Tāne's Tree Trust

NATIVE FORESTS FOR OUR FUTURE

Hereherea te Wao-nui-a-Tāne

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

Measuring native planting height and vigour in a fenced plot under intact pine canopy, upper Maitai transition trial. Photo: Michael Bergin

To be presented at the Annual General Meeting
Friday 17th October 2025, 3pm
at the Franklin Club, Pukekohe

AGENDA OF THE 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Welcome and opening comments from Chairman Peter Berg
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the 2024 meeting and matters arising
4. Chairman's report
    a. Where we are at
    b. Projects
    c. Trustees
    d. Funding and funders
5. CEO's report
    a. Membership
    b. Communications
6. Treasurer's report
7. Other business
8. Close of meeting

MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Friday 15 November 3.05pm at The Water Bar, Ahuriri, Napier

1. **Welcome and Opening Comments**
    a. Peter Berg (Chair) welcomed attendees to the 2024 AGM, thank you to the members, trustees and patrons who have come along to the AGM.
    b. Attendees: (names withheld)

2. **Apologies formally received** (names withheld)

3. **Minutes of 2023 AGM**
    a. Chairman noted that the minutes from the 2023 AGM were reviewed.

4. **Matters Arising**
    a. No further matters arising or raised by attendees at the meeting.

5. **Chair's Report**
    a. Peter Berg (Chair) observed that the planting of native trees is as popular as it's ever been. Over the last 12 months TTT has been putting even more effort in helping people engage and participate as well as they are able. It is helpful to have so much goodwill and support from many people in the community.
    b. Peter introduced the trustees present and reminded attendees that we are always interested in people who would like to join the team.
    c. Ultimately what we are able to achieve is very dependent on people being able and willing to invest in the work we are doing. We have been well supported in the last two to three years. We are hugely grateful to our supporters.

d. Peter thanked Mel and Keri for the work they do, as CEO and Office Manager.
e. No further matters arising or raised by attendees at the meeting.

6. Chief Executive Officer's Report

a. Mel Ruffell (Chief Executive Officer) thanked everyone who completed the five and dime survey, as part of the review we are currently doing. We will be sharing the results with everyone in due course.
b. Thank you to the trustees for supporting us.
c. No further matters arising or raised by attendees at the meeting.

7. Treasurer's Report

a. Warwick Silvester (Treasurer) was unable to attend. Peter directed attendees to the financial reports and independent auditor's report, showing that we follow good accounting principles and that we use the investment we receive for the purpose for which it is intended.
b. Statement of financial performance - Mel noted that we received a bequest during the financial year and we are currently working on how best to use this to honour the giver.
c. No further matters arising or raised by attendees at the meeting.

8. Project Updates

a. All projects have updates included within the Annual Report, the chairman encouraged members to read these and to direct any inquiries to the individual project manager. The Annual Report is a good compendium to give to others and also point them to our website.
b. Collaboration and acknowledgements - concern about our work Pure Advantage. Peter advised that we have had this discussion as a group of trustees. We have a vision and try to work with people around this vision, but we are now not working as closely with Pure Advantage. There are some philosophical differences but they have some programmes that we believe could help us in what we are trying to achieve.
c. No further matters arising or raised by attendees at the meeting.

Chairman, Peter Berg, moved that the 2024 Annual Report, including financial reports, be received and approved, seconded by David Horgan and carried.

9. Other Business

a. Christian Roschak thanked everyone for the excellent 7 Sharp piece.
b. Michael Orchard noted that TTT and NZ Farm Forestry are working well together and feels that we can go further and work more closely together. Hamish Levack - any reason why the two groups shouldn't merge? Peter explained that we work under slightly different constitutions. A lot of us belong to both organisations. Vaughan Kearns explained that the NZ Farm Forestry Association is a collection of branches and each branch is autonomous.
c. Paul Quinlan thanked the trustees and also Glenda and Peter Berg.
d. Peter thanked Paul and recommended that everyone take a look at his tree guide on tōtara.

10. Close of Meeting 3.36pm

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - October 2025

I'm beginning this year's report with a little sadness and reflection – during the year the Trust's founding chairman Ian Barton quietly passed away at the age of 87. Ian's early guidance was important to the development of the Trust and the excellent reputation it has developed as a source of information about the place and role of our native forests.

Ian was an ecologist, botanist and forester and the experience he was able to provide from a lifetime of operational practice and research was important to our focus and the direction of our work. Most notable was probably his 2008 publication on Continuous Cover Forestry which has set out the appropriate silvicultural direction for managed native forests in New Zealand and follows the course other countries are also following in their search for "closer to nature forestry".

Last year we reported on the completion of the third stage of our work programme aimed at projecting native forests as a legitimate land-use and component of New Zealand's landscapes and taking this position to the broader forestry community – "*Normalising Native Forestry*" (NNF). Over the last 12 months we have continued our programme of re-familiarising New Zealanders with their native forests, again based around key seed funding from The Tindall Foundation but shifting the focus to "*Native Forests for Resilient Landscapes*" (NFRL). While our aim has been to weave native forestry into discussions and strategies for forestry more broadly and alongside all other uses of land, we're now targeting just what those forests should look like and how they should be managed.

By providing a lead on the restoration of natural ecosystems we think that the information and tools we have provided are helping, although it is still a big step from planting trees (or protecting an area of natural reversion) to establishing durable and resilient forests for future generations to benefit from.

We were fortunate to be invited by Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service (TUR) to help prepare and publish *"A New Zealand guide to growing our native tall tree species*", a handy booklet expected to guide landowners towards choosing which species to plant on their land. Launched at this year's Mystery Creek Fieldays, this should provide landowners with more comfort about their native forests programme and of course is a great fit with our resilient landscapes programme.

In other respects through NFRL we continue to maintain our role as a balanced contributor to discussions about rural land-use particularly through hosting workshops, providing case studies and contributing to field days aimed at encouraging and facilitating the establishment and management of native trees and forests. We were delighted that a couple of our trustees and their work was recently recognised with awards at the Mystery Creek Fieldays: Paul Quinlan for the work he has done on his property to promote and demonstrate the sustainable management of naturally reverted tōtara and Ian Brennan for demonstrating at scale how integration of native forest into former farmland can substantially reverse the negative consequences of agriculture on depleted landscapes.

We see these awards as acknowledgement of the growing, ever-more widespread recognition of the important spread of values that all forests, but particularly native forests provide to the ecological, social, and cultural well-being of Aotearoa-New Zealand.

We continue to provide new information around productivity, new management models, information sheets, etc on our website and as noted earlier demonstrate how these can benefit native tree planting and management projects wherever possible. Many of these developments are detailed in this report so I won't expand upon them here.

Each year I reflect upon the importance of our wonderful funders and supporters to achieving an extensive work programme - that goodwill, alongside the volume of work members, Trustees and funders put into our activities means our progress, influence and profile remain very significant.

As I have already noted, this Annual Report gives updates on many of the projects and progress being made and members (and others) will find it a fairly comprehensive account of where we have been engaged most recently.

TRUSTEES

The trustees are – Ian Brown, Ian Brennan, Peter Berg, David Bergin, Paul Quinlan, Robert McGowan, Warwick Silvester, Jon Dronfield, Jacqui Aimers, Wayne O'Keefe, Michael Orchard, David Horgan and Michael Bergin. Meanwhile Peter Berg, Paul Quinlan, Jon Dronfield, Wayne O'Keefe, Michael Bergin, Michael Orchard, David Horgan retired by rotation, and all being willing to attend the Trust for another term they have all been reappointed.

