

# Introducing



CONNECTION  
TATAI KI TE WAI



Mountains To Sea  
Conservation Trust  
Nga Maunga ki te Moana

‘Wai Connection – Tatai Ki Te Wai’ is a catchment community engagement project offering on-the-ground support to assist with catchment issues through tailored change at source. We work to build community involvement, equity, and a shared vision of ecological sustainability as the basis of a healthy community.

The project helps empower communities through providing knowledge, tools and (most importantly) expert support to help identify and solve issues in their local catchment. We’ll connect people with their waterway, and promote collaboration between local catchment groups, NGO’s, hapū/iwi, Regional Council, central Government and primary industry working within the catchment – helping deliver the goals of the Government’s *Essential Freshwater (EF)* work package.

‘Wai Connection’ uses the **Mountains to Sea Conservation Trusts (MTSCT) existing (and future) affiliated regional Provider Organisations (MTSPOs) to provide the following ‘Wai Connection’ positions on the ground:**

- » **‘Regional Coordinators’** – Working predominantly with bridging the gaps of communication between council and catchment groups, arranging regional hui to share best practice. Manages ‘Wai Connection’ Catchment Coordinators and Connectors, and ‘National Inanga Spawning Programme’ (NISP) Coordinators. Reports back to MTSCT.
- » **‘Catchment Coordinators’** – Each Coordinator provides direct support to 4–5 catchment groups – through facilitation, restoration planning, advice and admin. They also provide on-the-ground support for groups, and delivery of community-based freshwater monitoring training and inanga spawning surveys.
- » **‘Catchment Connectors’** – Connectors provide wider engagement and training to community catchment groups/landowners at the water’s edge (so to speak) through our existing programmes such as ‘Whitebait Connection’ (WBC) and ‘Experiencing Marine Reserves – Te Kura Moana’ (EMR), NISP, etc.

Regional catchment working groups and national steering groups involving a range of stakeholders will be established

to ensure a coordinated response to resource allocation, and to provide an opportunity for targeted approaches to regional needs. We’ll also tap into the existing network of the NZ Landcare Trust (NZLT) and their programmes (to avoid undue repetition within regions).

‘Wai Connection’ is delivered by MTSPOs regionally throughout New Zealand via a well-defined multi-step project. Nationwide over-arching management support, and scientific and technical support is provided through MTSCT and EOS Ecology. This means there’s a consistent, quality assured approach across the country – while providing flexibility to respond to catchment-specific differences/needs.

One of the key components of ‘Wai Connection’ is supporting and connecting landowners/catchment groups/communities to their local freshwater environment through involvement in citizen science monitoring programmes. The data they collect will help fill knowledge gaps for under-resourced catchments/regions. At a national level we’re working closely with the National Advisory Group on Freshwater Citizen Science (NAG-FCS) to discuss options to create a national online hub, where communities can store and interpret their data, access resources/mapping tools and share their stories. This will build on the framework and learnings from the NIWA Envirolink tool currently being developed to help guide Regional Council’s in using citizen science data.

## Key delivery phases:

### 1. *Essential Freshwater (EF) Summary & Guide*

Provides ‘at a glance’ information about the *EF* work package and its aims to protect and improve freshwater quality and ecosystem health in waterbodies across NZ, to help ‘Wai Connection’ Regional Coordinators/Catchment Coordinators/Catchment Connectors and communities better understand *EF* and what aspects of water quality and habitat may affect catchments around the country. It also includes extra information on how catchments work (i.e., factors affecting water quality and stream health in a catchment), explains other biophysical processes that happen in freshwater systems (to help with overall understanding of these environments), and provides links to all relevant government policy documents, formal guidance and fact sheets.

### 2. *Where best to focus*

Identifying key catchments in each region on which to ‘focus’ our resources. We do this by focusing on Regional Council needs, conversations with partners, and collaboration in the region. We’ll undertake regional workshops and create regional plans that can focus resources in appropriate places.

