# EnviroSOUTH

Spring 2025

The hidden life beneath the water

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Holding the line

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environment SOUTHLAND
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Taiao Tonga

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EnviroSOUTH

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### Contact Us


Cnr North Rd & Price St, Invercargill
(03) 211 5115 | 0800 76 88 45
service@es.govt.nz | www.es.govt.nz
www.facebook.com/environmentsouthland


### Cover

**◂◂ Nui Explorer Oliver shows off his 'chainsaw'.**

## When I retire in August, I'll be leaving behind the stimulus and challenges that is daily life in a regional council.

After six years, three as chief executive, I can say that it has been a privilege to serve the community.

Our mission, to work with communities to improve the environment, is positively reflected in our community awards; supporting and recognising Southlanders doing great mahi for environmental gains and, in turn, inspiring others to do the same.

With the local elections this year and the Chairman stepping down as well, there will be opportunity for new faces with fresh thinking and energy to join seasoned Councillors and staff to take the organisation forward.

Who those people are around the Council table, will be up to you. The local elections are coming up and your vote will count.

*Wilma Falconer, Chief Executive, Environment Southland*

## This is farewell from me, as I'm not standing in the local elections in October.

It has been an honour to serve Murihiku Southland on the regional council these past 18 years and to have been the Chairman since 2016. I also feel very privileged to have chaired the mayoral forum during the past few years.

Things don't move quickly in local government, but when I look back, I can see we made good progress.

The Southland Water and Land Plan was a big one, and pursuing practical solutions for Southland has been an enduring approach.

Soon you will have the opportunity to decide who you want on the Council. Every vote for Environment Southland is a vote for the region's future and I encourage you to get involved.

*Nicol Horrell, Chairman, Environment Southland*

▲ *Raynger, Riley and Tāwera climb the Queens Park 'mountains'.*

# Active nature explorers

Early childhood education wasn't the initial career choice for Kate Knight, who started in hospitality and then joined the police force.

Seeing young people get into trouble made Kate think that, perhaps, if they had a better start in life, they'd do better.

"So I channeled my energy and went to teachers college, and here I am," says Kate.

"I wanted to start with the youngest tamariki, where I can make a real difference."

With eight years teaching experience under her belt and knowledge of bush programmes, Kate now runs the nature discovery programme 'Nui Explorers', at Invercargill's Active Explorers – an early learning centre.

Ten children, aged four-and-a-half, go with Kate to Queens Park every Wednesday morning, where they immerse themselves in nature and the endless learning opportunities this offers.

The children explore a range of activities – from climbing trees and bark chip 'mountains' to learning about pests and the changing seasons. It's about risky play, problem solving, building resilience, and nurturing nature.

"It's important to strengthen their relationship to the land and nature, as they will one day become the kaitiaki of it," says Kate.

One boy took his dad to the park to show him everything from their class adventures, walking around for three-and-a-half hours. "I'm really proud, but I'm also really sorry," she laughs.

> "It's important to strengthen their relationship to the land and nature, as they will one day become the kaitiaki of it."
>
> **Kate Knight**

Kate grew up close to Queens Park, walking her dogs there every day. She says she knows it like the back of her hand.

"I'm just a true Southlander, I think, it's on my doorstep, so I like to get amongst it."

▲ *Kate and her explorers investigate a leaf.*

Each session is led by the tamariki, who choose what they want to do, which inspires creative play.

Something as simple as a stick can become anything from a wand, to something for stirring, or a fishing rod. "They do a lot of fishing," she laughs.

"It's so cool they can switch that part of their brain on when we're out there," she says

"Seeing what the tamariki get out of it, becoming more confident, learning and having fun. I think to myself, 'this is why I do it.'"

# Environmental wins lead to production rewards

Diving head-first into agriculture has seen Cam Nelson become one of Murihiku Southland's farming leaders.

A Murihiku Southland born and bred farming lad, Cam has found his passion for farming and the results of his mahi are highly impressive.