I also record Gerard Horgan's decision to retire after a number of terms with the Trust - his background in economics was a valuable contribution to the Trust's work and ensured our passion for forestry with native trees was firmly grounded and properly justified.

EXECUTIVE TEAM

And another annual acknowledgement – our brilliant executive team of Mel and Keri continue to ensure we have remained on task and on time and the professionalism of both in every respect continues to be reassuring for our supporters, members and the trustees alike.

TRUST FUNDING

Throughout this annual report readers will find reference to a number of significant projects only underway because of the funding support we receive – valuable projects are only possible with quality backing and it's important to us that we reciprocate by ensuring that our supporters are well advised of progress and that the results of our work are both well disseminated and readily accessible.

Our annual financial report for the past 12 months' activity is attached; it has been independently reviewed and otherwise indicates the breadth of our effort and our robust present situation confirming the appropriateness of our strategy. We get great help from many of our members and in appreciation we've worked to hold the modest membership charge at its present level. As we have previously noted, we appreciate any additional support any of our members are able to provide – it enables us to extend our work to other important aspects and promote it as widely as possible. Last year we received a totally unexpected but absolutely awesome bequest and now we are working towards a way that this can both advance the cause for our restoring our natural environments but also permanently acknowledge the contribution this lovely person has made.

IN SUMMARY

2024-2025 has been something of a time for reflection, but no less productive for the Trust with our programmes, workshops, publications, etc all getting lots of coverage. Our team continues to work famously together and we expect to continue providing the data and tools necessary to support the realisation that establishment and management of native forests will for many landowners be part of a highly valued land use well into the future.

Peter Berg – Chairman

CEO UPDATE

The 2024/25 year has seen TTT continue to expand and strengthen our support, guidance, and project work across various regions of New Zealand. The comprehensive project updates in this report highlight the breadth and depth of the work we're involved in.

Despite challenging economic conditions, we've had another solid financial year. Membership renewals are slightly down compared to 2023/24, but overall membership remains strong. Subscriptions for the 2025/26 year have been sent out, with the annual fee remaining at $45.00. We currently have 665 members, with 227 having already paid for the 2025/26 year.

Keri continues to be a vital member of our office team, managing member enquiries, maintaining our website, overseeing our social media presence, and producing our informative and engaging newsletters. Thank you, Keri, for your ongoing dedication and hard work. Your contribution to the smooth running of our office is deeply appreciated by me, our members, and the trustees.

Over the past year, TTT has continued its strategic review and the development of a forward-looking framework. I'm pleased to share that we are nearing completion of a refreshed brand and logo, which we look forward to unveiling in the coming months. Later this year, we will also be launching a more user-friendly website, making it easier for visitors to access the information they need.

We remain focused on opportunities to further our research and progress toward our vision - promoting the use of indigenous New Zealand tree species to support biodiversity, enhance landscapes, deliver cultural value, and offer sustainable options for high-quality timber and other resources. Several new proposals are currently in development to advance this work, with a particular emphasis on permanent, resilient native forests.

Additionally, we are continuing the redevelopment of our databases to make them more user-friendly, and we hope to secure additional funding over the next six months to support this effort.

Finally, I want to thank the trustees for their ongoing support. Your guidance enables me to carry out my role effectively, and I'm truly grateful for your commitment to TTT's mission.

Please contact either Keri at the office, office@tanestrees.org.nz if we can be of any assistance or if you wish to obtain any of our publications, or you can reach out to me at mel@tanestrees.org.nz.

I am looking forward to what the 2025/26 year will bring for TTT.

Mel Ruffell – CEO

TREASURER'S REPORT

It is a pleasure to report yet again that, given last year's support again from The Tindall Foundation, and our ability to leverage some of that support as co-funding for the wide variety of projects you will see in this report, we have a healthy balance sheet. We have proven over the years to project and maintain a lean operation with no more than 9% of our budget in necessary overhead. Our membership should also realise that to identify appropriate projects that meet our objectives, to write winning grant proposals and to fulfil all of our obligations within that proposal is a threefold art form that we have mastered with consummate skill. I suggest you confirm this by consulting our website. The preparation of grant applications is a significant chore that some of our team have perfected with continuing success, and much of that work is done without remuneration.

It is a further pleasure to report that our accumulated contingency fund and significant donations to our base allows us to take on significant, otherwise unfunded, projects that arise out of current projects or that are requested of us.

Our programme leaders are doing an astonishing job, both in winning significant contracts and applying funding in a most productive way. Please read the research summaries in this report and look at results on our website.

Our executive team of Mel as CEO and Keri as Office Manager and Trust Secretary do a quite spectacular job in keeping us in order financially and administratively. We could not wish for a better team at the helm.

The latest financial report can be found at Appendix 1. As treasurer I can assure members that we are incredibly well served by Mel in keeping the accounts in order. Our accountant comments every year on how well we are served by Mel and our whole administration team.

Warwick Silvester – Treasurer

PROJECT UPDATES

Introduction

Tāne's Tree Trust had another productive year delivering applied research and technology transfer projects. Highlights included the first year of a three-year Native Forest for Resilient Landscapes (NFRL) project funded by The Tindall Foundation, alongside a range of initiatives supported by central government, the forestry sector, and corporate partners.

Key projects and activities undertaken in 2025 included:

1. Transitioning exotic forest to natives -
    - WS 1 - LUCAS data
    - WS 2 - Tairāwhiti survey
    - WS 3 - Bioclimatic zones
    - WS 4 - Canopy manipulation trials
2. Accelerating landscape scale restoration of native forest (seed islands)
3. Native Forest for Resilient Landscapes
    - WS 1 - Working with nature
    - WS 2 - Making the case for native forestry – timber values, CCF, NTWG
    - WS 3 - Making the case for native forestry – non-timber values, education and promotion
    - WS 4 - Improving our records and database development
    - WS 5 - Survey of native plantings
4. TUR workshops for best-practice restoration
5. Pāmu Farms ecosystem services project
6. Tall Tree Booklet
7. Other projects and activities
    - National Fieldays
    - Puniu River Care audit
    - NZIF Napier Conference
    - Servicing requests for advice and information
8. Collaboration and acknowledgements

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1. Transitioning exotic forest to natives

PROJECT STATUS: Third year of a five-year project completed

Introduction

This Tāne's Tree Trust research project aims to inform the transitioning of exotic forest to native forest. This is a five-year project supported by MPI through the Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures fund, and our forestry partners.

Background

The advent of permanent forestry and carbon farming under the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) has sparked debate on the potential to manage transitions from exotic to native forest. The case for using fast growing exotic trees (e.g., Pinus or Eucalyptus) as the primary vehicle for rapid early carbon storage is compelling and is garnering much interest among landowners interested in permanent forestry options. In

other circumstances, large tracts of exotic plantation on highly erodible or environmentally sensitive sites (e.g., Tairāwhiti) will need alternative forest management options to conventional clear-fell harvesting. Likewise, effective management options need to be explored for areas afflicted with wilding conifers where a transition to native forest is conceivable (e.g. see video: https://vimeo.com/592450395).

Extensive pine planting programmes have been established with support from Te Uru Rākau and have been incentivised by the ETS. Irrespective of any changes that might occur to the definition of permanent forest in the NZ ETS, permanent exotic forestry is already a major land use across NZ and we urgently need research to guide its management. This research will help inform relevant policy settings and regulation on this matter, and to inform forest establishment and management practices, to ensure that successful transitions to native forest does indeed occur.

A clear-fell area near a native seed source that is dominated by wilding pines.

