

LIVING

WATER

Dairy and freshwater thriving together

## Living Water FAQs April 2021

### What is Living Water?

Living Water is a 10 year, \$20 million partnership between the Department of Conservation (DoC) and Fonterra. We're trialling tools, methods and approaches to enable farming, freshwater and healthy ecosystems to thrive side-by-side. The partnership began in 2013.

We're working with farmers, scientists, councils, mana whenua and communities to design and test solutions to improve freshwater quality, and then sharing the results of our trials and research on our website.

### What is the problem?

Dairy farming is central to New Zealand's economy, but how we are farming is having an impact on our lowland freshwater ecosystems. Our streams, lakes, rivers, lagoons and coastal estuaries are being impacted by high levels of nutrients, sediment, effluent and other pollutants. Freshwater ecosystems have been reduced and degraded. This needs to change because healthy water is critical for our economic development and New Zealanders expect to be able to swim, fish and gather kai in our lakes, rivers and streams. Our streams, lakes, rivers, lagoons and coastal estuaries are being impacted by high levels of nutrients, sediment, effluent and other pollutants. Freshwater ecosystems have been reduced and degraded. We need to change this because water is a key part of our national identity and New Zealanders expect to be able to swim, fish and gather kai in our waterbodies.

### How is Living Water trying to fix the problem?

Living Water selected five catchments across New Zealand that presented a variety of challenges as well as being significant dairying regions with ecological and cultural significance. Our initial focus was establishing relationships, investigating and assessing local challenges, and piloting projects to determine what solutions will significantly reduce farming impacts on freshwater and improve ecosystem resilience.

### Where are these five catchments?

**Wairua River, Northland** flows into the Kaipara Harbour which is a significant nursery ground for commercial and recreational fisheries. The harbour is New Zealand's largest estuarine ecosystem and its sand dunes, seagrass, freshwater and estuarine wetland ecosystems are some of the rarest in New Zealand.

**Pūkoro-koro-Miranda, Hauraki** is internationally protected under the Ramsar Convention. It is home to around 40 different types of birds including the godwit – a migratory bird that travels from Miranda to Siberia each year. It also includes one of the world's finest examples of a rare coastal land form, a chenier plain made up of a bank of shells.

**Areare, Ruatuna and Rotomanūka Peat Lakes, Waikato** are part of a unique collection of peat lakes in the heart of Waikato dairy country. They're of scientific interest and important both culturally and spiritually.

**Ararira-LII River, Canterbury** flows into Te Waihora-Lake Ellesmere, New Zealand's fifth-largest lake and its largest coastal lagoon. The lake has 166 species of birds, a number of wildlife reserves, a large tuna (eel) fishery and a diverse range of other native fish.

**Waituna Lagoon, Southland** was the first site in New Zealand to be named a Ramsar site, recognising it as a wetland of international importance. It is home to over 80 bird species (including the threatened Australasian bittern) and is part of the 20,000 hectare Awarua-Waituna catchment that includes the coastal lagoon, extensive peat lands, swamps, and freshwater streams.



### **What's happening in each catchment?**

Living Water is designing and trialling a number of tools and approaches with farmers in each catchment. The focus is on testing tools that reduce contaminants, increase waterway health and recognise cultural values. This gives farmers an assurance that the solutions we recommend will improve their farming footprint and target the right problem in the right place with the right tool. Living Water is also looking at how achieve environmental outcomes at a catchment wide scale.

### **How are you tracking improvements?**

We are measuring the progress in each catchment by monitoring water quality and biodiversity, partnering with research institutes and consultants, and enabling social changes and greater understanding of wider issues. Living Water is 'open source', so all the results of our projects and trials are on our website so others can learn from them: [www.livingwater.net.nz](http://www.livingwater.net.nz)

### **Who's paying for Living Water?**

Along with Fonterra's investment of approximately \$2 million per year, DoC is also investing up to \$500,000 per year. Work is occurring on Fonterra farms, public conservation land, council land, and on other land uses (such as non-Fonterra dairy farms, deer, lifestyle, horticulture, sheep and beef farms).

### **Why is public money being spent on private land, and Fonterra money spent outside their farms?**

Living Water is demonstrating a catchment-based approach, which is internationally agreed good practice for delivering biodiversity and water quality improvement outcomes. Many rural catchments are characterised by forestry, protected native bush, lifestyle, and sheep and beef farms in the upper catchment with dairy on the flatlands. Together, Fonterra farmers and DoC manage almost 40 % of New Zealand's land area. The catchment approach requires working on private land and engaging and supporting non-Fonterra farmers.

### **What happens at the end of the 10 years?**

Living Water lessons and solutions for freshwater management on farms are already being shared with Fonterra's farmers through the Tiaki Sustainable Dairying Programme, that enables farmers to tap into specialised regional knowledge, expertise and services to support best practice farm management. In addition, successful tools and learnings will be embedded into Fonterra's Sustainable Catchments programme and DoC's operations, and shared with the agriculture industry, land managers, central and local government, iwi and communities.



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