Cam is not only at the helm of a highly productive farm, but one that is making an outstanding commitment to environmental progress and sustainability.

Cam instantly became one of Murihiku Southland's environmental leaders when he and his family were crowned the Ballance Farm Environment Awards 2025 Southland Supreme winner, through their Nelson Farming Company.

With partner Christina Vaughan and parents Wally and Jan Nelson, the family took home the Beef + Lamb NZ Livestock Farm Award, Rabobank Agri-Business Management Award, and NZFET Biodiversity Award on a huge night in Invercargill.

Even after scooping three prizes, Cam admits that going on to take top honours and being crowned Southland's supreme winner was a big surprise.

"It was a bit of a shock to be honest, we weren't really expecting it."

"Sarah Thorne from Thriving Southland encouraged us to have a go and we thought we would just see what happens."

Once that initial shock wore off, the winning experience has been a great one for Cam.

"Going up to the national awards was an awesome experience, we have met a lot of great people and got a lot of new contacts."

"The winner's field day we had was a pretty intense, but it has been a great experience."

Standing on the stage at the Ballance Farm Environment Awards wasn't something Cam would have even considered ten years prior, when he started his apprenticeship as a diesel mechanic.

"I did ten years as a diesel mechanic; I did eight years here before two in Australia," he says.

"When I came back from Aussie I worked on the farm and it sort of went from there."

The award judges were clearly highly impressed with the Nelson Farming Company's practices and approach to farming.

One point noted was the Nelsons' strong intergenerational thinking and support that was at the heart of their operation.

Wally still plays an integral role, with Cam suggesting that retirement is not something he is likely to ever consider.

▲ *Christina Vaughan and Cam Nelson at the Nelson Farming Company property in Central Murihiku Southland.*

▲ *A herd of deer are on the lookout before being moved into the yards at the Nelsons' farm.*

Jan is also hands on, looking after the farm's accounts.

The Nelson Farming Company runs an intensive operation with 1200 deer farmed on 164ha at Central Murihiku Southland.

Wally and Jan were sheep and beef farmers before the family operation was transitioned gradually into a highly productive deer farm.

> "What we have found is that where we have made improvements that are good for the land or the environment, it is good for production and for the overall benefit of the farm"
>
> **Cam Nelson**

That intensity is at the heart of Cam's passion for what he does and the success that he and the rest of his family have achieved.

"We do run an intensive operation, there aren't too many holidays or days off so you have to love what you do", he says.

"The other thing, too, is that you are always looking for areas you can improve in and ways to make the farm more efficient."

The results of the awards judging process noted that continued improvement was at the core of the Nelson Farming Company's success.

Whether it be genetics, winter grazing practices, or environmental areas, the Nelsons run a tight ship, both environmentally, as well as productively.

"What we have found is that where we have made improvements that are good for the land or the environment, it is good for production and for the overall benefit of the farm."

"One example would be where we have had wet areas, the deer would get in there and wallow and make a real mess."

"They'd drag it over good pasture, so we have fenced off a lot of wet areas and done a lot of planting."

Riparian planting has been at the heart of the range of environmental improvements made on the farm, which include the establishment of sediment traps and measures to improve water flow on the property.

The Nelsons have also made significant advances in their winter grazing practices, which now include using a wintering shed and feed pads.

Judges noted biodiversity has been further supported through an ongoing planting programme, which includes replacing eucalyptus trees with native species, supported by the establishment of an on-farm nursery.

Judges praised the farm for maintaining a high level of production while keeping its environmental footprint to a minimum.

The Nelsons were also credited for their deep commitment to environmental sustainability.

Mahi to drive genetic improvements of their stock has been another area of consistent improvement noted by the award judges.

The Nelsons' use of pinpoint genetic selection sees all stock DNA tested which supports those breeding choices.

"Dad started off with four hinds and now we have 1200 deer on the farm, Cam says.

"With the work we do on the breeding side of it, it is great to see the results coming through."