Titoki and tawa naturally regenerating under a pine canopy, Tairāwhiti.

Project progress in 2025

The project is now halfway through with the majority of the field work now completed. The team has been busy writing up results from the different workstreams.

Land Use and Carbon Analysis System (LUCAS) plot analysis: This workstream was led by Dr Mark Kimberley. LUCAS data was made available to TTT by the vast majority of the large forestry managers. This provided 197 grid locations around NZ of which 90% were radiata pine stands, providing 473 plot measurements (many plots had repeat survey data).

Key findings included:

- Radiata-pine forests have more diverse understorey than Douglas-fir forests
- Variable native understorey density/diversity throughout NZ
- Key understorey species in terms of carbon were - māhoe, wineberry, tree ferns, kānuka, putaputawētā, tutu, tree fuchsia, patē, mānuka, karamū and tōtara (the only one true canopy tree species)
- Key exotic species in terms of understorey carbon were - Radiata pine, gorse, Douglas-fir, Contorta pine, blackwood, poplar
- Native understorey plant density and diversity increases with stand age and decreasing stand density (≤ 250 stems/ha)
- Naturally regenerating Radiata pine was absent in first rotation stands but present in young second or later rotation stands - however became an increasingly minor component with stand age
- Carbon in the understorey was 3.8 tCO2/ha, only a small fraction of the carbon stored in the crop trees (av. 215 tCO2/ha)

National bioclimatic surveys: This workstream was undertaken by Dr Adam Forbes to assess the potential bioclimatic influences that may affect how easily an exotic to native forest transition may occur. A total of 80 plots were surveyed in Northland, Gisborne, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Wellington, Marlborough, West Coast and Otago. Analysis found that native understorey varied with:

- Climate
- Elevation and aspect
- Plantation top height
- Nearby indigenous forest, and
- Level of browsing

Lack of understorey vegetation where browse is common and dominance of weeds (e.g. ink weed) particularly near habitation.

Palatable species such as Schefflera digitata (patē, seven finger) and Fuchsia excorticata (kōtukutuku, tree fuchsia) are present in the lower understorey but do not get established due to browsing, Tairāwhiti.

Tairāwhiti canopy density surveys: This workstream was led by Meg Graeme to assess the effect of canopy density on understorey characteristics at a regional scale. A total of 45 plots were surveyed at 24 sites throughout the Tairāwhiti/Gisborne region. The plots targeted older stands (av. 37 years). The understorey analysis found:

- Widespread browse
- Understory was predominantly native 98.2%
- Tairāwhiti understorey stem density, carbon and species diversity ranked higher than national LUCAS metrics
- Mainly shrub species (76%) and subcanopy species (21%)
- But carbon mainly in subcanopy species and tree ferns
- Tall canopy species made up 1.8% of stems but contributed 8% of carbon
- Number and density of species, as well as carbon, increases with plantation age

Example of open pine canopy of old radiata pine stands, Tairāwhiti.

Common regenerating vegetation under a steepland pine stand restricted by browse pressure, Tairāwhiti.

Long-term trials: This workstream is led by Michael Bergin and will be monitored until the end of the project in 2027. These trials provide nationally relevant permanent sample plots to inform carbon and biodiversity forestry models and to help refine management practices. Paired poisoned/unpoisoned canopy plots with and without fencing have been set up in Omahuta Forest (Northland), Whangapoua Forest (Coromandel) and the upper Maitai (Nelson). These are surveyed annually to gather data on understorey planting and natural regeneration survival and growth. Fenced and unfenced sub-plots beneath the poisoned and unpoisoned treatment areas are measured for natural regeneration and survival/height and vigour of plantings. Evidence of deer, goat and possum browse on certain plant species is already clear and we may be able to discern whether pig rooting has an effect on natural seedling regeneration by the end of the project. Early signs of weed establishment have been noted in the Whangapoua poisoned trial plots. Data analysis in 2027 will indicate whether any significant trends are apparent from the early establishment phase of these trials.

Carbon modelling: This workstream is led by Mark Kimberley and assesses various scenarios for a pine to native transition. Based on certain assumptions, scenarios are provided for pine stand transition trajectories with no major disturbance events, through to planned early intervention in killing the pine canopy. This provides useful information to help forest managers and policy makers plan for the inevitable carbon ‘dip’ that occurs when the pine canopy is removed or senesces, and before any regenerating native forest can put on significant growth.

Saplings and trees within native understorey of a radiata pine stand can be pushed over and browsed by deer or wild cows, Tairāwhiti.

Preliminary transition guidance: The project team is currently working on providing draft guidance that will be reviewed before being published. This will summarise our transition findings to date and help information practitioners' considerations and planning in undertaking a pine to native forest transition. This guidance will be updated at the end of the project.

Results, including management recommendations, will be freely and widely disseminated to landowners, forest owners, forest managers, policymakers and regulators. Currently available reports and other information can be found on the TTT Project website page at https://www.tanestrees.org.nz/projects/transitioning-exotic-forest-to-native/

We thank everyone who has assisted Tāne's Tree Trust with this project including the Ministry for Environment, Summit Forests, Ernslaw One Ltd, Aratu Forests Ltd, Ngati Porou Forestry, Juken NZ Ltd, Manulife Forest Management NZ Ltd, Pan Pac Forest Products Ltd, Rayonier Matariki Forests City Forests, Tasman Pine Forests Ltd, Ngāi Tahu Forestry, OneFourtyOne, Gisborne District, Nelson City Council and Northland Department of Conservation.

For further information contact project manager Meg Graeme Meg@ecologist.nz

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2. Accelerating landscape scale restoration of native forest – demonstrating the concept of 'seed islands'

PROJECT STATUS: Second year of a three-year project completed

Introduction

Tāne's Tree Trust (TTT), in partnership with Trees That Count (TTC), is developing a nationwide network of demonstration sites to test and promote 'seed islands' as a method to accelerate large-scale native forest restoration.

The approach involves planting small groves of key native tree and shrub species within degraded landscapes including marginal, erosion-prone hill country so they act as seed sources that promote natural regeneration towards appropriate high native forest over time.

Representative sites have been established across New Zealand in collaboration with landowners, iwi, community landcare groups, NGOs, local authorities and other partners. Successful outcomes depend on integrating planting with effective pest control, including browsing animal management, targeted exotic weed removal and, where possible, bird and seed predator control.

Project objectives

The project comprises the following key components and aims:

1. **Establish demonstration areas** of planted seed islands using selected native trees and shrubs on representative landscapes to accelerate native forest succession.
2. **Collaborate with existing restoration initiatives** where the seed island concept has been applied but not formally monitored or documented.
3. **Identify optimal sites** for establishing seed islands to maximise performance, ensure accessibility for monitoring, and facilitate ongoing maintenance.
4. **Implement seed island plantings** at each demonstration area, testing a range of site conditions and vegetation cover treatments.
5. **Undertake targeted pest animal and weed control** including browsers and, where practical bird predators, in collaboration with project partners to promote natural regeneration.
6. **Engage with other practitioners** involved in native forest establishment to exchange knowledge and align efforts.
7. **Disseminate early findings** through social media, online platforms, workshops and wānanga with local communities, iwi, landowners and management agencies.

Laying out and planting of native tree species within seed islands in a wide retired riparian zone located along the Pouawa River near Whangara, north of Gisborne, Tairāwhiti.

