

South Mole Works Habitat Protection and Restoration

Hapū, together with project partners, including Horizons Regional Council, are working to ensure delivery of this project is in accordance with an abundance mindset. This means that we are not just building infrastructure to protect the South Spit, we are restoring the awa, and leaving it better than today. We call this He Ara Tuku Rau.

One of the ways we are doing this is by protecting and restoring the South Mole environment.

Why is this work important?

The South Spit dunes are home to native species like lizards, invertebrates and shorebirds such as the pohowera (banded dotterel).

By restoring dunes following our construction activities, and planting native species, we're helping to:

- Strengthen natural dune systems
- Reduce erosion
- Improve habitat for native wildlife

Who's involved?

This mahi is about community collaboration.

Those involved include:

- The Catalyst Group - ecological planning and guidance
- Te Mata Pūau, Horizons Regional Council, The Learning Environment, local kura, and the wider community - dune restoration and planting
- Lambie Ecology - wildlife surveys
- BlueGreen Ecology and DabChickNZ (Jo Sim and Miro the penguin detection dog) - kororā surveys
- Department of Conservation - guidance and oversight
- Te Matipo Trust - potential involvement in future planting and restoration activities
- Mills-Albert Limited - on-site works, fencing and daily wildlife checks

In addition, every day, our kaihautū is on site to make sure environmental and cultural values are respected and that all appropriate measures are in place.

How are wildlife protected?

Before any work begins:

- Ecological surveys to help us to identify any wildlife present. These surveys include visual searches, tracking tunnels for lizards and detection dogs for kororā (little penguin)
- If wildlife is found within the construction zone, buffer zones are created around those areas, where no work can occur
- Protective fencing keeps wildlife and native vegetation safe from disturbance

Daily checks are carried out by our contractors Mills-Albert Limited to make sure these protections are working.

What's happening with the dunes?

After construction, all disturbed dune areas will be replanted with native dune plants.

- Locally sourced native species are already being prepared by nurseries including The Learning Environment, Minimoor Nursery, Whanganui Prison Nursery, and Coastlands Nursery.
- Planting will occur April–August 2026, with follow-up planting in the years after.
- Planting will be carried out by Te Mata Pūau, Horizons, The Learning Environment, local kura and the community.

These activities will restore the natural shape and function of the dunes, helping protect the dune ecosystem and improve habitat for wildlife.

How can the community get involved?

Join us for community planting days in winter 2026. You'll be helping with one of the largest dune restoration projects in our district. Register your interest at portproject@whanganui.govt.nz