### 3. *Defining the values*

Providing an overview of essential information about each chosen ‘focus catchment’. This will include a catchment-specific audit of the state of current water quality and ecology (based on current available data, initially focused on Regional Council and LAWA data), as well as talking to catchment groups, iwi/hāpu, and rural decision makers to define the values and opportunities they see in their catchments. This overview will be provided visually in map form, with supporting information if required.

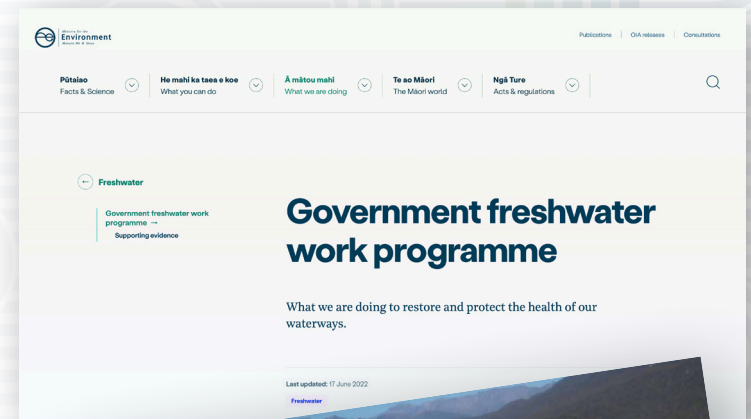
### 4. *Filling knowledge gaps & coordinating action*

Determining the key knowledge gaps for each ‘focus catchment’ and explore ways to fill these gaps by including landowners, community groups, and other science organisations in the process. We’ll support these groups to implement their on-the-ground sampling and subsequent mahi that’s identified to fill these gaps. We’ll also provide ongoing support for knowledge sharing

through the provision of a national online hub, where communities can store and interpret their data, access resources/mapping tools and share their stories. This will help inform decisions around catchment priorities selected specifically to improve the health of catchment waterways and adjacent ecosystems. This is an important part of the process to help build landowner knowledge about the catchments they live in, and supports them in working towards improving waterway health in their area.

### 5. *Making connections & effecting change*

Ongoing support for both MTSP0 coordinators, landowners and community members will be provided via our connection with the NZLT ACE learning programme and the NZLT-MTSC0 co-implemented ‘community of practice’ framework. This also provides access to regional and national freshwater-related events, groups and networks. Supporting landowners and communities to engage with the *EF* work package process and Regional Councils aims to help achieve effective on-the-ground action that provides lasting improvements in freshwater health for the focus catchments.





**What it will look like in action:** Shows the type of activities/successes the MTSCT programmes have currently achieved. These should also be possible with 'Wai Connection' if there is an identified need at the catchment level which contributes toward the implementation of the EF package.

Since 2001, our Mountains to Sea programmes have planted over 132,000 trees along waterways, we engaged over 120,000 people in monitoring their river, we have helped identify and restore over 140 inanga spawning sites, we have taken over 160,000 people snorkelling, delivered over 370 public community guided snorkel and kayak days, guiding a total of over 87,000 through our marine reserves. Information is transferred into the wider community by over 1,000 media articles. Over 284,000 volunteer hours have been contributed. Our annual wananga has attracted the attendance of 700 people. The total reach for our direct engagement is over 350,000 people.