Status of seed island set up

Thirteen seed island sites are in various stages of establishment and monitoring from Northland to Southland, comprising five main demonstration sites and eight satellite sites. Of the demonstration areas, three are in the North Island and two in the South Island, representing marginal and degraded landscapes where large-scale native forest restoration is a priority, along with other key sites such as riparian zones. These are intensively managed and monitored for early performance. Satellite sites extend the project's reach, building on existing work with landowners and community groups, and require less intensive planning and monitoring.

Main Demonstration Seed Islands

Five sites have been planted and are being monitored:

1. **Northland – Waipoua Forest Trust, Pukemiro Ridge:** Restoring cleared land bordering Waipoua Forest to protect and expand kauri. Baseline completed.
2. **Bay of Plenty – Kōkako Ecosystem Expansion Project (KEEP), Rangiuru:** Multi-generational project supporting kōkako recovery. Baseline and first-year assessments completed.
3. **Banks Peninsula – Mount Vernon Park, Christchurch:** Conserving and enhancing natural environment with public recreation. Baseline completed.
4. **Central Otago – Remarkables Station, Queenstown:** 900ha QEII covenant gifted by owners, located near Remarkables ski field. Baseline completed.
5. **Tairāwhiti/East Coast – Pihitia Station, Pouawa:** Adjacent to Pouawa River catchment flowing to Te Tapuwae o Rongokako Marine Reserve.

Satellite Seed Islands

Several sites are in various stages of planning, planting and monitoring:

1. **Waikato – Kawhia:** Two backdune areas planted over two years; monitoring and maintenance underway.
2. **Tairāwhiti – Waingake Restoration Area:** Catchment cleared of pines; monitoring planned for seed islands planted within regenerating shrubland.
3. **Eastern Taranaki –** Mānuka planted at wide spacing; seed islands of canopy trees planned for planting in 2025 or 2026.
4. **Southern Hawke's Bay – Mangarara Station:** Two 10ha retired hill country blocks with manuka; seed islands to be planted in 2026.
5. **North Canterbury – Tūhaitara Coastal Park:** Tōtara and nurse shrubs in former pine backdunes; monitoring underway.
6. **Southland – Te Kōawa Tūroa o Takitimu:** Planting to replace exotic grassland with native seed sources, enhancing ecological and mahinga kai values.

Methods for Establishing Seed Islands

While consistency is important, the design and implementation remain flexible to accommodate:

- Site-specific variation in landscape and ecological characteristics
- Scale of planting
- Regional differences in suitable native species
- Local best practices for planting and early management

Seed island size is determined by the available gap or micro-site for inter-planting natives, or by the planting density where a nurse cover already exists. All sites are monitored using the standard plot-based procedures developed by Tāne's Tree Trust and Trees That Count.

Early performance

Survival and growth assessments at most planted seed island sites to date show high survival rates and good early height growth for both native shrub and tree species. Examples of early performance are provided from one main demonstration site in the North Island and another in the South Island.

Kōkako Ecosystem Expansion Project (KEEP), Bay of Plenty

The second-year remeasurement of eight monitoring plots at the Rangiuru Te Puke seed island site, undertaken with the landowner and Bay Conservation Alliance's new manager, shows:

- Exceptional survival and growth, despite the exposed ridge location
- Many five-finger, tī kōuka (cabbage tree), and mānuka seedlings have exceeded 2 m height within two years of planting
- Minor wind damage, with a few mānuka toppled
- Effective weed control has resulted in few aggressive weed species competing with the planted natives establishing within the dense pasture cover
- Projected 80% canopy cover within a further 2–3 years

Plans are now underway to interplant canopy species (e.g. tōtara, pūriri, kauri) in sheltered gaps within the developing nurse cover of native shrub hardwoods that are providing side shelter on this exposed site.

The drone image gives good context of the planting site on a ridge surrounded by farmland.


The landowner standing next to a planted five-finger that is only two years old! Almost a metre in height growth per year since planting.

Mount Vernon Park, Port Hills, Christchurch

A full remeasurement was undertaken one year after planting for the 10 seed island plots established within this highly popular public recreation park, established on steep pastoral hill country typical of the Port Hills. Initial observations from the assessment found:

- Good survival on the low, sheltered sites compared to the seed islands located on the high exposed ridge and western faces
- Good weed control in the 3-6 months after planting has been undertaken. Without weed control and the use of stakes to help locate the planted natives some of the smaller seedlings would likely have been suppressed by exotic grass and gorse regrowth
- Frost damage has affected some of the more vulnerable species such as tōtara, and the coprosma species
- Browse damage was evident on some highly palatable species, e.g. tī kōuka

A seed island plot on a western face upper slope where existing exotic pasture grass and native tussock dominate the ground cover at Mt Vernon, Port Hills Canterbury. The exotic grass has been brush cut to reduce the competition and prevent suppression of the planted natives.

Above left: A tōtara seedling one year after planting. Some tōtara seedlings in low lying sites show signs of frost damage to the foliage. Above right: A ngaio seedling with good growth one year after planting. This species was planted due to its drought tolerance and low flammability rating, two key challenges with native plantings on the Port Hills, Canterbury.

Promotion

Over the past 12 months, the seed island project has been promoted at several events with positive feedback on the concept. Highlights include:

- Presentations by Tāne's Tree Trust at Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service nationwide workshops for farmers, foresters, landcare groups, iwi, communities, schools and the public on large-scale native afforestation, including seed islands.
- Regular updates to Trees That Count Regional Advisor meetings.
- Project update on the Trust's website https://www.tanestrees.org.nz/projects/accelerating-landscape-scale-restoration-of-native-forest/.
- Conference presentation at the Coastal Restoration Trust's Annual National Conference in Tolaga Bay, Tairāwhiti, attended by 140 participants including community groups, iwi, councils, research providers, landholders, Māori trusts, consultants and practitioners.
- TUR presentation on the seed island concept was presented at the New Zealand Ecological Society Conference (Rotorua, November 2024), comparing it with seed orchards. Developing seed orchards to provide genetically improved seed of natives will require major research and consideration of cultural and ecological impacts. Seed islands are a more practical, cost-effective option for large-scale native afforestation. https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/64956-Native-Afforestation-Programme-Feasibility-of-a-network-of-seed-orchards-vs-seed-islands.

For further information contact project managers Dr David Bergin davidbergin.erl@gmail.com or Michael Bergin michaelbergin.erl@gmail.com

3. Native Forest for Resilient Landscapes (NFRL)

PROJECT STATUS: First year of a three-year project completed.

Introduction

Over the past 12 months, a major focus for Tāne's Tree Trust (TTT) has been implementing the Native Forests for Resilient Landscapes programme, supported by The Tindall Foundation (TTF). This initiative builds on the success of previous work that has accelerated progress toward better outcomes for both land and people, in collaboration with like-minded organisations and initiatives such as the NZ Institute of Forestry, Tiwaiwaka, NZ Farm Forestry Association, Pure Advantage, and Trees That Count.

Addressing the urgent need for science-based information and technical guidance, the programme focuses on working with nature, demonstrating managed regeneration as a cost-effective way to establish native forests at scale and providing practical options for the sustainable management of nature-based native forestry to meet the challenges of climate change and enhancing indigenous biodiversity.

Workstreams

There are workstreams underway for which workplans have been completed and projects within each workstream initiated over the first year of this programme.

WORKSTREAM 1: Working with Nature

Establishing native forestry at scale will only be possible by working with natural regeneration and forest succession, i.e., assisted natural regeneration with strategies such as seed islands. We must quickly learn how to apply these approaches and promote their adoption.

