MEDIA RELEASE
Tuesday 6 September 2022
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Largest collaborative team working in conservation in Aotearoa receives strategic support grant from Rātā Foundation

South Island's largest funder Rātā Foundation has granted global conservation organisation The Nature Conservancy (TNC) $754,007 to support the delivery of the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance (KMTT) strategy. The grant will support the strategy to deliver the best possible conservation outcomes for people and nature in the Te Tauihu region.

Acknowledging that conservation can go faster alone, but further together, 15 partners came together to form KMTT, currently the largest collaborative team working in conservation in Aotearoa.

The grant will enable TNC to support the environmental objectives of KMTT – a collaborative group of iwi, the Department of Conservation, and all councils in Te Tauihu and the West Coast. TNC will provide strategic support such as improved planning, incentivized land-use changes, and greater coordination of community conservation projects.

"All KMTT partners are working to each other's strengths in their region. The work of the Alliance aligns with the Rātā aim to create a world where people care for each other and the environment so future generations can thrive," Rātā Foundation Chief Executive Leighton Evans says.

KMTT has targeted its landscape-scale work to the 3.5 million hectares across the top of the South Island, which are home to precious natives and rare and endangered species found nowhere else in the world.

"This strategic grant will enable KMTT partners to maximise the impact of the funding they have achieved, such as the $20.8 million of Government money received through Jobs for Nature, with $7.6 million focused on iwi-led regeneration in Te Hoiere/Pelorus Sound," Mr Evans says.

Kotahitanga mō te Taiao means collective action for our nature, says KMTT Co-Chair and DOC Director, Partnerships Martin Rodd.

"Across our iwi, council, and DOC members, we work in collaboration with community, business, and philanthropy to achieve outcomes for people and nature on a scale that no one entity could achieve alone," Mr Rodd says.

For example, KMTT is restoring critical areas within regional catchments to build resilience to climate change, from mountains to the sea.

“Projects of this scale require considerable planning. Rātā’s strategic investment in capacity and capability building supports us in completing this planning and investing directly in quick wins that accelerate our momentum.

“It enables us to prepare major investment-ready funding proposals that will help restore our natural world for current and future generations,” Mr Rodd says.

“Mātauranga Māori and iwi aspirations and priorities are integral to the Alliance. The collaboration from all partners is already making a difference in tackling our challenging environmental issues,” says Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Kuia General Manager and KMTT Co-Chair Dave Johnston.

“Some of our early results are phenomenal as we think big and lead the change together – iwi, councils, DOC, and TNC. We are gaining great momentum, which is needed, and others are partnering with us as they see the effectiveness of our new way of working together,” Mr Johnston says.

“All perspectives are important, and sometimes we need to look back to go forward. We are guided by our ancestors, who were instinctive in their approach. Some of their methods are considered best practice in sustainable living, and providing a solution to deal with this crisis at our doorstep.”

Mr Johnston reflects, “How we work in the Alliance exemplifies how we can work together to overcome adversity through kotahitanga and keeping the well-being of all whānau and nature at our centre.”

Rātā has focused strategic funding in its northern region on initiatives that will have landscape-scale impact on enhancing the natural environment and emphasise capacity building to strengthen the effectiveness of community organisations, Mr Evans says.

“TNC’s mahi fulfils both these efforts,” he says.

TNC, a global conservation organisation, brings considerable international expertise and capacity to drive conservation outcomes and sustainable land use as the backbone organisation for Kotahitanga mō te Taiao. It has global experience working with indigenous communities on landscape-scale conservation projects.

“The Nature Conservancy is proactively working with the KMTT iwi partners to enable meaningful leadership and participation. It has supported engagement at the first of our major wānanga/workshops, and we look forward to the outcomes of our work reflecting the important values of our iwi partners as a result,” says Debs Martin, KMTT Programme Manager for The Nature Conservancy – New Zealand.

“It’s an exciting time as we really step up to what resourcing co-governance and iwi-led programmes can achieve, delivering good results for the taiao across Te Tauihu/top of the South Island,” Ms Martin adds.

Spatial mapping, community and iwi engagement, and development of Te Tauihu-wide success measures are other components of TNC’s support for KMTT, which are covered by the grant.

The crucial aspects of the project are TNC’s support for building capacity for community organisations and on-the-ground outcomes such as its significant weed control project Restoring and

Protecting Flora, prioritising high impact weed control programmes to protect ecologically significant sites identified across Te Tauihu.

This includes a goal for 14,000 seedlings to be planted for weed suppression at 3 hectares of priority sites over the next few years.

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PHOTO CREDIT: Melissa Banks

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