

Kūkūwai in Kaikōura

Wetlands — what they
are and how you can
help protect them

Kaikōura has diverse landscapes, biodiversity values, and land uses over short distances. We have an abundance of life in our natural environment that needs collective effort to help protect and enhance it.

Most of Canterbury's natural wetlands have been lost, with Kaikōura's wetland areas significantly reduced due to human impact. This includes farming and urban development.

The small number of natural wetlands left need our help so their unique plant and animal life can prosper, and residents, visitors, and future generations can experience, love, and learn about these amazing places.

What makes wetlands so special?

Wetlands are vital to maintaining healthy waterways and are rich in biodiversity, providing habitat for plants, animals, fish, and insects. They also play an important role in nutrient and sediment filtering, water quality, and flood control – so it is important that we work together to protect them.

Protection of biodiversity within wetlands is a National Environmental Priority – a set of priorities announced in 2007 for the protection of threatened biodiversity on private land. We have been tasked with protecting wetlands and making sure local knowledge and culture is integral to that process.

We aim to do this by working with local landowners, community, and key stakeholders to develop strategies and plans to guide on-the-ground action that will make a real difference.



Photo: Heath Melville

Protecting mahinga kai for future generations

Mahinga kai is the treasures and habitats in which those taonga live. Think freshwater crayfish, lizards, and whitebait, wetlands, waterways, and native vegetation.

Mahinga kai is protected for future generations when we protect wetlands. Understanding how mahinga kai looks and works within the environment is key to understanding the health of an area.

We are all connected to the land and waterways – our waterways are our lifeline. When we have a healthy ecosystem, we are healthy as people, as a community, and as a country.

Healthy wetlands mean
healthy waterways.

Get your wetlands mapped

Wetlands are important because they filter water; reducing sediment, nutrients and other contaminants. They also reduce the risk of flooding and provide habitat for a diverse range of plants and animals, including rare and threatened species like the Canterbury mudfish.

The Canterbury Maps website allows you to view maps and information on land features, services, transport and recreation across the Canterbury region.

We have a layer on Canterbury Maps that shows where wetlands may exist.

Landowners with mapped wetlands have access to potential funding streams, resources, and other handy tips through Environment Canterbury.

If you think you might have a wetland on your property and would like to see if it is mapped get in touch with our Kaikōura office on 03 319 5781. You can also find out more about wetlands and what's available at ecan.govt.nz/wetlands-mapping.

Equally, we are happy to investigate if you feel an error has been made and your property does not have a wetland. This process may involve a ground-survey visit by one of our ecologists, but we will work with you to get this sorted – at our cost.

How do I know if I have a 'wetland' or simply 'wet land'?

There is no easy way to tell if your land that is wet is considered a wetland. The best way to know is by having an ecologist examine the types of plants and wildlife calling your wet land home. Bear in mind that wetlands aren't always wet. Like other ecosystems, they have their dry periods. Conversely, we also recognise that not all wet places are wetlands.

If you think you have a wetland or would like to find out about re-establishing one, contact our Kaikōura office on 03 319 5781. We have ecologists that can assess the area, at no cost to you.

I know I have a wetland, what is the next step?

If you do have a wetland on your property there may be rules in place around whether a consent is needed to carry out activities that might affect it.

It can be tricky to figure out which rules apply when you have a wetland on your property but protecting a wetland on your farm will go a long way to achieving a great consent audit result.

We are here to help you work it out, so that the consenting process is clearer, and the area is mapped correctly.

What can Environment Canterbury do for me?

Wetlands are a long-term investment. They can reduce nutrient losses, decrease the impact of floods and provide a valuable habitat for native plants and animals.

We can help with advice for mapping, fencing, planting, and on maintaining your wetland, to help you create an ecological haven for you, and future generations.

Find out more by:

- Calling the Environment Canterbury Kaikōura office on 03 319 5781
- Going online to ecan.govt.nz/wetlands-mapping
- Looking up your property at ecan.maps.arcgis.com
- Reading more about the National Environmental Priorities for biodiversity at mfe.govt.nz/more/biodiversity

Local landowners and managers who are interested in assistance or resources for protecting or enhancing wetlands on their property can get in touch with our Kaikōura office by calling 03 319 5781.