Background

TTT has focused in recent years on planting natives to meet environmental, cultural and economic goals, producing best-practice guidelines, tools, factsheets and videos freely available on our website. However, blanket planting is prohibitively expensive, so complementary strategies are needed. Working with nature—supplementary planting, pest and predator control, and use of existing vegetation cover including exotics—can accelerate regeneration and achieve large-scale native forest establishment.

Up to 1.5 million ha of erosion-prone marginal hill country in New Zealand requires conversion to permanent forest cover, mostly native. Incentivising landowners to change land use is critical to addressing biodiversity loss and climate change, integrating natives into productive landscapes, protecting erosion-prone land, improving water quality, and safeguarding downstream communities.

Key projects

This workstream will investigate practical, cost-effective ways to encourage regeneration alongside planting:

- ***Role of Natural Regeneration* –** Define successful regeneration, how to encourage it, and the role of planting in accelerating forest establishment.
    - Review knowledge on reversion and practical steps for landowners.

    - Assess techniques such as enrichment planting, seed islands, pest and weed control, and use of shrubland or exotic cover.
    - Analyse datasets (Cyclone Bola/Northland plots, Tōtara Working Group, seed islands, exotic-to-native transition trials).
    - Draft best-practice guidelines for large-scale conversion of marginal land to native forest.
- ***Quantifying Regeneration –*** Develop a simple method to assess and measure regeneration.
    - Work with others including remote sensing expertise and MPI/TUR on a user-friendly reversion assessment system.
    - Explore expanding TTT's planted native monitoring tool to include regeneration, evaluating both ground-based and remote sensing methods.
- ***Carbon and the ETS –*** Investigate carbon's role in incentivising reversion.
    - Work with MPI/TUR on factsheets, calculators, videos, and case studies showing potential carbon returns from planting and reversion.
    - Explore promoting ETS options for large-scale reversion.
- ***Demonstration Sites –*** Create a national network of best-practice farms and forests showing land-use change to natives.
    - Identify and showcase examples of retiring marginal land or integrating natives into production.
    - Use sites for field days and workshops with forestry and farming groups.
    - Highlight environmental and economic benefits from farm to landscape scale.

Progress to date

This project marks a major shift in large-scale native forest restoration, particularly on eroding hill country. Rather than relying solely on costly blanket planting, we are prioritising scalable, nature-based solutions with targeted planting to accelerate natural reversion. Key barriers remain pest animals and introduced bird predators. Trials are underway using supplementary planting of key native shrub and tree species to boost local seed sources of high-forest species as a cost-effective way to drive regeneration across the wider landscape.

Planning has begun to investigate remote sensing such as aerial photogrammetry and drones and how these methods can integrate with ground-based methods to monitor regeneration. The goal is to give landowners user-friendly, robust tools for assessing the success of retiring marginal land at scale to encourage natural forest recovery.

There is growing acceptance that exotic vegetation common in early succession can sometimes accelerate native forest recovery. The effectiveness of enrichment planting and promoting reversion through exotic shrubland depends on the species present and needs further evaluation as a practical, cost-effective restoration method. This nature-led approach will inform the next generation of TTT's tools, calculators, and guidelines to scale up restoration efforts.

Establishing native forestry at scale will only be practical by encouraging natural regeneration and forest succession. This workstream focuses on evaluating nature-based approaches including targeted planting to accelerate natural reversion instead of relying on costly blanket planting.

WORKSTREAM 2: Making the case for native forestry – timber values, CCF, NTWG

Workstream 2 of Tāne's Tree Trust's programme *Native Forests for Resilient Landscapes* continues work on foci that were part of the preceding programme, Normalising Native Forestry. This includes the promotion of nature-based forestry, such as the Northland Tōtara Working Group (NTWG), and Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF), but also work on novel ecosystems and transitioning of exotic to native forests.

Workstream Objectives

Managing native forests on private land and Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) need to become viable land use options in order to occur at any significant scale within the rural production landscape. To help bring this outcome about this workstream aims to:

- Advocate and support Sustainable Indigenous Forest Management (SFM) and the development of native timber industries and use, especially the opportunities to manage tōtara in Northland and other regions.
- Advocate and support Close-to-Nature CCF practice in Aotearoa NZ – including transitions from plantation structures and mixed species (exotic/native) forests.
- Influence the development of conducive policies and regulation frameworks and reduce impediments to native forestry and CCF in New Zealand.
- Expand the Tāne's Tree Trust database to include networks of research trial and demonstration sites of native forestry, CCF, and transitional forestry.
- Continue to support and/or coordinate collaborative projects with sector partners and stakeholders.

Outputs

The first year's outputs have included:

- A Northland Tōtara Working Group (NTWG) newsletter
- Two articles published in the Tree Grower Journal on legal disincentives affecting native forestry
- One article published in the NZIF Journal of Forestry on Continuous Cover Forestry
- Provision of material to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) research team for the report on resetting forestry in NZ
- A collaborative research project proposal with Scion on native timber properties is being scoped
- Two tōtara field days (jointly hosted by the NTWG and Te Taitokerau Māori Forestry Inc. funded by MPI, and generously supported by Scion, Oromahoe Trust, Northland Regional Council, Tapuaetahi Inc. and Tāne's Tree Trust)
- Workshops on Native Forestry, Transitional Forestry and CCF were held in Nelson, funded by Te Uru Rākau and Nelson City Council.
- Support for a Nelder trial design for Himalayan alders and tōtara (at Eastwood Hill)
- In collaboration with Whenua Oho, a Sustainable Indigenous Forest Management (SFM) Plan for a property in Northland has commenced
- Support for the Tōtara Industry Initiative – trying to facilitate a functional supply chain with NZ-based processors and manufacturers

For more information, contact Paul Quinlan: pdq@pqla.co.nz

Greg Steward from Scion discussing native forestry at a tōtara field day in May this year.

Peter Berg talking at the first of two tōtara field days in Northland held this year.

Ernest Morton, Chair of Te Taitokerau Māori Forestry Inc., summing up at the second tōtara field day.

WORKSTREAM 3: Making the case for native forestry – non-timber values, education and promotion

This workstream flows from the previously funded programme NNF (Normalising Native Forestry), particularly the momentum created by the publication of the review of non-timber values, which raised the profile of native forests and resulted in greater recognition of their wider values - www.tanestrees.org.nz/site/assets/files/1099/non_timber_values_in_native_forests_-_web.pdf

This workstream overlaps with and supports other NFRL workstreams, particularly regarding technology transfer and technical communications. The overall goal is to have management of native forest on private land recognised as a viable land use option – for the myriad of benefits it provides. The main focuses are providing resources and education on the wider values of native forests, and advocating for incentives for people establishing or restoring native forest on private land.

This workstream has three components:

(i) **Education and training** on native afforestation and the wider values of native forests, working with government organisations, other NGOs, industry groups, and Māori organisations.
(ii) **Providing advice and representing native forest interests to the green financing industry**, particularly nature-based investment in voluntary biodiversity and carbon markets.
(iii) **Engagement with policymakers, and advocating** for incentives for landholders and a supportive regulatory environment for native forestation.

Background

The business case for native afforestation relies on decreasing the costs for native forest establishment and also compensating landowners for the environmental and sociocultural benefits that accrue to the wider community, but do not currently have a market value. Currently there is a 'sea change' happening nationally and internationally, driven by market forces and increased accountability over international climate change commitments, biodiversity, water quality, and wellbeing. This is helping drive green financing and voluntary biodiversity and carbon credit systems, and investment in nature-based solutions.

Green financing refers to financial investments that support sustainable development and environmentally friendly projects. It encompasses a range of financial products and services, including green loans, green bonds, biodiversity credit systems, etc., which are designed to channel funds towards initiatives that reduce carbon emissions, and improve environmental outcomes, including biodiversity, and climate change adaptation and resilience.

