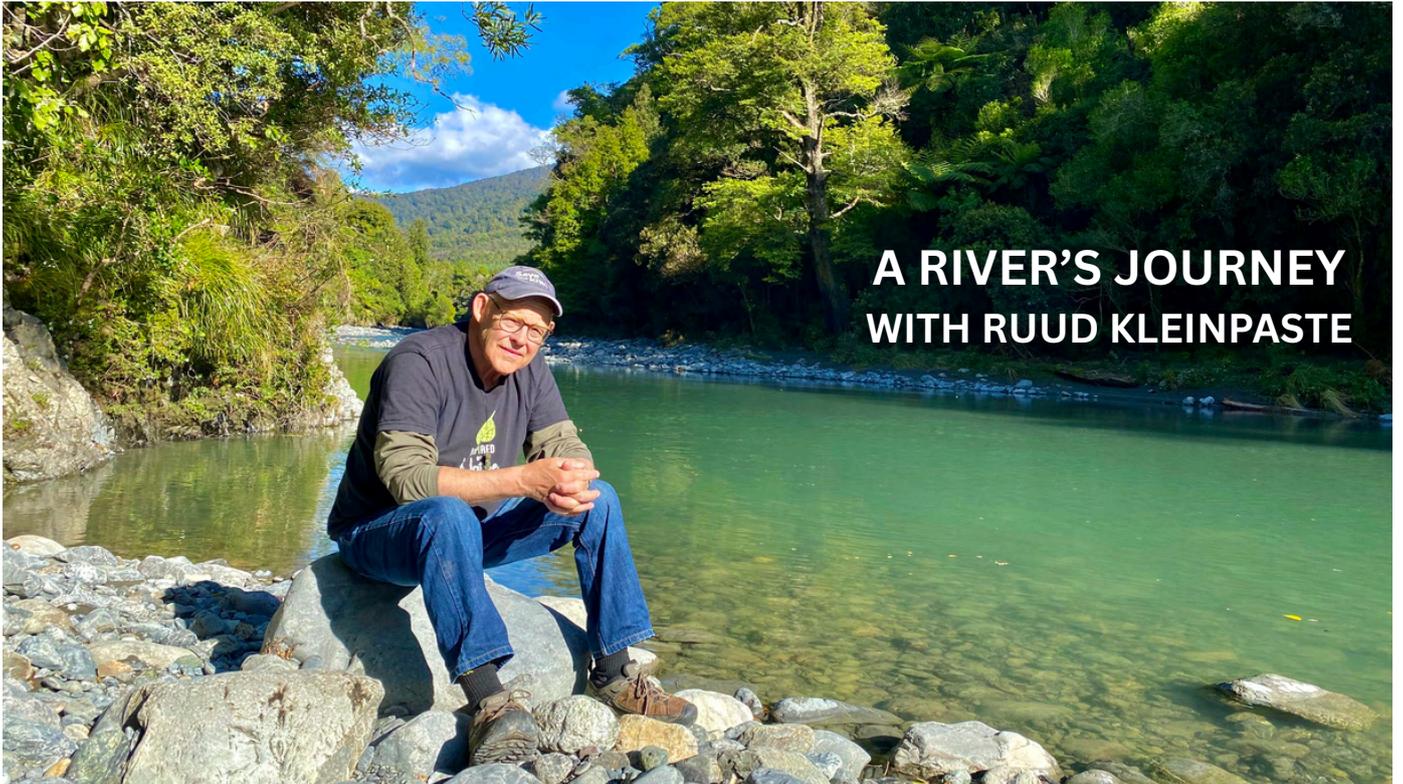
Now in its third year of production, the interviews with students from across the Wairarapa will eventually be edited into a feature-length documentary examining how youth perceive and relate to their environment and the possible impact that climate change may have on their futures and communities.

In 2025, the New Zealand National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**) approved a grant in support of the series, which underscores the role and importance of what the Trust is recording.



The Trust has also filmed a documentary about the Ruamāhanga River presented by Ruud Kleinpaste. Filmed over three days, **A RIVER'S JOURNEY** explores how all living things, including forests, wetlands, farms, and communities, are all interconnected with the life of the river.