"You love seeing the two-year-olds come through each year."

▲ *Cam Nelson assessing stock with son Eddie.*

▲ *Kelsi Hayes with some of the seedlings from the Waikawa Community Nursery.*

# Delving into the hidden life beneath the water's surface

With her waders on and a kākahi freshwater mussel shell in hand, Kelsi Hayes is part scientist, part environmentalist, and wholly committed to the land and waters that raised her.

Growing up in Progress Valley, in the Waikawa catchment, Kelsi's connection to the land runs deep. The second eldest of a sheep farming family with four siblings, she grew up helping on the farm, playing in creeks and, of course, joining in on the musical stylings her family is known for.

"We do make a terrible racket," she says.

The Hayes' have lived in Progress Valley for generations, their roots intertwined with the forests once felled by their ancestors.

“There’s a story that one of them said, ‘If you want to court one of my daughters, you’ve got to fell an acre of bush first.’”

It’s a tale told with a laugh, but it underscores a legacy that Kelsi is now working to balance.

“I guess when we talk about my ancestors cutting down all the trees, I probably need to do a wee bit of something to settle that balance,” she says.

“It would be really bad if in a hundred years we’ve lost these things – kanakana, kākahi. Just because we didn’t care enough.”

So now Kelsi’s doing her PhD in Zoology at the University of Otago, studying kākahi, New Zealand’s native freshwater mussels. These unassuming creatures are more than just riverbed dwellers, they are indicators of ecosystem health.

“When you’re doing a PhD, it has to be unique science. Nobody’s really studied freshwater mussels, so it’s easy to get the tick.

“But it’s more than that. I love mucking around in rivers and creeks. It’s pretty fun when your job is playing in a creek.”

Her passion for freshwater ecosystems is matched by a pragmatic approach. “Freshwater mussels are particularly easy to study because they don’t move very far,” she says. “It’s half part intelligence, half part laziness.”

There’s no laziness in the approach though. Her research spans from the macro – the climate, geology, and geography, to the micro – where she examines the exact substrate stability of a streambed to understand where kākahi thrive.

Her plan is to collect e-DNA samples, conduct social science interviews, and dive into historical data to map where these mussels once lived and why they may have disappeared.

She’s now looking for Southlanders who have done e-DNA testing in their creeks to share their data with her and for any anecdotal information on areas of the region where kākahi used to be but no longer are.

Kelsi’s life is a blend of science and community, of fieldwork and music.

> “I love mucking around in rivers and creeks. It’s pretty fun when your job is playing in a creek.”
>
> **Kelsi Hayes**

She volunteers at the local museum, plays banjo with her dad, and shares stories that are as much about people as they are about place.

Whether it’s helping with a neighbour’s unconventional funeral or chatting about one of the many other projects she’s a part of, Kelsi’s world is rich with connection.

As one of the members of the Waikawa Community Nursery, she’s working with the group to provide accessible and ecologically suitable native plants for the area. Simply put, the aim is to restore the riparian margin along the Waikawa River and therefore improve the river itself and the indigenous biodiversity values of the catchment.

Formed earlier this year, the group is a way for locals to learn to propagate plants, learn about the environment and to keep connected.

For Kelsi, environmental work isn’t just about data points. It’s about ensuring that future generations can still play in creeks, find eels, and marvel at the hidden life beneath the water’s surface.

“You want the environment to be healthy because if the environment’s healthy then we get a bit healthier too. We’re all connected,” she says. “We can’t exclude ourselves from the environment and think we can live in a concrete place with no ecosystem. It doesn’t work.”

▲ *Kākahi (native freshwater mussel) shells.*

# Holding the line

From quiet conversations with landowners to long days on the digger, Shane Dickson brings local knowledge, practical ingenuity and a deep sense of responsibility to every job he undertakes on the Ōreti River.

A born and bred Southlander, Shane grew up on farms around the Winton area – the place he still calls home. He's passionate about the Ōreti catchment where he and his family work to protect their community from flooding.

