The Living Water Partnership: Dairy and Freshwater Thriving Together
We are a New Zealand Co-operative made up of 10,000 farming families and 20,000 dedicated staff, working together to do good for people and planet.

We are the world’s largest exporter of dairy products, and Aotearoa New Zealand’s largest company. We want farming in New Zealand to continue for generations to come, and that is why we are committed to farming in a way that regenerates our farms, the environment and local communities.
Dairy and freshwater thriving together
Te puāwai ngātahi a te mahi pāmu me te wai māori
Living Water is a 10-year partnership between Fonterra and the New Zealand Department of Conservation.

Our focus is to trial scalable solutions that will enable farming, freshwater and healthy ecosystems to thrive side-by-side.

He waka hourua, He waka eke noa
A waka with two hulls bound by a common Kaupapa
Lead in Sustainability
Our business is dependent on healthy freshwater. We create value for our farmers and for Aotearoa New Zealand from our unique environment. We have a leadership responsibility in New Zealand and the world.

Papatūānuku Thrives
We are charged with protecting and restoring Aotearoa New Zealand's unique biodiversity. Our goal is that by working with others, ecosystems and species across Aotearoa are thriving from mountains to sea.
Pastoral farms cover 50% of Aotearoa New Zealand’s land. What happens on pastoral farms is vital to restoring the full spectrum of native biodiversity and ecosystems in New Zealand.

10% of New Zealand’s land area is estimated to be artificially drained, developed over many years to make lowland areas productive for agriculture.

Key issues for the dairy sector that impact on biodiversity and ecosystem health include:

- **Water hydrology management** - use, diversion, drainage
- **Water contaminant management** - inputs, filtration, sedimentation
- **Habitat loss** – freshwater and terrestrial lowland habitats
- **Poor ecosystem function** – lowland freshwater, terrestrial and estuarine ecosystem function
- **Legacy impacts** - cumulative impacts over 150 years of productive land use (e.g. contaminant build up in lakes)
- **Climate change** – mitigation, adaptation and nature-based solutions.
The partnership has three core pillars:

- **We are a partnership with a shared vision** – we believe in a long-term prosperous future, have measures of success for our 10 years together, and we are learning about how to partner as large, influential organisations.

- **We have a programme of activity on the ground** – we are trialling tools & solutions, measuring what our work is achieving environmentally, socially and economically, and we are sharing and scaling our lessons learnt.

- **We stand together as champions of change** – we know that farming and land and water management needs to be different in the future and we will develop shared principles or advocacy positions that we will stand behind and share with others.
A Mitigation Tool: Fine particle fertiliser application – 50% reduction in fertiliser use, same pasture growth, less nitrogen loss to waterways.

SOUTHLAND / MIRUHIKI – WAITUNA LAGOON
A New Planning Tool: Putting the best science into the hands of land stewards so they can make the best decisions.
A New Management Approach: Redesigning the water network so it is managed to meet biodiversity outcomes, restore mahinga kai (indigenous food gathering), improve water quality and continue to provide drainage for farming.
A New Way of Working: Using a *Mana Enhancing Agreement* to bring partners together through the indigenous principle of mana (an individual’s life force and prestige). This drives a living connected relationship to manage the expectations, roles and responsibilities of the partners working together.
A Science-Based Solution: Partnered with the University of Canterbury to undertake waterway restoration trials in a unique pastural landscape. These trials were then used to design solutions at a large catchment scale.
Creating space for nature: Retired farmland to take pressure off the sensitive receiving environment (RAMSAR coastal wetland) and to restore ecological functioning of lowland drainage systems.
An integrated multi-party response: Whakamana te Waituna Trust was formed to oversee an integrated work programme for this internationally significant RAMSAR site. Activities include land retirement, catchment-scale contaminant management interventions, ecological restoration and increased access/connection to the lagoon for indigenous people and the community.
Working at just farm scale can’t fix the problems we are facing.

Design with nature rather than squeezing nature in around farming.

We need to ‘reimagine’ our productive landscapes for a resilient future.

It’s a people problem, even more than an environmental problem.

We need all knowledge – indigenous, western science & farmers.