Progress to date and next steps:

- **Input into the Pāmu Farms SFFF Ecosystem Services project** - This workstream links to the SFFF Ecosystem Services project. Information on this project is provided separately below.
- **NZ Taxonomy Ag/Forestry Technical Advisory Group**:
  - TTT and two trustees were approached to provide a representative for a technical advisory group (TAG) for building an economic investment framework (taxonomy) for NZ - on climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience - https://sustainablefinance.nz/nz-taxonomy-public-consultation/
  - Jacqui Aimers is currently representing native forest interests in the TAG, coordinating with the wider TTT team.
  - This taxonomy is being developed on behalf of the NZ Government in response to increased accountability in world trade over international climate change commitments and biodiversity agreements, and the wellbeing of local communities and indigenous people.

  - Work on the NZ taxonomy is led by the Centre for Sustainable Finance, coordinating with international experts who have helped create taxonomies for other international entities including the European Union, the UK, Singapore, China, and Australia.
- **TTT has also been asked to provide technical advice** in support of several voluntary biodiversity and carbon credit programmes.
- **Geoff Simmons, Chief Economist for the PCE** (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment) requested info on TTT work, particularly the Ecosystem Services project.
- **Alt-F Reset – Examining the drivers of forestry in NZ** - Several TTT trustees helped with the PCE review on alternative forestry systems - https://pce.parliament.nz/publications/alt-f-reset-examining-the-drivers-of-forestry-in-new-zealand/
- **Workshops and field trips on native afforestation continue** for farmers, foresters, and iwi, including a visit by University of Canterbury School of Forestry students to Cassie's Farm with landowner and trustee Ian Brennan.
- **TTT participated in TUR Native Afforestation Hui** and provided further information on request - in support of Māori interests in native afforestation, including transitioning from clear-fell plantation forestry to native forest cover on highly erodible steeplands.
- **Two trustees presented at a workshop for Dunedin teachers** and helped with creation of resources for the Dunedin Town Belt Kaitiaki - on carbon sequestration measurements, in preparation for field trips with students.
- **A presentation was given at the NZ Ecological Society conference** in November 2024 - *Carbon sequestration in Aotearoa NZ's planted native forests*.
- **Resources and advice were provided to a Scion intern** studying ecosystem services associated with native forests.
- **Two Nuffield scholars were taken on field trips** - an Irish forestry leader and a young British forester. Both are working to bring back more native forest into landscapes in their homelands and they wanted insight into what TTT is doing in NZ.
- **TTT coordinated with NZ Institute of Forestry (NZIF) in:**
  - Lining up papers on native forestry for publication in the NZ Journal of Forestry.
  - Providing input into the excellent NZIF Conference "Emerging Stronger" (post Cyclones) in Napier in June 2025. TTT had an exhibition booth, provided native forestry resources for the conference bags, provided CPD (continuing professional development) on native afforestation, and a presentation on the transitional forestry project, plus contributed to a conference session panel discussion.
- **TTT wrote submissions for:**
  - Resetting the ETS annual charge. This included extra information on incentives and barriers for native afforestation, as requested by MPI.
  - The Aotearoa NZ Sustainable Finance Taxonomy, first public consultation - on climate mitigation. (A further public consultation on the NZ Taxonomy will be opened in September on climate adaptation and resilience). See above for info on the NZ Taxonomy work.
- Looked at potential collaboration, providing help with resources and advice for **Trees for Survival**, a charitable trust supporting schools to grow and plant native trees to restore our environment - https://www.tfsnz.org.nz/

Ian Brennan, trustee and landowner, has established 35 hectares of native forest on his Waikato hill country farm as a long-term continuous cover forestry regime. He is leading fourth-year University of Canterbury School of Forestry students on a field visit to inspect the plantings and associated silvicultural practices.

Overall, TTT has had an increase in requests for information and strategic advice on native forestation from government organisations, NGOs, iwi organisations, landowners and private investors. We need to continue to provide science-based information and extend our reach and impact by making our resources and data more accessible to policymakers and stakeholders - particularly in the face of increasing impacts of climate change and loss of biodiversity - advocating for the many benefits of native forest, much of which accrue downstream and to the wider community.

For more information contact:

- Dr Jacqui Aimers - jacqui.aimers@xtra.co.nz
- Mel Ruffell - mel@tanestrees.org.nz

A green or sustainable finance taxonomy is a standardised framework for classifying economic activities according to their environmental performance.

This classification system allows investors to identify and invest in green activities while avoiding those that cause significant harm to the environment.

WORKSTREAM 4: Improving our records and database development

TTT holds the largest database of planted and managed natives, which now needs upgrading to an interactive, open-access national database covering reversion, transitional forestry, supplementary planting and continuous cover forestry.

Background

TTT's database is the most comprehensive record of native tree and forest growth, but naturally regenerated stands are largely absent. An upgrade is needed to meet multiple objectives and host data from other organisations. Good data underpins most of our work, and demand for access is increasing.

The new relational database will replace the Excel system, incorporating over 100 years of plantation data and enabling calculation of key plot metrics such as stocking, mean top height, basal area, carbon per hectare, and species diversity. It will also store data on regenerating shrubland, sustainably managed regenerating forest, exotic-to-native transitions, urban native forest, biodiversity monitoring, remeasurements in planted stands, and continuous cover forestry plots.

Projects in this Workstream

- ***TTT Database System***
    - Complete setup of the new primary database for planted and naturally regenerating stands including:
        - Existing plantation database (>100 PSPs and growth plots)
        - New plantations and PSPs
        - Transition forestry plots
        - Regeneration plots (Tairāwhiti Cyclone Bola, Northland)
        - Northland Tōtara Working Group plots
        - Seed island demonstration and satellite sites
- Develop user-friendly field and desktop data entry.
- Implement automated retrieval, analysis, and reporting of PSP, growth, and trial plot data.
- ***Image Library***
    - Central repository of all TTT digital images and videos on sustainable native forest management.
    - Include high-resolution/originals used in TTT resources, with source and copyright details.
    - Provide backend storage, and user-friendly retrieval, editing, captioning, and source management.
- ***Reference Database***
    - Online database modelled on the Coastal Restoration Trust system.
    - Include published/unpublished references, "grey literature," and all TTT resources.
    - Searchable by author, subject, publication type, with PDF copies or links where possible.
    - Respect copyright and IP protocols.
- ***Promotion***
    - Promote new database systems to stakeholders and set access protocols.
    - Enable other entities to add their data.
    - Run workshops/webinars on using the databases alongside TTT's calculators and monitoring tools for planted and managed regeneration.

Progress to date

Subject to securing ongoing co-funding, Tāne's Tree Trust (TTT) is developing a new MySQL- and Python-based database, building on the structure of the current Microsoft Access system. The upgraded

platform will store TTT's own data as well as datasets from other organisations involved in native forestry, several of which have already approached TTT to host their information.

The database will cover a wide range of topics, including sustainably managed regenerating native forest, early planting assessments, biodiversity and regeneration monitoring, enrichment planting (e.g., seed islands), exotic-to-native transitions, urban native forest, remeasurements and new measurements in planted stands, and continuous cover forestry plots.

A user-friendly, web-based interface is also planned, with geospatial capability and tools to calculate key plot-level metrics such as stocking, top height, basal area, carbon, and species diversity.