"The river's not far away, it's on our doorstep really," Shane says. "My friends and I would often end up down at the Ōreti River swimming in the summer."

Helping to manage the river that's "become part of home" is what drives Shane and his small team at their family-run business, Stirling Contracting.

People who have not experienced a major flood probably drive over a bridge across a river without giving much thought to the flood banks nearby. In rural Southland, they're part of the landscape — grassy embankments that seem as permanent and nondescript as the paddocks they pass through. But these mounds of earth, rock, and grass hold the line between routine and disaster.

They know that better than most at Stirling Contracting. The company has been working on Murihiku Southland's flood protection schemes for generations.

"In the early 1950s the work focused on land clearing, and then in the 80s that shifted to river works and flood bank construction."

"We've been building and maintaining flood banks in Southland for as long as there's been an Environment Southland – and before that, it was the Catchment Board," says Shane, who works alongside his partner Jan Stirling and stepson Raymond, the latest generation to lead the family business.

Stirling Contracting helped build many of the original flood banks in the 1980s. These days, they're increasingly focused on making sure the structures remain effective, resilient and ready for the next big high river flow event.

"In the last couple of years, we've changed a little bit in what we're doing," Shane says. "We're doing a lot more maintenance on the flood bank side of things, repairing and rebuilding them."

Now the team is delivering targeted upgrades to key parts of the Ōreti Flood Protection Scheme. This scheme provides protection for Winton, Dipton West and the surrounding productive farmland.

That work includes rock strengthening, repairing access ramps and sections of flood bank that have slumped, and removing rank grass and weeds.

Shane says the biggest risks aren't always obvious.

> "You could see the makings of a potential disaster. The lack of grass cover around the tree didn't help....The water starts pouring in....And all hell breaks loose."
>
> **Shane Dickson**

"There have been some big old macrocarpa trees that we've removed over the last six years. One had debris built up around it – you could see the makings of a potential disaster. The lack of grass cover around the tree didn't help. That's how it starts. The water starts pouring in, and next thing, you've got a weakened structure and it breaches. And all hell breaks loose."

Experience and technical expertise are important, but so are relationships with landowners.

"The majority of the farmers we work with – we've known them for a long time and we have a good rapport with them," Shane says.

"When we turn up back at their place, they're more than willing and helpful in terms of getting the job done."

That partnership extends to the quality of the work itself.

"We've had a few farmers where we've repaired flood banks on their place and they've been quite impressed with the product we've left behind. It basically just looked like a worked-up paddock, but it's a flood bank – all re-grassed and easier to maintain. We're also using a different type of grass seed now, a turf grass, which has more root structure in it."

It's hard, physical work – digging, cutting, repairing – but it's not just about the tools.

"One day we could be fencing; the next day removing crack willow; the next week, doing some repair work," Shane says. "We're just doing what we do."

In doing so, they're making Murihiku Southland more resilient – even if not everyone sees it.

"Nobody really sees it, but we are making a difference," Shane says.

"Just because they don't live on the river doesn't mean it's not going to impact them. If there's a flood and the flood banks aren't in good shape, it's going to impact everyone."

▼ *Shane (centre) works alongside his stepson Raymond Stirling (right) and Nathan Clarke (left), who has been with Stirling Contracting for 38 years. During the past year, they've been working to improve Environment Southland's flood banks on the Aparima and Ōreti Rivers.*

# Talking Trash

When a young Fiona Walker read a children's story about a rubbish dump, the concept was so intriguing her parents organised a family outing.

On the Tokoroa dairy farm where she was raised alongside three siblings, waste was dealt with in one of two ways – it was either burned or tipped into a dead-hole.

The dump was a revelation – all that household trash out in the open – green waste, food waste, packaging and bric-a-brac, along with furniture and whiteware which could have had a second life.

Fiona arrived in the south a decade or so later, with a freshly inked Bachelor of Environmental Management degree from Lincoln University, and firm ideas that people needed to improve their environmental footprint.

