

Congratulations on being a nominee in the Environment Southland Community Awards.

This year will be the 30th year of the Environment Southland Community Awards, which celebrates winners and finalists in a gala dinner at the Ascot Park Hotel on Thursday 22 October.

The judging panel is made up of two Environment Southland councillors and one organisational representative. Two or three judges may be in attendance.

Format for judging

Once nominations close, the nominations will be collated and each nominee will be contacted and advised of the next steps. For those who will be visited a mutually agreeable time will be arranged.

There are usually seven to eight judging days during August and September. Each day is carefully coordinated to make sure each visit has sufficient time, and the judges time is used most efficiently.

When you are called about your nomination, we'll ask about what you want to show the judges. This will give us a good indication of how much time to allow and any health and safety requirements. The judges prefer to visit the site, but recognise that it's not always practicable, so nominees may need to provide supporting material if this is the case (photos, etc.).



▲ 2025 winner of the Kaitiaki Tohu Pou Award – Rebecca McLeod.

Once all visits have been completed, the judges will carefully review their notes and make final decisions about the award recipient

Some nominees may move categories at the judges' discretion.

You are welcome to request a copy of your nomination form if you have been nominated by someone else and would like to see what has been submitted.

Thanks to this year's award sponsors:

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Environment Southland

Community Awards 2026

What to expect from a judges' visit

Judges' visits typically take around 30 minutes to one hour. Farm visits usually take 1½ – 2 hours. A communications staff member will accompany the judges. They will take photos of you and your project for the awards night.

At the end of the visit, a few minutes will be needed to record a short video. We ask each of the nominees to speak on camera about their work/project/business. The videos are used on social media, the Environment Southland website and also at the awards night. By accepting the nomination, you agree to have photos and the video taken of you, your project/business/school. Please ensure permission is obtained from anyone appearing in photos and videos. In the case of children, this should be obtained from caregivers and we may ask you to sign a permission for minors.

Don't worry about bad weather. The judges will come prepared for any eventuality.

What to show and tell the judges

The judges will have read the information in your nomination form and any supporting documentation prior to their visit.

They have a judging criteria that is specific to each category, this will determine the type of questions the judges may ask. Judges are looking for you to tell them about your project/action. They want to hear about:

- ▶ Your strategy and objectives. Do you have measurable outcomes?
- ▶ Your levels of engagement with the project/action in the community.
- ▶ The execution and effectiveness of your project.
- ▶ What makes your project/action unique?

It is great if you can show the judges your project site. If this is not possible, photos or a video can be really helpful as well.

The judging visit is a great opportunity to share your work and your passion for your project/action. Don't be afraid to share all the wonderful things you are doing and be proud to share what you have done/are doing.

Awards evening

There will be promotion prior to the awards night of all of our finalists, and afterwards of the winners in newspapers and online. You are welcome to share the videos and photos from our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/enviromentsouthland).

Each finalist will be invited to the awards gala dinner on Thursday 22 October at the Ascot Park Hotel. The awards gala dinner is designed to celebrate our finalists and their work. We will provide information regarding additional ticket availability for supporters that you may be interested in inviting. Each finalist receives four tickets, with more available for purchase if required. The dress code is business/formal.

On the awards night, each finalist will only be presented in one category, but judges will have considered the nomination in all the categories that were selected on the form.

Any questions?

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Lee Harris on 027 519 4185 or email lee.harris@es.govt.nz



Terms and conditions of entry

Environment Southland Community Awards 2026

The Environment Southland Community Awards recognise environmental excellence and effort in the community.

They are organised and run by the regional council, Environment Southland, and are community-based awards focused on the region of Southland and its people.

Nominees and their project/s must:

- be for the benefit of Southland
- clearly demonstrate impact and outcomes of achievement
- show how their contribution makes a positive difference to Southland's environment.

It is the responsibility of the person who enters the nomination to ensure all parties agree to their nomination and are aware of these terms and conditions of entry and what is involved. It is also that person's responsibility to ensure adequate and appropriate information is provided about the project with the nomination.

It is the responsibility of the nominator to ensure nominees understand they are sharing their contact details with Environment Southland.

Nominees may be contacted as part of the Environment Southland Community Awards Alumni programme.

Nominees may only enter once in three years, unless the project is different or has had significant changes. (Any acceptance within the three-year period is at the discretion of Environment Southland Award organisers.)

Political activist groups and/or lobby groups are not eligible.

If a nominee or member of a nominated group is standing for an elected position in an election year, they cannot front the nomination.

Judges have the discretion to move nominees between categories if they believe it is appropriate.

Environment Southland reserves the right to use discretion in the acceptance or non-acceptance of nominations in relation to any matters, including:

- For a nominee connected or affiliated to a political group/cause that could be detrimental to Environment Southland and/or its work
- For a nominee with a compliance history/record at Environment Southland
- For a nominee with a public profile contrary to the community spirit of the awards or detrimental to Environment Southland and/or its work.

It is intended that judges will visit all the sites of all nominations where possible. However, judging visits will be capped at 25 nominees. If more than 25 nominations are received, it will be at the discretion of the judges as to whether more visits will take place or a shortlist of finalists is made.

Nominees will receive a visit from the judging panel at an arranged time, suitable to both the nominee and the judges within the allotted judging period. It is the nominee's responsibility to ensure they are available at that time to meet with the judges. This could take up to an hour, or even longer for farm visits.

Environment Southland will endeavour to accommodate nominees, but if a suitable date/time cannot be found, the nomination will be held over until the following year or will be removed at the request of the nominee. The nomination could also be considered without a site visit, if this is agreed to by both the nominee and the judges.

Information provided on the nomination form may be used for initial judging and the judges will read the nomination form prior to any visit. The judges' visit will be an opportunity for a nominee to add additional information and to show what they have achieved. This could include details of the project, its history, how it has been managed, the contribution of individuals and its impact in the community.

Nominees will be filmed/photographed (usually at the time of judging) and may appear in print and social media.

Environment Southland is the sole owner of any images, footage or interview material collected during the awards judging process and reserves the right to use this media at its discretion.

The final edit of material (photo, video or written content) is at the discretion of Environment Southland and is not subject to approval from the nominee. The material may also be used in other Environment Southland collateral at the discretion of council staff.

Sponsors may reproduce award content for their own use, including nominee videos or photos.

Use of award branding by nominees and winners must be approved by Environment Southland award organisers.