The film will be entered into wildlife and nature film festivals and premiered at the Wairarapa Film Festival before its release to the public, freely available for educational use.



CONSERVATION AWARDS

The Trust issued 19 hand-signed certificates for students who received the Conservation Award for Environmental Leadership certificates in 2025. The certificates are awarded to students who “best demonstrate principles of kaitiakitanga and leadership skills in environmental conservation, restoration, or innovation within their school and community”.



Among the recipients were **Delarah Aktas** (top) at Kuranui College and **Wyatt Backhouse** (below) at Wairarapa College.



Toitū te marae ō Tāne, Toitū te marae o Tangaroa, Toitū te tangata.
 If the forest and the ocean are strong, so too are the people.

“ One of the most impactful aspects of our collaboration has been the **Conservation Award** introduced by the Trust. This initiative recognises and celebrates student involvement in environmental stewardship, fostering a strong sense of responsibility and pride. It has become a powerful motivator, encouraging students to take an active role in caring for their natural surroundings. We have been involved in a planting programme at the Solway Showgrounds and this has given our tamariki a link to our wider community, which we hope to continue this year.

Through their work, the **Ruamahanga Restoration Trust** is helping to build children's awareness of environmental issues and nurturing a deep appreciation for nature. Their hands-on approach engages students in meaningful learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom, inspiring a lifelong respect for the environment.

We wholeheartedly support the ongoing work of the Ruamahanga Restoration Trust and commend their dedication to education, sustainability, and community enrichment. Their contributions have made a lasting and positive impact on our school, and we look forward to continuing this valuable relationship.