Her first job was at Fonterra's Edendale Plant.

"Amongst other elements, Fonterra had a really strong directive around waste – looking at both diversion and some of the challenges."

Reduce, recycle and always consider whole of life of the product. It was powerful messaging which resonated with her early experiences.

Fiona worked with the company in roles throughout New Zealand before returning south to raise a family and begin an environmental management consultancy in 2017.

▼ *WasteNet Southand director Fiona Walker at the Wyndham Transfer Station.*

"I saw this huge opportunity for positive change."

In 2024 she took a sideways step, accepting a newly created role to head WasteNet Southland, which allowed her to continue her environmental focus while gaining an insight into governance and the workings of local government.

> "The projects are both broad and exciting, from Aurora College in Invercargill with its closed loop kitchen gardening and recycling to the Te Hau O Te Ora Mataura using reusable incontinence products, to Enviroschools initiatives."
>
> **Fiona Walker**

The WasteNet office is in the Invercargill City Council building, but it is equally responsible to the Gore and Southland District Councils who set up the organisation in the early 2000s.

"We are quite unique – other councils may collaborate over waste management, but the Southland councils are the only ones with a formal partnership arrangement."

It has proven a successful model - offering avenues for cost efficiencies, economies of scale and consistent messaging across the region. Working in this manner has been paying off too.

This year's bin inspection campaign – checking the contents of yellow recycling bins across Southland – has been a huge success.

Cross contamination with rubbish was impacting recycling, so the three strikes system was devised to check bins.

In the 2023-2024 year 944 tonnes of material in contaminated recycling bins were redirected to landfill, at an equivalent cost of $339,000 to ratepayers.

In the first phase, non-compliance was equally spread between the 'don't cares' – people who were dumping dirty nappies and deer carcases in recycling bins – and the 'don't knows' – people who were putting in soft plastics like plastic bags and clingwrap that can't currently be recycled in kerbside yellow bins.

Overwhelming support from the community was encouraging – and rewarding.

Within two months, 92% of bins were getting green ticks, up from 80% at the first inspection. And that means we all win.

"One of the reasons we divert waste from landfill is because it's becoming a more, and more expensive disposal method. So, one of the easiest ways to save money on waste disposal is to create less waste."

That is challenging, because New Zealand's population continues to grow.

WasteNet's Community Waste Minimisation Fund grants money to community and individual projects across Southland that reduce waste.

They don't specify what those projects might look like because they don't want to limit what those projects might entail.

"The projects are both broad and exciting, from Aurora College in Invercargill with its closed loop kitchen gardening and recycling to the Te Hau O Te Ora Mataura using reusable incontinence products, to Enviroschools initiatives, says Fiona.

"Children are our future. They are just so much more aware, and they are the ones who pull the family into line."

▲ *Tamariki at the waste reduction workshop in Invercargill.*

## Waste reduction workshops

Thanks to funding from WasteNet Southland, 200 children from 18 primary schools spent time learning about reducing waste, promoting sustainability, and building eco-friendly habits.

Facilitators from the University of Otago, Environment Southland, WasteNet Southland and Fiordland Community Garden were involved at waste reduction workshops held at Invercargill and Gore during June.

The event, which was open to all primary schools, was organised by Environment Southland.

## Enviroschools

Enviroschools is a nationwide programme supporting childhood centres and schools, which commit to a long-term sustainability journey.

Tamariki connect with and explore the environment, then plan, design and take action in their local places in collaboration with their communities.

There are 61 Enviroschools in Southland (24 ECE centres and 37 schools) involving about 7,800 tamariki. The programme is a shared service with all the Southland Councils and is delivered by Environment Southland.

Enviroschools

# Caregiver's dedication earns winter warmth

## Michelle Jefferis doesn't seek recognition, but this winter, she's getting it.

Michelle was one of three recipients of the Environment Southland Firewood Giveaway, nominated not by a neighbour or a friend, but by the man who knows her best, her husband Graeme.