A nationwide survey of planted native stands by Tāne's Tree Trust is well underway, including remeasurement of Permanent Sample Plots (PSPs) such as kahikatea (left) and kauri (right) in the Bay of Plenty. New PSPs are being established to expand growth data across more species and sites. The data will feed into the upgraded Tāne's Tree Trust Native Plantation Database to refine growth and carbon models for online calculators.

WORKSTREAM 5: Survey of native plantings

Regular remeasurement of planted native stands and measurement of new stands is essential for accurate long-term growth forecasts (50–100 years) and for maintaining robust growth and carbon models. Other organisations value and seek access to this data.

Background

Plantation data underpins TTT's database, growth models, and online calculators. Updating this requires both periodic remeasurement of existing permanent sample plots and adding newly located planted stands. Long-term records gain value with each remeasurement, improving forecasts and expanding coverage by species, site type, and management regime.

Surveying native plantings will be an ongoing annual activity, with the scale dependent on resources. Alongside Workstream 4's database upgrade, priority is developing a user-friendly system to incorporate regular survey data and broaden the database to capture more species, site conditions, and management approaches nationwide.

Projects for this workstream

- **Survey programme** – establish an ongoing system for surveying native plantations, with annual survey numbers based on available resources.
    - Draft guidelines and backup systems for long-term tracking, with data entered into the TTT database.
    - Remeasure established PSPs and growth plots in planted native hardwood species.
    - Locate undocumented plantations (typically 10+ years old) and set up new PSPs.
    - Increase plot coverage across species, site types, management histories, and treatments to develop species-specific and regional growth/carbon models.
    - Expand database coverage to rural and urban sites, including shelterbelts, amenity plantings, and restoration projects.
    - Digitise historical survey records and site information for future-proof access and efficient processing.
- **Collaboration and promotion** – use multiple methods to locate new stands for assessment and inclusion in the database. Work with forestry and farming networks to promote and conduct the survey.

Progress to date

The survey of planted native stands is well underway. Since the last main survey in 2010–2012, 11 Permanent Sample Plots (PSPs) and two growth plots have been remeasured in the Bay of Plenty, Waikato, and Hawke's Bay regions, with data entered into the TTT database.

New plots have also been established but not yet added to the database, including 21 PSPs and 11 growth plots. These cover further stands in the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, northern and southern Hawke's Bay, as well as sites in south Auckland and the Wairarapa.

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4. TUR workshops for Growing Native Forests series

TUR supported TTT's involvement at five workshops around NZ, two in Northland, one in the Hawke's Bay, one in Taranaki, and one in Nelson. We wish to thank TUR for their support for TTT to be able to present at these workshops. Our recently launched Factsheets which TUR had available in a printed form, were popular with attendees. Find more about our factsheets here https://docs.tanestrees.org.nz/

Factsheets on display at the Stratford workshop on Growing Native Forests.

TTT presentation at the Stratford workshop on Growing Native Forests.

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5. Pāmu Farms ecosystem services project

Background

Tāne's Tree Trust is part of a collaborative, inter-agency project valuing ecosystem services provided by natural ecosystems on private land. The overall goal is to develop valuation frameworks specific to New Zealand - for assessing ecosystem quality and ecosystem services, particularly the economic benefits of improving the condition of ecosystems harbouring indigenous biodiversity. Ultimately, this will provide land managers with both the means and incentives to quantify economic values associated with sustaining and improving the condition of natural ecosystems on private land.

The project was initiated largely due to increased interest in green financing, voluntary biodiversity credit markets and other financial incentives for landowners to conserve, protect and restore natural biodiversity on private land – and the need for robust assessment systems.

This project is funded by a MPI SFFF grant, Pāmu (Landcorp), and The Tindall Foundation.

The project aims to:

(a) Develop a framework and methodology to assess the relative quality of selected ecosystems – starting with wetlands, indigenous forest, and streams.
(b) Develop methodology to quantify the monetary value provided by ecosystem services in a pilot study across several Pāmu Landcorp farm units in Northland.
(c) Identify and implement activities that improve the condition and quality (natural capital) of selected ecosystems - and quantify the benefits provided by these activities in a pilot study on Pāmu Landcorp farm units in Northland.

(d) Develop robust, but readily usable, web-based tools for assessment of ecosystems before and after intervention. This will allow land managers (or outside agents) to assess sites and translate environmental data into tangible, on-farm actions for improving ecological integrity – to satisfy financial lending organisations and voluntary biodiversity credit markets.

Progress to date and next steps

Rapid Assessment Forms (RAFs) have been developed and tested for wetlands, indigenous forest, and streams. These RAFs are designed to help land managers (or those helping them) assess ecological quality of ecosystems, and provide a 'benchmark' to gauge progress over time. Nearby reference sites (with as close to pristine ecosystems as could be found locally) were identified and assessed as benchmarks.

The RAFs have been tested to see how well they correlate with more rigorous, standardised ecological assessments. Management activities (fencing, pest and weed control, etc) have been, or are being, implemented to improve the condition of selected ecosystems. The degree to which these activities enhance ecosystem services is being quantified in economic terms.

The next step is the development of a prototype tool for land managers (and those assisting them) for assessments of ecosystem quality before and after improvements. It will be a fine line between developing an assessment tool that is robust enough to correlate well with the more rigorous, standardised ecological assessments developed by ecologists, and having a tool that is readily usable by land managers (or those helping them) on the ground.

Robin Sallis is now working on a prototype web-based tool for native forest assessment, using the RAF that we have developed. This prototype will need to be independently tested. Web-based tools will also be developed for streams and wetland assessments. Robin has a proven track record in development of web-based tools and he has a special interest in working with organisations in the not-for-profit and conservation sectors. Robin was instrumental in the development of TTT's native forest toolkit - https://toolkit.tanestrees.org.nz/

A substantive paper was provisionally accepted for the Restoration Ecology journal. The lead writer was project leader Dr Clint Cameron. The paper provided evidence to show that the RAF for native forest ecosystems is accurate and robust when measured against standard quantitative metrics. This should help shore up the evidence base needed for sustainable lending.

Other publications are in the pipeline. The wetland and streams RAFs and comparative quantitative analyses will be turned into manuscripts for publication. Note all the RAFs will continue to evolve and be refined.

Also, Rhiannon Warren and her masters supervisor Professor Bruce Burns - who are part of the project team - are working on turning her thesis into a manuscript for submission to the NZ Journal of Ecology. Her MSc thesis was titled 'Dynamics of woolly nightshade and native plant succession in Northland retired pasture environments'.

This research had surprising results, indicating that *Solanum mauritianum* (woolly nightshade) has potential as a nurse species in the succession towards native forest. However, some woolly nightshade stands exhibited increased regeneration of other invasive species, indicating the need for management to prevent non-native dominance. And while woolly nightshade can support native regeneration, its persistent seedbank, prolific fruiting, and flammability pose ecological risks. Also, the fine hairs on its leaves and stems can be an irritant and cause respiratory problems, and the berries are moderately toxic to people and livestock.

These findings emphasise the importance of adaptive management that balances the potential benefits of woolly nightshade (as a nurse species) with active control measures to support native forest restoration in New Zealand.

Matt Funaki, a PhD student, is also part of the project team. His PhD work involves valuing ecosystem services of wetlands on farms. This includes direct measures and economic valuation of regulatory ecosystem services - flood mitigation, sediment, nutrient and *E.coli* attenuation.

For more information contact:

- Dr Jacqui Aimers - jacqui.aimers@xtra.co.nz
- Mel Ruffell - mel@tanestrees.org.nz

Regenerating native podocarp/hardwood forest on a Pāmu Landcorp farm in Northland. This was one of the forest ecosystems that was assessed in the ecosystem services project.

