

# ► Our freshwater environment

Our connections to freshwater are important to our identity. However, the state of our rivers, lakes, and groundwater is degraded in areas where land has been transformed by human activities.

## BENEFITS FROM HEALTHY FRESHWATER

### Providing habitat

Freshwater environments provide food, shelter, and breeding or spawning sites for many types of birds, invertebrates, fish, and taonga species.

### Our culture

When we use our freshwater environments for recreation or to collect mahinga kai, or share knowledge of freshwater taonga species, we are connecting with Waitī.

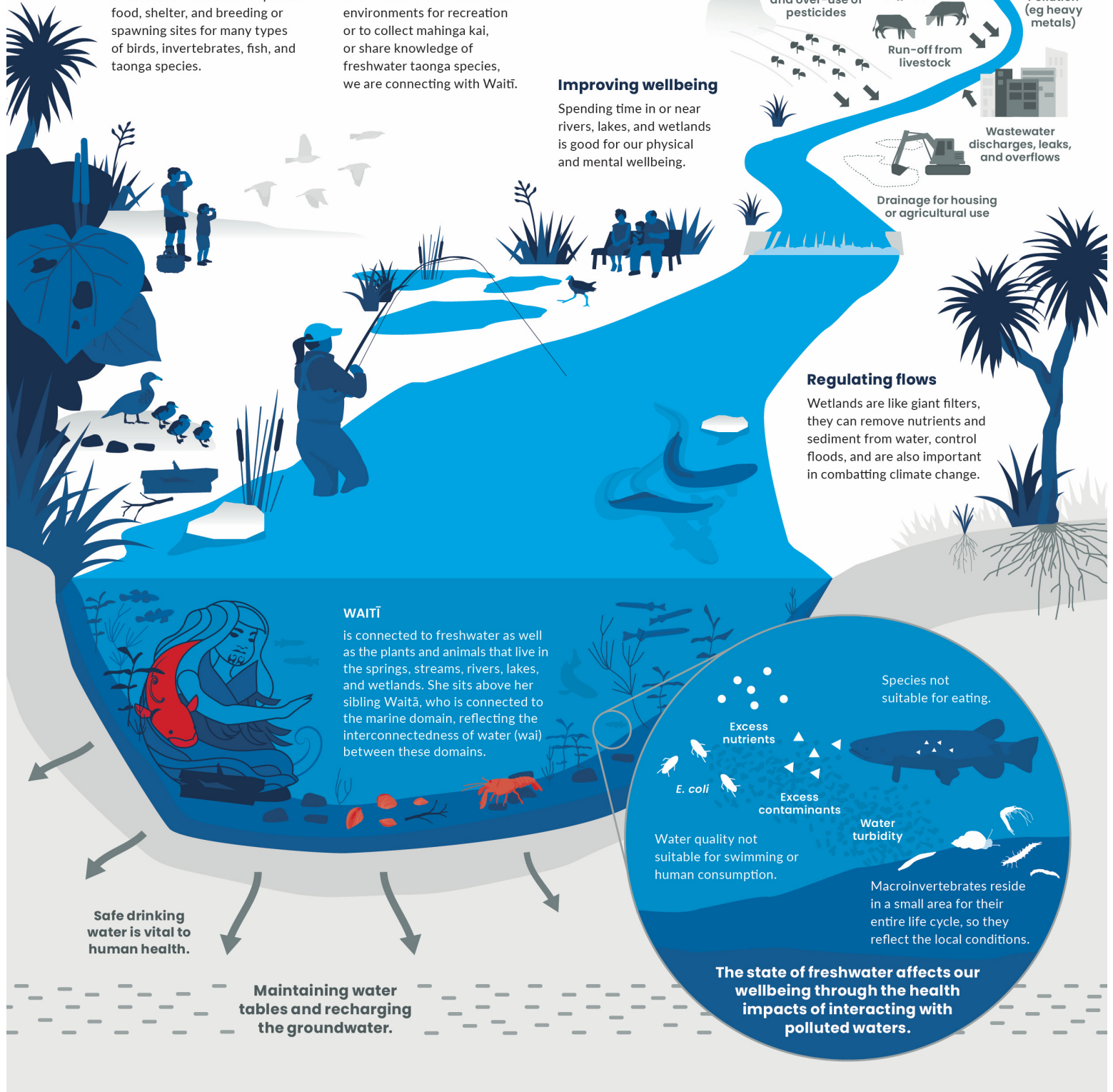
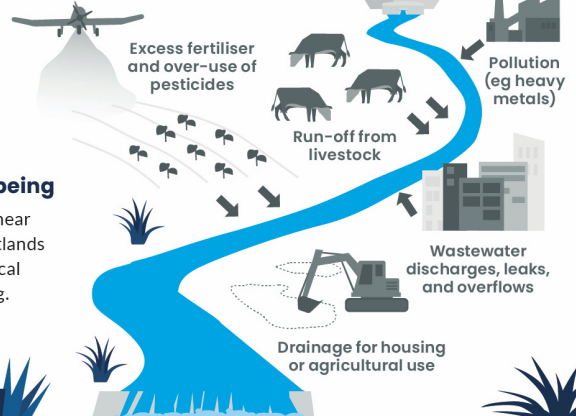
### Improving wellbeing

Spending time in or near rivers, lakes, and wetlands is good for our physical and mental wellbeing.

### Regulating flows

Wetlands are like giant filters, they can remove nutrients and sediment from water, control floods, and are also important in combatting climate change.

## PRESSURES ON OUR FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS



### WAITĪ

is connected to freshwater as well as the plants and animals that live in the springs, streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands. She sits above her sibling Waitā, who is connected to the marine domain, reflecting the interconnectedness of water (wai) between these domains.

Safe drinking water is vital to human health.

Maintaining water tables and recharging the groundwater.

Species not suitable for eating.

Excess nutrients

*E. coli*

Excess contaminants

Water turbidity

Water quality not suitable for swimming or human consumption.

Macroinvertebrates reside in a small area for their entire life cycle, so they reflect the local conditions.

The state of freshwater affects our wellbeing through the health impacts of interacting with polluted waters.