Graeme lives with arthritis and Parkinson's disease, conditions that have slowly taken away his ability to do the things he once enjoyed.

"I used to provide all the firewood for our household," Graeme wrote in his nomination. "I am no longer able to do this…Michelle has continually looked after me as my condition has deteriorated over the years, not complaining or being overcome as the load on her, as my caregiver, has increased."

Michelle's care doesn't stop at home. The couple raised six children and now have 17 grandchildren, some of whom she cares for so her daughter can work.

Graeme, originally from Southland, met Michelle after moving to Canterbury.

Then, over three decades ago, he moved back to Southland with their family and settled into working on farms for Tangiwai Christian Charitable Trust.

Eighteen months later, the Trust decided to exit the business in Southland, so Graeme and two others decided to take over.

Michelle says that through the farms, they ran a programme focused on bringing in young people to work, which ran for about 21 years.

"They ran it all around Southland just with youth that fell out of the system. Graeme really loved it and loved the experience. We sold it to the YMCA. Then Graeme worked with them for about two years before he had to give up 10 years ago because of the Parkinson's," Michelle says.

The nomination from Graeme was a complete surprise to Michelle, who didn't hear a peep of it until her husband received a phone call to announce their win. He looked across at her from the kitchen table with a big smile and finally admitted what he'd done.

"It's quite sweet really, that he appreciates the things I do."

The firewood giveaway, supported by Environment Southland Good Wood suppliers Waikiwi Wood and Coal, and Hippo's Heaps, has brought warmth to the Jefferis home and recognition to a couple who has quietly lit up the lives of those around them.

As Michelle puts it, it's very important to have good wood.

"If you haven't got decent wood, it really doesn't burn well, and you don't have good heat."

▼ *Invercargill firewood winners Graeme and Michelle Jefferis.*

## Firewood Giveaway

The Environment Southland Firewood Giveaway recognise people in Gore and Invercargill who may otherwise struggle to get access to high quality, dry wood for their domestic fires.

The promotion also raises awareness about the importance of better burning practices to improve air quality. More on this is available at **BreatheEasySouthland.co.nz**

The promotion attracted more than 400 entries. The other two winners were from Gore and Invercargill.

# Updates

## New maps website

A fan of maps? They're about to get a whole lot better with SouthMaps.

Next time you're checking out water flows, soil moisture, safe swimming sites or consents on our website, look out for the banner inviting you to take a look at SouthMaps.

You'll find all your old favourites on the new site optimised for smart phones.

We'll be running both the old (Beacon) and new sites during a change-over period, so be sure to check it out and let us know what you think.

## Annual Plan and Fees and Charges Schedule adopted

Councillors approved the 2025-26 Environment Southland Annual Plan and the 2025-26 Fees and Charges Schedule in late June.

Environment Southland Chairman Nicol Horrell said the Council will continue its focus on increasing community resilience to flooding but has reduced the average rate increase from the forecast 12.9% to 8.8% for 2025-26 – mainly due to operational savings.

Following consultation in April, the Council introduced a regional river management rate (excluding Waiau rating district) based on capital value, recognising that all Southlanders benefit from river management activity, and in particular the flood infrastructure network.

Individual rate amounts will vary as the overall rate is made up of a mix of land and capital value rates. Some properties not currently paying rates for river management may notice higher increases in their rates.

Environment Southland has options available for paying rates in instalments.

Both documents and more information on rates are available at **es.govt.nz**

## Rates notices by email

Register to receive your rates notices by email so you get them promptly and have less paper lying around at home. Receiving rates notices by email will also save money on postage.

Even if we already have your email address, we can't legally send you your rates notices via email unless you specifically authorise it.

Registering is simple.

1. Pop onto our website (es.govt.nz) and scroll down to the Online Services menu on the left-hand tab on the home page to select email rates notice
2. Enter the address of the property you pay rates for
3. Complete both your email address and a physical mail address for the property.