Steve Hornby
Deputy Principal
Solway School

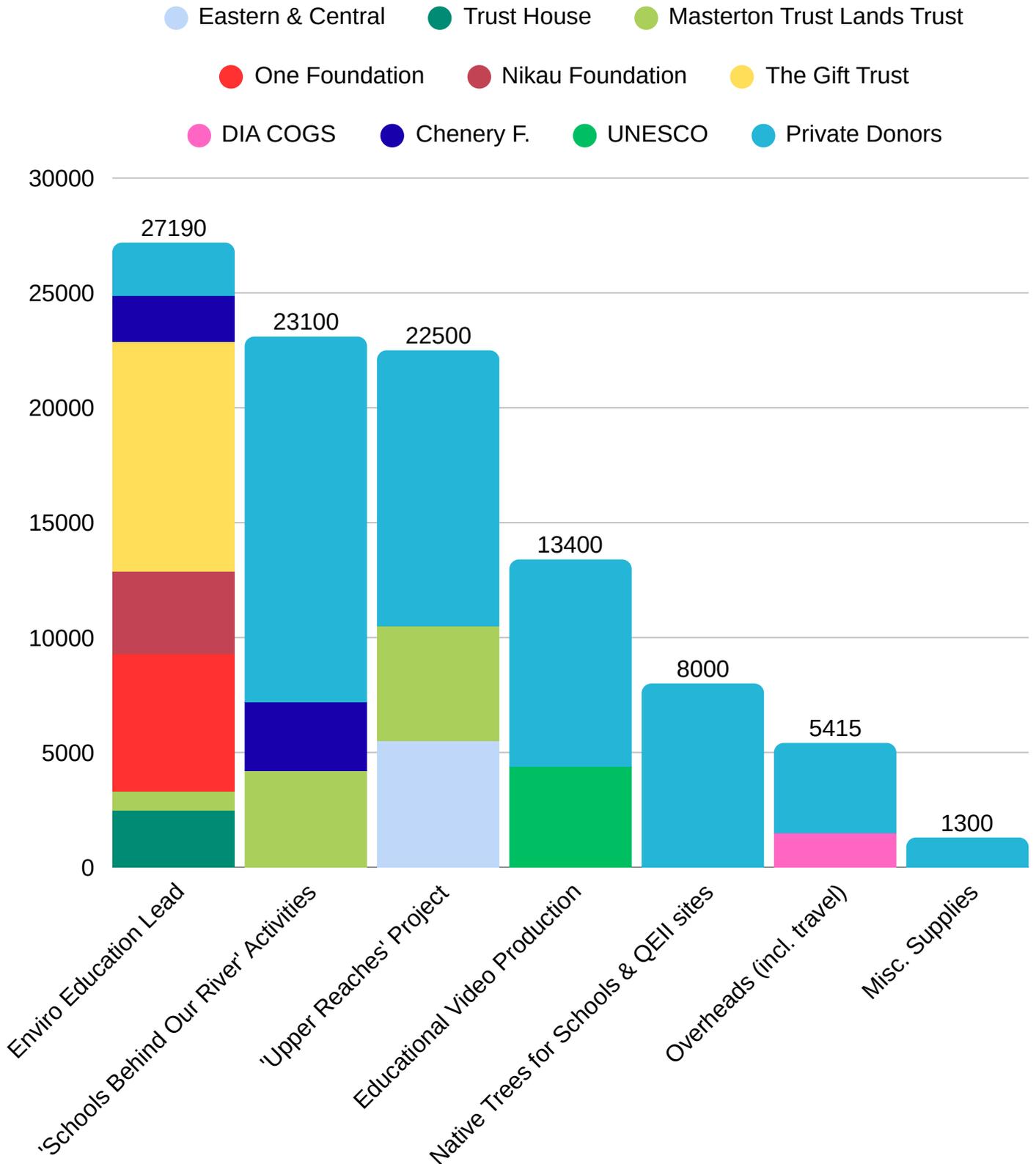


**EXPLORING
THE GREAT
OUTDOORS**



2025 FUNDING IMPACT

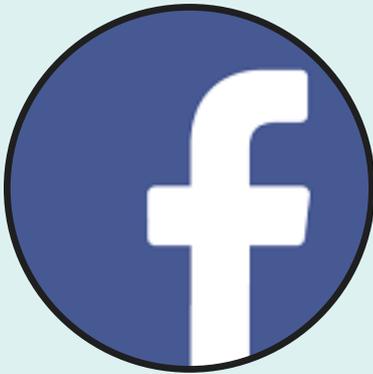
Allocation of funding sources for the 2025 school calendar year.



OUR SOCIAL MEDIA : 2025

TWITTER X

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025
FOLLOWERS 147



FACEBOOK

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025
FOLLOWERS 729

INSTAGRAM

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025
FOLLOWERS 331



YOUTUBE

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025
VIEWS 810 SUBSCRIBERS 17

PROJECT PLAN: 2026

1. SCHOOLS BEHIND OUR RIVER: 2026

The part-time role of **Environmental Education Lead** remains key to the Trust's signature project's reach, effectiveness, and growth. Equally important is the need for ongoing funding support toward resources and materials for our outdoor learning kits, predator traps, native plants, school workshops, and field trips.

Funding Needs for 2026

Predator Control - Tracking & Trapping

- Ink tracking cards & chew cards
- Trapping equipment & baits
- Trapping expert for school sessions

Materials and Resources for Schools

- Books
- Water testing and eDNA sampling kits
- Development of activities and other resources
- Expert for school sessions

Mātauranga & Climate Change with Joe Potangaroa

- Half-day school workshops
- Special sites – classroom field trips & expenses

Ruud Kleinpaste

- Half-day school workshops
- Classroom field trips
- Travel & expenses

Native Trees & Seed Propagation

- Locally eco-sourced native plants
- Seed trays & equipment
- Production of how-to video
- Seed propagation & planting expert for workshops

3D Catchment model

- Educational resource for schools and community
- Collaboration with Fab Lab Masterton

Environmental Education Lead

- Part-time wages & travel expenses



2. UPPER REACHES PROJECT: 2026

Our **UPPER REACHES PROJECT** enters its second year in line with our long-term vision to create and protect resilient ecological conservation zones along the Ruamāhanga River.

This ongoing project includes a program of predator control, ecological weed control, and restoration plantings on QE2 blocks and forest remnant sites along the Ruamāhanga River extending from Mt Bruce downriver as far as Rathkeale College; repairing canopy gaps, creating edge vegetation, allowing native plants to have a secure seed production base, and reintroducing plant species that play an important role in the area's ecosystem.

