



WATERWAY PROTECTION FUND

and

MAKING SPACE FOR RURAL WATER FUND

Guidelines

2025-2026



Introduction

Auckland Council offers two regional grants for rural landowners and community groups working on a private property larger than 5 hectares to deliver projects that improve water quality and freshwater ecosystems and minimise the impact of flooding.

The **Waterway Protection Fund** (WPF) is an Auckland Council and Franklin Local Board grant programme. WPF supports projects that protect and enhance riparian margins and wetlands.

The **Making Space for Rural Water Fund** (MSWF) is a new Auckland Council grant programme to reduce the impact of flooding to rural private landowners and properties downstream. MSWF supports projects that enhance the efficiency of flood plains to absorb and hold water. It also supports restoration projects that protect and enhance wetlands.

Who can apply?

Funding for 2025/26 is available for rural landowners and catchment groups working on a private property larger than 5 hectares. The following water catchment areas are priority for funding:

- Papakura Stream
- Matakana River
- Āwhitu Catchment
- Ōrere River, and
- Aotea/Great Barrier Island

What are the funding priorities?

For the 2025/26 funding round, the WPF and MSWF will prioritise funding projects within the Papakura Stream, Matakana River, Āwhitu Catchment, Ōrere River, and Aotea/Great Barrier Island.

Additional priority will be given to restoration projects that establish a **10-metre average setback** from streams and rivers, and projects focused on **wetland restoration** to enhance water quality and flood resilience.

A 10-metre riparian setback provides an efficient protective buffer zone between the land and water which delivers far better environmental and flood benefits than a smaller one. It is more effective at filtering out sediment, nutrients, and pollutants before they reach waterways. Dense native planting and groundcover slows runoff, allowing more time for particles to settle and water to soak into the soil. It also creates more space for insects, small animals and birds to thrive. This wider setback also cools and stabilises streams, protects fish habitat, and reduces flood damage to paddocks.

What can I apply for?

Both Funds cover up to 50 percent of the costs for the following activities:

Waterway Protection Fund and Making Space for Rural Water Fund 2025-2026

- Stock exclusion fencing for flood plains¹ (low lying areas and next to streams and rivers), waterways (includes streams, seeps, drains, springs), lakes and wetlands. Fencing can include new, upgraded or moving fences to create larger setbacks
- Alternative water supply for stock previously accessing unfenced waterways
- Site preparation for native planting
- Native, eco-sourced plant supply and planting labour in stock excluded riparian margins, wetlands and flood plains
- Releasing (plant maintenance)
- Fish passage remediation.

Refer to [Minimum Standards](#) below for more information.

What will not be funded?

Both Funds will not provide funding for:

- Any retrospective work completed prior to Auckland Council receiving a signed Funding Agreement
- Projects on public land
- Any form of earthworks
- Fencing or planting which is a condition of current or future resource consent such as subdivision consents, or for gaining transferrable titles
- The project may lead to a conflict of interest for Auckland Council as a consent authority.

Minimum Standards

Fencing Setback

Streams and Rivers: New fencing must have a minimum, average setback of 5-metres from the edge of the waterway.

Flood Plain, Seeps or Wetland: New fencing should follow the natural margins of the area to maximise flood mitigation and enhance water quality and biodiversity outcomes.

To see if your property is in a flood plain, search for property on the [Auckland Council Flood Viewer](#).

Fencing Standards

The minimum standard is permanent fencing (wooden posts) with two electric wires.

Fencing must be tailored to the property to ensure stock exclusion while being appropriate and practical (i.e., flood zone, topography).

Restoration Planting

¹ To see if your property is in a flood plain, search for property on the [Auckland Council Flood Viewer](#).

All plants must be native, eco-sourced and appropriate to the planting area. Eco-sourced plants are grown from seeds collected locally, which ensures they are adapted to the area's climate and soils. This boosts survival and supports local biodiversity. If your funding application is moved to the second stage (refer to section [How to Apply](#) for more information), your assigned land advisor will create a restoration plan with you. The plan will include a plant species list, appropriate site preparation, timings of when planting works should occur, and recommended releasing.

Releasing (controlling weeds post planting to maximise plant survival) is always part of a planting plan. Releasing is done over summer, usually one round of releasing in November/December and another in March/April the following year, for a minimum of two years. Your assigned land advisor will help you work out how to best do this if you are unfamiliar with planting maintenance.

