



Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee

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

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Working towards a shared vision

Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee (RWC) members gained a fuller understanding of the complexities of land and water management in the lower Ruamahanga River valley during a field trip last week.

Braving extremely unseasonal weather conditions committee members joined the annual Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme (LVDS) meeting to hear about developments, improvements and issues for land and water management in the South Wairarapa District.

"I have lived here all my life but I definitely gained a deeper understanding of some of the issues faced by all those who live in the district," says Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee member Vanessa Tipoki. "The flood protection

infrastructure is extremely complicated – the scope and scale can be hard to understand."

"The last one-hundred years or more of intervention has made the natural landscape unrecognisable with the essential feature of this scheme being the diversion of the Ruamahanga River, which previously flowed into the southern end of Lake Wairarapa, directly into Lake Onoke.

"This is a hugely compromised system and the ecological impact, particularly on Lake Onoke and the marine environment, has not been assessed, but is evident to Lake Ferry residents and its frequent visitors. It will be interesting to see what the community vision for this part of the Ruamahanga River catchment might be – and



GWRC Councillor Barbara Donaldson joined Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee members Vanessa Tipoki and Mike Ashby at the Ruamahanga River Barrage Gates in South Wairarapa

I am really looking forward to developing some shared thinking across my community."
The Ruamāhanga Whaitua

Committee will be actively seeking the views of the wider community about land and water management in the catchment through 2015.

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.

December 2013
Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee announced

February 2014
Powhiri and first committee meeting, Te Ore Ore Marae, Masterton

March-December 2014
Understanding the Landscape: committee meetings, presentations, field trips, workshops, discussion with community members

January-June 2015
Understanding community values: How important is our land and water you? How do you want it to be managed in the future? Looking at options for a way forward

November 2015 onwards
Draft Ruamāhanga Whaitua Implementation Programme (RWIP) discussed with the community

February 2016
RWIP submitted to GWRC for approval

Mid 2016
RWIP incorporated into GWRC Natural Resources Management Plan (this document governs the work of GWRC, formerly called the 'Regional Plan')



Kaiwaiwai Dairy Farm directors Aidan Bichan and Vern Brasell have implemented sustainable environmental solutions for their dairy farm

Wairarapa Moana – a turbulent history

The natural resources of Lake Wairarapa, and its surrounding wetlands, have been valued by humans for more than 800 years.

The area was both economically and culturally significant to Māori. Eel was caught in vast quantities and could be dried for storage or trading. Early European settlers experienced severe flooding but valued the richness of the land above this 'inconvenience'.

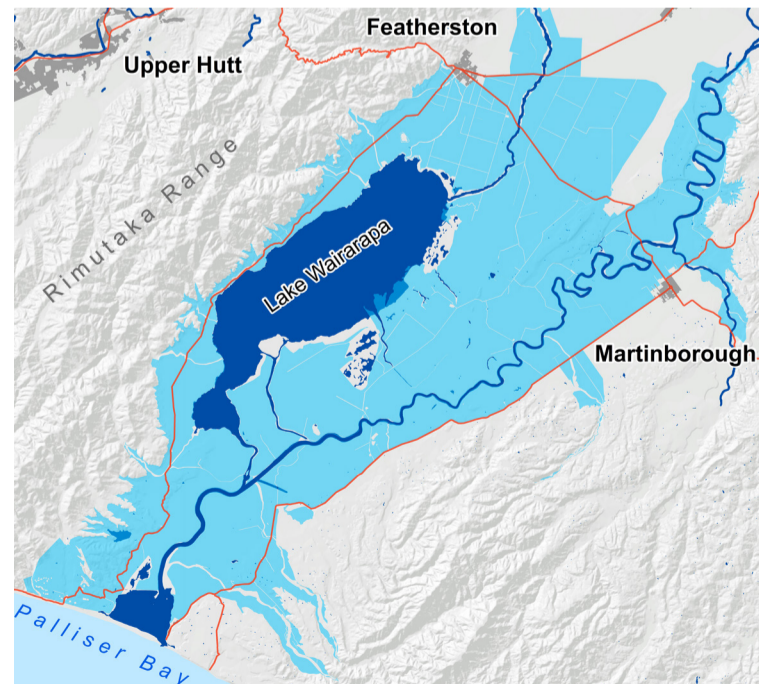
Human intervention in the natural pathway of the river and flood patterns began in earnest with the establishment of the Wairarapa River Board in 1886, a communal attempt to reduce flooding.

Tensions between land and water management have existed from this time. Wairarapa Moana was gifted by the tangata whenua to the Crown in 1896. It has been protected, in part, by a National Water Conservation Order since 1989. There is a 2010 Waitangi Tribunal settlement pending.

The Lower Valley Development Scheme was constructed between 1963-87. It supports 31,500 hectares and includes management of 176km of rivers and streams, 200kms of stopbank, 110 culverts and floodgates, 2 floodways, 4 sills (low overflow banks), 11 drainage schemes, the Lake Onoke opening to the sea and a flood warning system.

Greater Wellington is responsible for ongoing maintenance of the Lower Wairarapa Valley Scheme. Read more at www.gw.govt.nz/lower-wairarapa-valley-development-scheme.

Lake Wairarapa has a rich 'natural history'. The ecology has, of course, been impacted by man-made changes to the landscape. A very small percentage of wetland remains which supports diverse native species. Work to restore the Wairarapa Moana is ongoing, read more at www.waiwetlands.org.nz.



Practical steps forward

The lakeside environment is one of the most challenging to farm in – the resourcefulness and resilience of those who do is legendary!

Generations of Lake Wairarapa landowners have valued the wetland habitat they farm near and many are involved in on-farm research and innovations to minimise the loss of nitrogen and phosphorus from farms into waterways.

Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee member Aidan Bichan is passionate about working towards best environmental practice while maintaining sound economic farming principles at the Wairarapa

Moana dairy farm he co-directs.

The Kaiwaiwai dairy farm hosted a 'Water Quality' field day for around forty farmers earlier this month and shared knowledge about the construction of a wetland to filter drainage water.

The farm is also trialling the use of wheat to reduce potassium levels from effluent irrigation paddocks.

Kaiwaiwai has demonstrated significant economic gains through the introduction of improved dairy shed, water monitoring and effluent management technology on this summer dry, winter wet farm.

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