In addition to acting as a vital go-between with landowners, the part-time **Ecological Restoration Adviser** role is central to the project's success – providing hands-on expertise.

Funding Needs for 2026

Predator Control - Tracking & Trapping

- Trapping equipment & baits
- Trail cameras
- Installation, maintenance, data management

Ecological Weed Control

- Identify and poison invasive weeds
- Monitor and maintain

Restoration Plantings

- Purchase, supply & delivery of plants
- Safety and Supervision
- Release & management

Site Management

- Site visits & hours attended
- Materials & expenses



3. RESTORATION PLANTINGS: 2026

The Trust will continue to support schools, QEII National Covenant sites, rural landowners, and local councils by supplying and planting eco-sourced native trees.

Funding Needs for 2026

Native Plants

- Purchases (3,000-5,000 plants)
- Delivery costs (helicopter slingwork for Hidden Lakes)
- Additional planting labour costs (if required)
- Plant protectors & materials
- Weed control & release (labour, if required)



4. VIDEO PRODUCTION: 2026

In 2026, the Trust will continue to produce our long-running video series **UNDERSTANDING NATURE**. Now in its fourth year, the series has already featured students from five schools – all talking openly about their understanding of what Nature means to them and how climate change may affect their future.

This is an important series for all New Zealanders, and for this reason has been partially supported by UNESCO New Zealand Commission, but ongoing financial support is required.

The Trust also needs funding to help complete post-production of **A RIVER'S JOURNEY**, which will be submitted for entry to a number of international film festivals and hopefully receive a special screening at Parliament in 2026.



*“The river teaches us resilience, reciprocity, and respect.
It’s time we listened.”*

Ruud Kleinpaste

6. COLLABORATION

The Trustees acknowledge that we are stronger when we work together with others.

Our collaboration partnerships and community engagement includes engagement with many of the following:

- Enviroschools Wairarapa
- Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre
- Ruamahanga Farm Foundation
- Queen Elizabeth II National Trust
- House of Science
- Potangaroa Education
- Ruud Kleinpaste
- Greater Wellington Regional Council
- Kahungunu ki Wairarapa
- Sam Ludden
- Mountains To Sea Conservation Trust
- Wairarapa Pūkaha to Kawakawa (WaiP2K)
- Wairarapa Catchment Collective
- Rangitāne o Wairarapa
- Forest & Bird
- Sustainable Wairarapa
- Norfolk Nursery
- Fab Lab Masterton
- Predator Free Masterton
- Waiawa Botanicals



2026 AND BEYOND

The Ruamahanga Restoration Trust will continue to develop working relationships with Greater Wellington Regional Council, iwi, like-minded community groups, and rural landowners with the aim to establish a network of ecological restoration sites along the Ruamahanga River.

Engaging and including school students will continue as a means to inspire a new generation of environmental guardians located throughout the Wairarapa.

In 2026, the Trust will launch special screenings of A RIVER'S JOURNEY thereby raising greater awareness of the river and the ecological need to protect local biodiversity and indigenous flora and fauna. This will include issuing media releases and granting interviews.

Key to all of our goals and vision will be our engagement and partnership with local iwi and other collaborative partners, including funding supporters.

The Trustees remain forever grateful for the faith and trust shown by supportive community funders and other benefactors who have kindly contributed towards our aims and purpose.





**RUAMAHANGA
RESTORATION TRUST**

TRUSTEES

Michael Birch
Campbell McLean
Christopher Morrison MNZM (Chairman)

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION LEAD

Karin Stillberg

RESTORATION CONSULTANT

Trevor Thompson

MATUARANGA MĀORI CONSULTANT

Joseph Potangaroa

ADVISORY TEAM

Grant Harper
Bruce Logan

SUPPORTING PARTNERS 2025

Masterton Trust House
Masterton Trust Lands Trust
Eastern & Central Community Trust
Nikau Foundation
One Foundation
Lloyd Morrison Trust
The Gift Trust
Tai Shan Foundation
BioMe Trust
The Chenery Memorial Trust
Greater Wellington Regional Council
Trees That Count
Gibson Sheat Lawyers
Windrush Design
Sellar & Sellar Chartered Accountancy
SWV Productions

Registered Charity No. CC56547

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