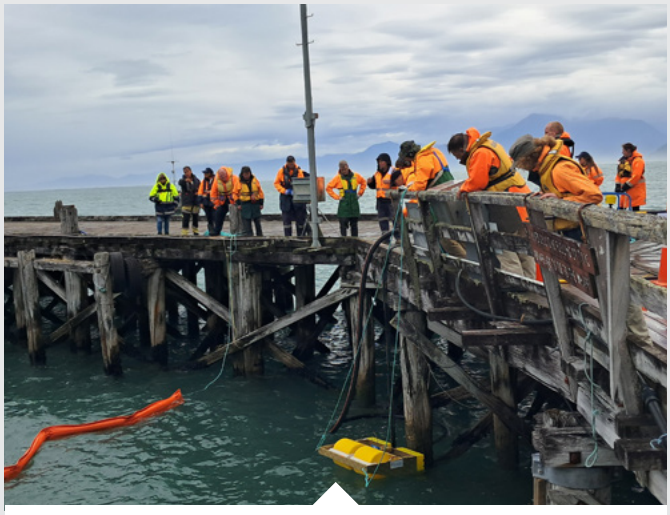
(If you pay rates for more than one property you will need to repeat steps 2 and 3 for each one.)

Your annual rates are due **28 November 2025**.

# Out in the field

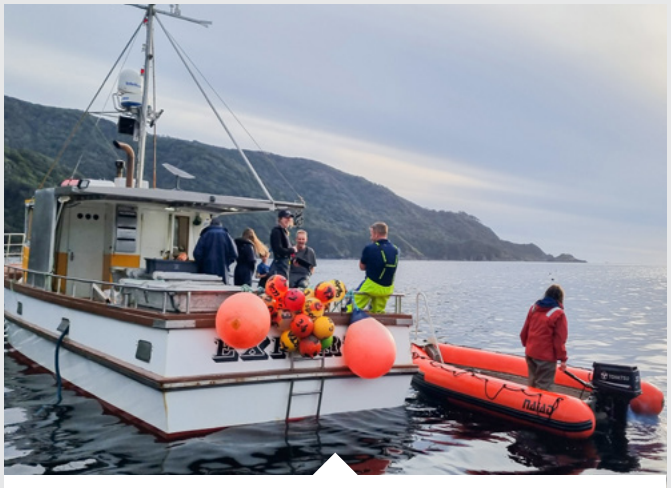
*Waimumu*

Education advisor Jane Tagamoa and land sustainability officer Rob Bird teach students about the importance of wetlands during their planting day at Murray Ward's Waimumu property.



*Jackson Bay*

Teams from Environment Southland, West Coast Regional Council and DOC participate in an oil spill response at Jackson Bay.



*Te Puaitaha / Breaksea Sound*

Marine team leader Kathryn McLachlan and Fiordland Marine Guardian Pete Young on a joint-agency compliance trip in Fiordland. Environment Southland partners with the Department of Conservation, Fisheries NZ, and Biosecurity NZ to undertake vessel and high-risk structure inspections.

*Waikawa*

Land sustainability officer Nate Chandrakumar uses our GIS gear to map, draw, and photograph fencing work in Waikawa and compare it to the plan submitted. The fencing work excludes stock from the native bush and attracted funding from both the biodiversity Environmental Enhancement Fund and the Land Sustainability Catchment Improvement Fund.

# Time to think about...

## August

**Cultivation –** Now's the time to make sure you know the plan for cultivating your winter grazing crops for next season with planting season starting soon. For cultivation information, visit our website **www.es.govt.nz/cultivation**

**Whitebait stands –** With the season (1 Sept-30 Oct) set to start it is a good idea to check everything is in order for both your safety and compliance with the rules. Ensure your stand is structurally sound, appropriately placed and that the name of the owner and ID are displayed on a post or handrail at the entrance to the stand.