For stream restoration planting information refer to: [Auckland Council Streamside Planting Guide](#)

For restoration information refer to: [Te Haumanu Taiao – read the guide](#)

For wetland restoration and planting information refer to: [Wetland Restoration Guide](#)

How much of my application will Auckland Council and Franklin Local Board fund?

The Funds provide **up to 50 percent** contribution towards your project cost. This helps Auckland Council to maximise the Funds' benefit by providing financial aid to the greatest number of applicants and increasing the extent of projects completed in the Auckland region.

Your 50 percent contribution can include in-kind inputs (such as volunteer or landowner labour), a cash contribution, and/or contributions by other donors. Landowner, related persons, catchment group, and friends and family time working on a funded project can be attributed in the budget as 'in-kind'. In-kind cannot be reimbursed by Auckland Council.

Applicants are encouraged to seek funding from alternative sources, such as Trees that Count and Trees for Survival. *Note that funding from Kaipara Moana Remediation is currently excluded as it shares the same Auckland Council budget.*

GST

- For grant recipients that **are** GST registered, the funded amount and reimbursement payments (up to the value of the approved grant) are GST exclusive.
- For grant recipients that **are not** GST registered, the funded amount and reimbursement payments (up to the value of the approved grant) are GST inclusive.

How to Apply – Applications close 10pm Sunday 27 July 2025

Stage One: Monday 16 June 2025 to Sunday 27 July 2025

Complete and submit the funding application form. Applications are accepted online until **10pm Sunday 27 July 2025** via the [Smarty Grants portal](#). Applications should be accompanied by sufficient supporting information:

- Total project cost budget (a project calculator is provided in the application form), and a description of your contribution
- Bank account details
- Project map showing proposed works

If you require assistance with applying, please email ruralwaterways@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz.

Stage Two: Monday 28 July 2025 to Mid-September 2025

Once the funding round closes, staff will assess all projects and determine which will go to Stage 2. During Stage 2, a land advisor will visit the project site with you and provide a restoration plan and attain accurate quotes from suppliers. Applicants will be notified by 8 August 2025 if their project has progressed to Stage 2.

Stage Three: Mid-September 2025 to Mid-November 2025

Projects will be reviewed and assessed against the funding criteria below. Funding will be awarded and funding agreements sent out. Please don't start your project until you have signed your funding agreement.

Auckland Council's Funding Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed against the criteria outlined below:

- **Environmental benefits:** This includes the level of improved water quality and aquatic ecosystem health, the type and significance of the environment to be protected, the length or size of the flood plain, waterway, wetland or lake, and the total area to be protected or enhanced.

Additionally, assessments will be weighted towards waterway projects that have a 10-metre+ average setback, and wetland restoration projects due to their significant environmental, water quality, and flood reduction benefits.

- **Community benefits:** The extent of community involvement with the project. This might include community planting days, working with not-for-profit groups like Catchment Groups or Trees for Survival, hosting open days, or actively working with neighbours.
- **Feasibility and likelihood of success:** Projects should be practical and feasible. All proposed activities should have a high likelihood of being completed successfully, to the project scope and within the funding timeframe.

- **Partnership with Iwi:** The level of engagement, collaboration and/or partnership with local hapu/iwi to provide cultural and social benefits.

Who will assess applications?

The assessment of applications and final decision on allocation of grants will be undertaken by the Auckland Council's Wai Ora Rural Partnerships team.

A cultural heritage review may also be undertaken as part of the funding assessment and allocation process by Auckland Council's Heritage Unit.

Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will be notified via an emailed letter before mid-November 2025 and will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with Auckland Council, which will include terms and conditions.

How is funding provided?

Successful applicants will enter into a Funding Agreement with Auckland Council. This will be provided to you by 14 November 2025. You will have 24 months from signing your Funding Agreement to commence and complete the project and seek financial reimbursement.

Funds are paid as reimbursements after the work is verified as completed via a site visit by the land advisor to audit the project area. Copies of full receipts, invoices, and/or packing slips are to be provided to the Funds' manager. Funds can be reimbursed aligned with project stages, e.g. after fencing, after planting etc.

Typically, it takes 2 weeks for Auckland Council to make payments, therefore we highly encourage successful applicants to contact us as soon as work is complete.

The property owner is expected to maintain and manage this funded work as an on-going commitment. This is outlined in the Funding Agreement.

Finally, we are here to help!

Any queries about either Fund, please contact us on ruralwaterways@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Any questions relating to completing the online SmartyGrants application form please contact: communityfunding@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz.

Please note: there is no support available after 5:00pm and on the weekends.