

ECO Fund – Wakatipu Reforestation Trust



Volunteers with the Wakatipu Reforestation Trust during a planting day near Lake Hayes in April.

ORC’s ECO Fund (short for “Environment, Community, Otago”) supports community-driven projects that protect, enhance, and promote Otago’s environment. \$250,000 per year is distributed to projects big and small, for both shovel time and administrative support.

One recipient of ECO Fund support is the Wakatipu Reforestation Trust (WRT), whose ambitious vision is to “protect and restore the native biodiversity of the Wakatipu Basin through revegetation projects, collaboration, education and advocacy.”

The Trust’s volunteer-run Community Nursery (established in 2014) is currently growing 10,000 native plants per year from seeds sourced from local vegetation. To date, through community planting days, WRT has planted over 55,000 native plants on public land in more than 30 sites around the Wakatipu Basin. Their “keystone” sites are thriving examples of biodiversity restoration: as they become more established, they provide food and habitat for native insects, invertebrates, and birds.

During April and May, the Trust hosted four native planting days with volunteers. On the biggest day – despite the rain and cold – 80 volunteers helped to mark the incredible milestone of having planted 50,000 native trees since planting began in 2015. Thanks to their work, the once broom-infested site along the Queenstown



The Wakatipu Reforestation Trust runs bi-annual planting days in Spring and Autumn, and no experience is needed to join the fun.

Trail is rapidly transforming into a thriving grey shrublands ecosystem.

The ECO Fund has enabled WRT to develop and launch their “Educate for Nature – Nurturing Environmental Stewardship” program. Educate for Nature delivers

hands-on educational opportunities that support and encourage our community to value ecological sustainability, while aiming to inspire and motivate young leaders to embrace kaitiakitanga (stewardship) of place. The program’s



By planting natives from eco-sourced seeds, the Trust is working to gradually restore the natural biodiversity of the Wakatipu Basin.

three pillars focus on schools, adults, and community groups.

Educate for Nature is delivered by Education & Outreach Officer Jo Smith and Nursery Manager Barbara Horrell, whose work is 50% funded by the ECO Fund. Through this program, WRT hopes to give all 3,500 schoolchildren across Wakatipu a chance to engage in protecting and restoring their native environment.

To get involved in the Trust's community nursery, pitch in at planting days, or to help out with site maintenance, visit their website, www.wrtqt.org.nz. No experience is necessary, and volunteering is a great way to pick up a range of skills for their own backyards.

To find out more about the ECO Fund, visit www.orc.govt.nz/ECOFund.

