



Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee

Ki uta ki tai, he taonga te wai - From the mountains to the sea, water is life

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Changes to the way land and water are managed are happening across New Zealand. These changes are led by new government legislation.....but more importantly they recognise that local problems need local solutions.

The Wellington region's communities are full of capable people who are bursting with great ideas. And we're already putting them to work!

The Ruamahanga River community is the first in the Wellington region to take ownership of the new catchment-led (or whaitua) way making decisions. A committee of local people was established earlier this year. The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee has been gathering knowledge and ideas about land and water management and will share these with the wider community early next year.

This committee of local people already know their land and its people well, but they have been getting to know the Ruamāhanga

River catchment even better through field trips, presentations and reports as well as conversations with community members and industry experts.

They have explored the Ruamahanga River, and some of its tributaries, from its headwaters in the Tararua Ranges to its outflow into the Pacific Ocean at Lake Onoke. To read some of the cultural, environmental, economic and social landscape information the committee has looked at go to www.gw.govt.nz/ruamahanga-whaitua-committee/.

"It is exciting to be part of the future of this catchment and a privilege to represent the community in this way. I am really mindful of the task ahead and how we must balance the cultural and environmental factors with the economic needs of our community," says Phillip Palmer, Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee member.

"It's been a voyage of discovery - I have learnt a lot about water science and ecology. I have lived



Ruamahānga Whaitua Committee members Rebecca Fox, Esther Dijkstra and Philip Palmer were interested to learn more about aquatic invertebrates that live in the Ruamahanga River during a field trip earlier this year.

and farmed in the Wairarapa all of my life and I thought I knew the upper part of the river well until this recent field trip when I saw a different side to it."

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee will continue to gather

more information about the region's land, water, ecology and human interactions and is looking at ways to share this in a clear and understandable way with as many people that live in the Ruamahanga River catchment as possible.

Wairarapa and the Greater Wellington Region, is moving to a new way of managing land and water.

Find out what it's all about and watch our video at: www.gw.govt.nz/whaitua-committees/

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee has been established to make decisions on the future management of land and water in the Ruamahanga River catchment. They will find out what the people who live, work and play here value about the water and land they share.

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee will have worked with the community to develop a Whaitua Implementation Programme by February 2016. This will inform the final Natural Resources Plan (formerly a series of five Regional Plans covering regulations for: air, coast, land, soil and water) that is being developed now for the Greater Wellington Region. A section of this plan will be dedicated to the Ruamāhanga whaitua.

Driving change using the 'Wheel of Water'

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee has been learning about a tool called the Wheel of Water to help them work through the complex environmental, economic, social and cultural landscape of the Wairarapa valley.

The Wheel of Water has been developed through funding from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, by research company Aqualinc Research Ltd. Following a step by step, facilitator-led process, local knowledge, research and ideas about what the community wants for its' catchment in the future are brought together.

Information from research, workshops and discussions is structured into a 'wheel' graphic showing the relationships between

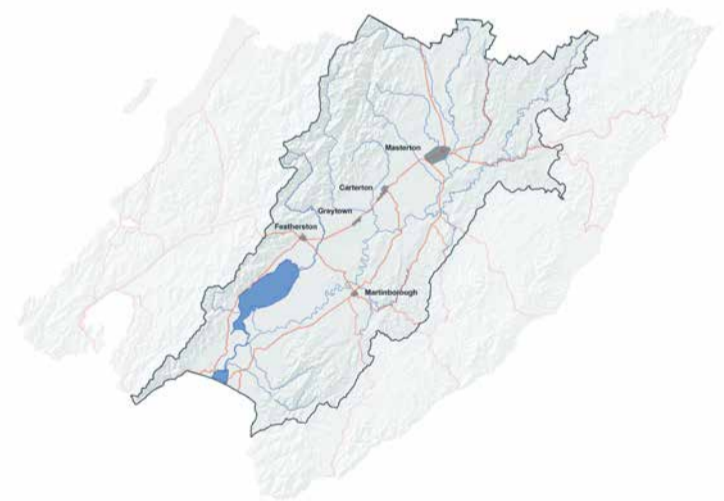
different elements the community has identified as important, such as land use or rare species habitats. For example, improved river water quality might be a goal for many people in our community for different reasons. Using the wheel to see how a change in one area improves water quality - but also how much it affects the wider local economy - will provide a good basis for community decision making.

The Wheel of Water process has been piloted in the Wairau Valley, Marlborough, and Mangatarere Valley, Carterton. Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee Deputy Chair Esther Dijkstra was involved in the process through her work with the Mangatere Restoration Society.

"The 'wheel' is a visual tool to

get people on the same page and talking about the issues. It brings the issues to the forefront and provokes some great discussion. It is a useful way of illustrating change and the interactions of people and the environment they live in," she says.

A first Wheel of Water graphic will illustrate the current picture of the Ruamahanga River catchment and it will be used to begin some discussions about the community's ambition for the catchment. Next year the committee will begin working with the wider community to look at how we can change the way water is managed in the Ruamahanga River catchment.



What is a catchment?

Everybody lives in a catchment! The Ruamahanga River catchment is the Wellington Region's largest with a land area of 3,430 km².

A catchment is a basin-shaped area of land, bounded by natural features such as hills or mountains, on which rain falls. This rainwater flows on, and under, the land surface into streams, rivers and wetlands. The outlet of a catchment might be where the water flows into another river or where it empties into a lake, wetland or ocean.

The Ruamahanga River begins in the Tararua Range and emerges into the Wairarapa valley west of Mauriceville. The river flows along the eastern side of the valley to Lake Onoke and into the sea. It is 162km long. The character of the river and the river edge changes along its journey. There are eleven other rivers that feed into the Ruamahanga River.

Greater Wellington Regional Council is using the Maori word 'whaitua' (designated space) to describe the area the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee is working in.



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