
The Gift Trust bucks the trend in environmental funding

Last year, the Government declared a climate emergency. Philanthropy could be part of the solution but less than 4% of philanthropic funds in Aotearoa, New Zealand are going to environmental causes. However The Gift Trust is a donor-advised fund that is bucking this trend, giving over 36% of our grants to environmental and conservation causes in the last financial year. In total The Gift Trust's donors have gifted over \$1.5 million to this sector so far.

Why so much for one sector? Partly because funding decisions are made by The Gift Trust's donors and we've attracted many environmentally focussed donors who spread the word to other donors. Giving begets more giving! Some donors joined The Gift Trust already dedicated to environmental causes, while others have followed other donors' lead through public facing funds such as the Carbon Critical Net Zero Fund (read more below). The Gift Trust also conducts research into charities that fit our donors' interest areas and so we are looking into more charities working on environmental and climate change issues and promoting them to other donors.

The Gift Trust supports its donors, who range from individuals, families, foundations and businesses, to manage and conduct their philanthropy in a more efficient way. While funding decisions are made by the donors, The Gift Trust conducts research and advises donors on opportunities within their sectors of interest. One of our environmental focussed funds, the Carbon Critical Net Zero Fund, supports a range of causes reducing greenhouse gas emissions, both here in Aotearoa and internationally. The fund has supported Te Ara Whatu, Generation Zero, 350 Aotearoa and the USA based organisations Clean Air Task Force, Climate Emergency Fund and Coalition for Rainforest Nations.

The donors supporting this fund are realising that investment in climate advocacy can challenge existing policies and power structures, to create systems change.

Climate change has cultural intersections. It is an issue that will hit our indigenous and Pacific communities the hardest. That is why The Gift Trust introduced some of our donors to Te Ara Whatu, a rangatahi-led indigenous youth movement from the Pacific and Aotearoa, fighting for climate justice. They run wānanga around the country for indigenous youth and involve their youth leaders in international talks, such as a delegation going to COP26.

Another of the environmental causes The Gift Trust donors are supporting is the Learning Environment, a Whanganui based project to regenerate Pīwakawaka Farm as part of a "living campus" offering practical environmental courses for students. One of our Gift Account holders, the Namaste Fund, gave a donation of \$300,000 to the Learning Environment, and we have facilitated a further \$360,000 of donations to them from American based donors through our fund in the USA.

A blog recently featured in Alliance magazine discussed the benefits of funding through intermediaries who run climate change focussed funds like The Gift Trust. Giving through a climate change funding intermediary, according to Florence Miller, director of the UK-based Environmental Funders' Network, is, 'much more efficient, cuts down on bureaucracy and allows funders to focus on a wide range of solutions. You don't want all your eggs in one basket.'

We're proud at The Gift Trust to be supporting our donors to effectively give to environmental causes and create a world in which future generations can flourish.



By Cheryl Spain
Executive Director

Environment/ conservation organisations that have received grants of more than \$10,000 from Gift Trust donors:

350 Aotearoa
Australian Earth Laws Alliance
Clean Air Task Force
Climate Emergency Fund
Coalition for Rainforest Nations
Ducks Unlimited
Ekos
Environment and Conservation Organisations NZ
For the Love of Bees
Forest & Bird
Garden to Table Trust
Globaia
Information Technology & Innovation Foundation
Kaibosh
Koanga Institute
Lawyers for Climate Action NZ
Million Metres Streams Project (Sustainable Business Network)
River Aotearoa Charitable Trust
Tiwaiwaka
River Watch
Woven Rivers Charitable Trust (The Learning Environment)