## September

**Rabbits –** It's the start of another breeding season for the rabbit population. Carry out rabbit control now before the young rabbits start appearing.

**Possums –** With spring growth, these pests are on the move to look for food sources, so it's a good time to undertake pest control. Several control methods can help landowners manage these pests.

**Boating –** It's time to get ready for the summer season – check your VHF radio, flares, batteries, bilge pumps, lifejackets; service your inflatable PFD and brush up on boating safety rules and ski protocols for your safety and others around you.

**Clean Vessel Pass –** Before loading your boat and gear to head into Fiordland's beautiful waters, ensure you have a current Clean Vessel Pass. The simplest way to apply for a new one, or renew an existing pass, is through our website **es.govt.nz**

**Outdoor burning –** The winter ban on outdoor burning within the Invercargill and Gore airsheds ends on 31 August. While burning is permitted, you always need to be mindful of your neighbours and ensure the smoke does not become a nuisance.

## October

**Mustelids and rats –** With the start of bird breeding season, it's essential to get good control of ferrets, stoats and weasels (mustelids) and rats. There is a variety of traps, so give our biosecurity team a call for advice or visit **pesthub.es.govt.nz**

**Check, clean, dry –** Fishing season starts on 1 October. If you're moving between waterways across the region, be sure to CHECK, CLEAN, DRY any gear that comes into contact with water. Help to protect your favourite waterways this summer.

## November

**Firewood –** Now's the perfect time to sort your firewood supplies for next winter. Visit **BreatheEasySouthland.co.nz** for a list of Good Wood approved suppliers.

To learn more about pest animals and weeds in Murihiku Southland, including control advice and the latest rules, visit our online Southland Pest Hub at **pesthub.es.govt.nz** or call the biosecurity team on **0800 76 88 45**.

# On the farm

You may have heard that the Government is reviewing the freshwater farm plan system. While we won't know the results of this until later in the year, we do know that farm plans will still be required for many farmers.

That's why we established a new team with a specific objective – to provide expert advice that supports Southland farmers to prepare their freshwater farm plans.

Our farm plan advisors offer a free service, guiding farmers through every step of developing their property specific farm plan – and they're available now.

We're here to help, so if you'd like to speak with one of our team then give us a call on **0800 76 88 45**.

It's also about that time of year when you're looking to put seed in the ground for next year's winter crop.

Make sure you've developed a cultivation plan that considers setbacks and critical source areas, before cultivation of the new crop takes place.

You can use this cultivation plan to ensure everyone on farm, including contractors, knows what is required.

If you have any questions reach out to our team for a advice, call us on **0800 76 88 45.**

*By* **Karl Erikson**
*Freshwater programme lead*

# Local elections

# Vote for Murihiku

On 11 October 2025, you'll have the opportunity to shape the future of your community, your region, and your Regional Council.

Whether it's protecting Southland's natural resources, guiding regional development, or ensuring our communities are resilient and thriving, councillors play a vital role in shaping the region's future.

Voting is your way to have a say in Environment Southland's future. Your vote helps choose who will represent your community and shape the region's direction.

To vote, you must be 18 or older, a resident or citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand, and enrolled as a Parliamentary elector.

Please note that there have been some boundary changes for our Southern and Hokonui constituencies affecting over 500 people, plus minor boundary changes for others. These will affect who some people can vote for. Go to **www.es.govt.nz/election-boundaries**

Check your enrolment status or enrol at **enrol.vote.nz** or call **0800 36 76 56**. Voting opens **Tuesday 9 September 2025** and closes **12pm, Saturday 11 October 2025**.

Return your vote by mail or at designated ballot box locations.

## Key dates

**09 September**
Voting opens.

**11 October**
**Election Day**
- Voting closes at midday
- Preliminary results

**16-22 October**
Declaration of results.

**October / November**
Elected members' swearing in ceremony.

environment SOUTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Taiao Tonga

For **now** & **our future**

0800 76 88 45 | service@es.govt.nz | es.govt.nz