**Mountains To Sea**  
Conservation Trust  
*Nga Maunga ki te Moana*

**Volunteer Fresh Water Monitoring**

**Landowner Engagement & Support**

**MTSCT Wananga**

**Community Engagement**

**School Programmes**

**Freshwater Protected Areas**

**Whitebait Habitat Restoration**

**Community Led & Kaitiaki Actions**

**Restoration Planning & Planting**

**whitebait Connection**  
x-stream about freshwater life

**Clean Cool Clear Creatures Coastline Current**  
**Cover Connections**

**Marine Protected Areas**

**Community Snorkel Days**

**Snorkelling Te Kura Moana**

**Experiencing Marine Reserves**

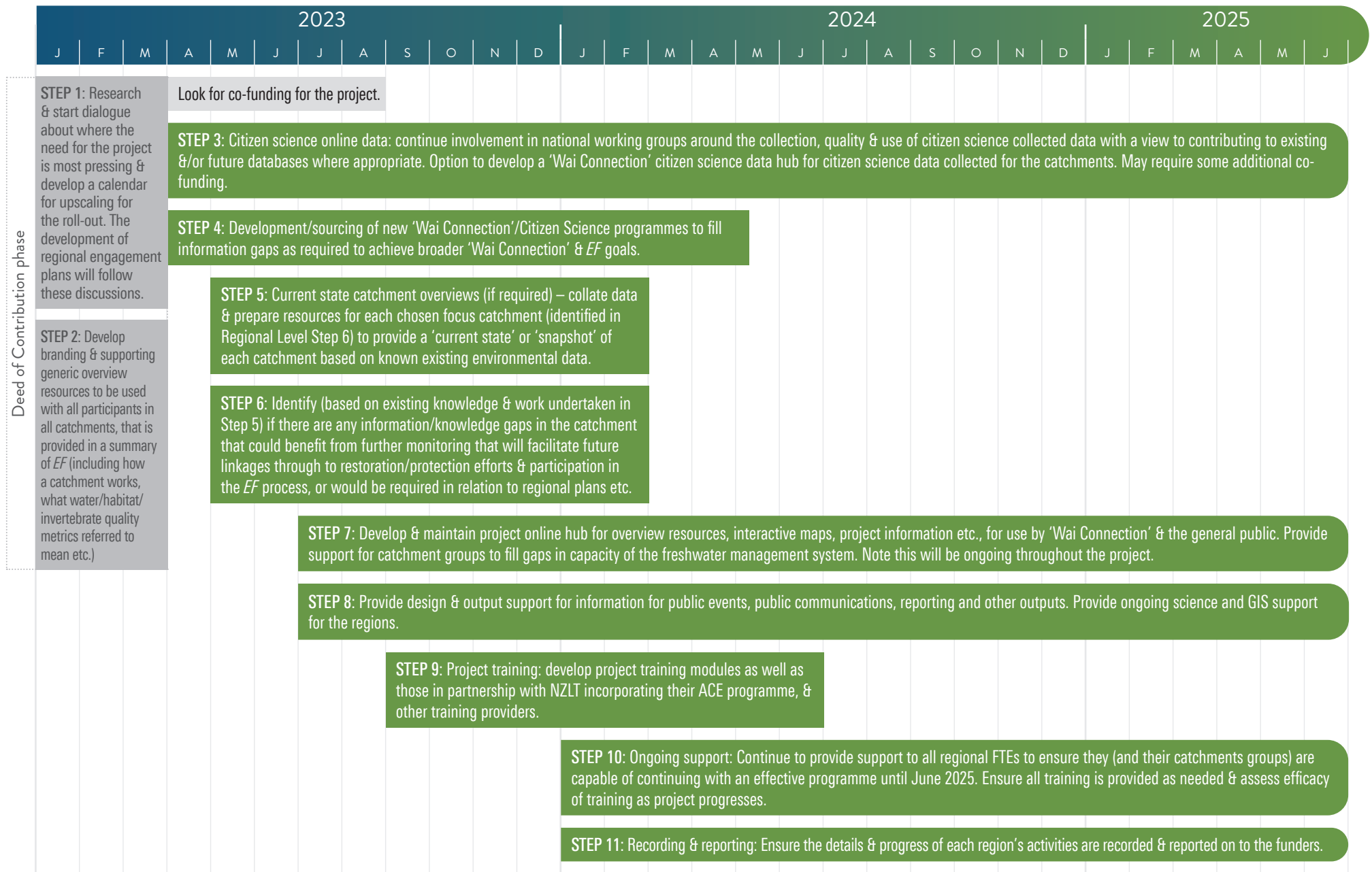
**Whitebait Connection**

**Whakamana te maunga, Whakamana te wai,  
He mauri o nga tangata, Nga mea katoa he pai.**  
*If we look after the water from the mountains to sea,  
it will look after us. it is our life force.*

**EMR**

**Timeline:** Project years are as follows: Year 1: 1 Jan 2023–30 June 2024  
Year 2: 1 July 2024–30 June 2025

### NATIONAL LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION



## REGIONAL LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