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6. Tall Tree Booklet

Te Uru Rākau and Tāne's Tree Trust worked together to produce a booklet on growing our native tall-tree species. This was launched at Fieldays. Copies were snaffled up like hot cakes. Hard copies will be mailed out to our TTT members. The booklet was also put in conference bags for the NZ Institute of Forestry "Emerging Stronger" (post Cyclones) Conference held in June 2025 in Napier.

This booklet provides a guide to common native tall tree species. It explains the suitability of these species for growers – farmers, other private landowners, councils, iwi and investors. The management conditions for each species are described, along with both timber and non-timber uses and environmental services. If land owners or managers are thinking of planting native tree species, this guide will help them choose the right species for the land. The guide covers 15 iconic tall tree species, including kauri, rimu, kahikatea and tōtara. For each species, the guide provides information on:

- optimal growing conditions
- silvicultural requirements
- pest and disease threats
- timber properties
- cultural services and Mātauranga Māori.

A digital copy is free to download via this link:
https://www.tanestrees.org.nz/site/assets/files/1069/a-new-zealand-guide-to-growing-our-native-tall-tree-species.pdf

7. Other projects and activities

National Fieldays

For the fourth consecutive year, Tāne's Tree Trust (TTT) attended the National Agricultural Fieldays at Mystery Creek in mid-June 2025 as part of the MPI–Te Uru Rākau (TUR) Forestry Hub. Our stand featured TTT publications, a beautifully crafted farm-grown tōtara window frame supplied by Paul Quinlan, and a new display of native tree wood samples. These proved popular with visitors, who enjoyed comparing the colour and weight of different native species.

On Thursday, Sam Keenan, Deputy Director-General of Te Uru Rākau (New Zealand Forest Service), and Todd McClay, Minister of Forestry, visited the Forestry Hub to present the inaugural Growing Native Forests Champions Awards. The awards aim to celebrate those growing native forests, share knowledge on their importance, and inspire more people to establish and manage native forestry to meet multiple objectives.

Out of five categories, two TTT trustees won awards in their categories:

- Trees on Farms – Ian Brennan and Trisha Wren (Cassie's Farm)
- Lifestyle Block Owner – Paul and Katharina Quinlan.

Mel Ruffell (TTT CEO) discusses with a member of the public native forestry and the TTT resources for landowners and forest managers at the TTT stand within the MPI-TUR Forestry Hub at 2025 National Fieldays, Mystery Creek, near Hamilton.

Ian Brennan and Trisha Wren receive their Growing Native Forests Champions Award for Cassie's Farm. Photo: TUR

Paul and Katharina Quinlan receiving their award in the Lifestyle Block Owner category. Photo: TUR

Pūniu River Care audit

PROJECT STATUS: Second year of three years

Tāne's Tree Trust (TTT) was commissioned by Pūniu River Care (PRC), with funding from the Waikato River Authority, to undertake a two-year audit of three restoration sites planted by PRC in 2024. The sites, covering a total of approximately 10 hectares, are being assessed for survival, early growth, and health over the two-year period.

TTT recently completed the first-year post-planting assessment, with initial results showing good survival across all sites. The assessment involved remeasuring 8–10 permanent monitoring plots on each property, recording all seedlings within a 10 m diameter circular plot. For each seedling, the species, height, vigour (health score from 1 to 5), and any damage or other establishment-related observations were recorded.

The final remeasurement will be carried out in winter 2026, two years after planting, followed by a summary report with recommendations.

The Pūniu River Care afforestation planting on retired hill country of a drystock farm near Wharepūhunga, Southern Waikato.

For more information contact Michael Bergin michaelbergin.erl@gmail.com

NZIF Napier Conference

The NZIF Conference was held in Napier at the end of June 2025 with the theme Emerging Stronger – Strengthening Forests, Infrastructure and Community, Post-Cyclone. The programme was interesting and looked at wider land-use issues in an era of climate change, with an excellent line-up of speakers.

David Bergin and Jacqui Aimers led a CPD (continuing professional development) session on Native Afforestation the day before the conference started. This was well attended with about 65 participants. Meg Graeme then presented in conference session 6: Innovative Restoration Techniques with an update on the TTT Transitioning Exotic Forest to Native research project. Jacqui and Meg were also part of the subsequent panel discussion for the session (responding to questions from the audience) along with Mike Marden and Penny Baker and session chair Heidi Dungey.

The TTT stand was run by several TTT people, providing a wide range of TTT resources. The native timber samples were a hit - thanks Mike! TTT brochures and the native tall tree booklet were also included in the conference satchels.

There was lots of positive feedback regarding native species, our CPD, CCF systems and Meg's talk. The rapport was amazing, with great networking opportunities.

The NZIF presentation can be downloaded here - T TT Transition presentation-NZIF June 2025.pdf

Servicing requests for information

Tāne's Tree Trust is experiencing a significant rise in requests for advice on establishing and managing native forestry. This reflects increased traffic to our website, where project updates and freely available resources such as videos, factsheets, and tools including our planting and budgeting calculator, growth and yield, economics and carbon calculators, and the planted natives monitoring tool are attracting growing interest.

Our Office Manager, Keri Wilson, endeavours to respond to all enquiries and keeps the TTT website regularly updated with new project information, items of interest for members and visitors, and our regular newsletters.

To become a supporter or member of Tāne's Tree Trust, or for further information, please contact Keri at office@tanestrees.org.nz

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8. Collaboration and acknowledgements

Tāne's Tree Trust would like to thank all those who we collaborate with for ongoing funding and support for another successful year across our range of projects and initiatives.

Project funders include:

- The Tindall Foundation
- Te Uru Rākau
- Ministry for Primary Industries' SFF Futures Fund
- Pāmu Farms
- Tasman Environmental Trust

Project partners and collaborators include:

- Pure Advantage
- NZ Farm Forestry Association
- Trees That Count
- Auckland Regional Council
- NZ Institute of Forestry

APPENDIX 1 - FINANCIAL REPORTS

Statement of Financial Performance

Revenue

Donations, koha, bequests, and other general fundraising activities:*	60,697
General grants:*	0
Capital grants and donations:*	0
Government service delivery grants/contracts:*	263,582
Non-Government service delivery grants/contracts:*	591,357
Membership fees and subscriptions:*	9,313
Revenue from commercial activities:*	0
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue:*	24,189
Other revenue:	0
Total revenue:	**949,138**

Expenses

Expenses related to fundraising:*	0
Employee remuneration and other related expenses:*	57,200
Volunteer related expenses:*	2,125
Expenses related to commerical activities:*	0
Other expenses related to service delivery:*	621,645
Grants and donations made:*	0
Other expenses:*	28,907
Total expenses:	**709,877**

Surplus/deficit

Surplus/deficit:	**239,261**

Statement of Financial Position

Current Assets	
Cash and short-term deposits:*	164,379
Debtors and prepayments:*	50,371
Inventory:*	0
Other current assets:*	2,104
Total current assets:	**216,854**
Non Current Assets	
Property, plant and equipmment:*	1,189
Investments:*	542,982
Other non-current assets:*	0
Total non-current assets:	**544,171**
Total assets:	**761,025**
Liabilities	
Total current liabilities:*	145,113
Total non-current liabilities:*	0
Total liabilities:	**145,113**
Assets less liabilities	
Total assets less total liabilities:	**615,912**
Accumulated Funds	
Capital contributed by owners or members:*	0
Accumulated surplus or deficits:*	342,890
Reserves:*	273,022