



# Waitohu Stream

## *Streams alive!*

### What is *Streams alive?*

*Streams alive* is Greater Wellington's streamside assistance programme for high value stream catchments. It's part of our biodiversity programme to halt the continuing loss of species and ecosystems around the region.

Through the programme we support landowners who want to plant the stream margins on their property. The 12 catchments in the *Streams alive* programme are:-

- Waitohu Stream
- Otaki River
- Ration Creek
- Karori Stream
- Wainuiomata River
- Mangaroa River
- Owhanga Stream
- Upper Waiohine River
- Upper Ruamahanga River
- Kaiwhata River
- Waihora Stream
- Glendhu Creek

Greater Wellington has chosen the Waitohu Stream as part of the *Streams alive* programme because streamside planting in just a few areas will make a difference to the overall ecological health of the stream.

The variety of stream types, geology and climate influences in this catchment help complete the range represented in the *Streams alive* programme. As a whole the programme covers the full range of stream and ecosystem types present in the region.

The catchment's native bush cover is almost entirely in its upper reaches in the Tararua forest. Here the stream is clean and well-shaded and provides excellent habitat for native fish. The lower reaches and tributaries flow through farms and Otaki township. Our monitoring shows that the lower Waitohu and Mangapouri Stream have high levels of nutrients (phosphorus, nitrate and ammonia), sediment and faecal bacteria. The nutrients are causing weeds and algae to grow in the stream, the sediment is making the water murky, and the bacteria are making it unsuitable for swimming.

Waitohu Stream is in the *Streams alive* programme because:

- Nearly half of its 4580 ha catchment is in native vegetation
- More than one third of the catchment is protected by covenants or in Department of Conservation ownership



- the variety of stream types in the catchment (from the rocky fast flowing streams in the hills to the spring and wetland-fed tributaries nearer the coast) provide home for a wide variety of native fish including shortfin eel, longfin eel, torrentfish, giant kokopu, shortjaw kokopu, koaro, inanga, lamprey, common bully, redfinned bully, brown mudfish and smelt.
- evidence from streamside planting projects around the region indicates that if the few open areas of the stream are planted, there will be measurable improvements to its overall ecological health.



Male redfin bully



Weta by George Gibbs



Green punctatus gecko



Eel



Kereru

## How Greater Wellington can help

Greater Wellington can help landowners in *Streams alive* catchments by:

- drawing up a stream plan with the landowner showing an agreed programme for planting the streams and other waterways on the property
- supplying native plants suited to local conditions
- paying contractors to plant the plants
- paying contractors to undertake weed control for two years after planting.

Greater Wellington will not provide plants if they would create a flood management problem.

## What will you have to do?

Landowners will have to:

- permanently fence off a section of the stream that will allow between two and seven rows of native plants to become established
- keep planted areas free of stock.

## What changes will you see?

After just a year without stock access, the stream banks will be more stable. After about four years the plants will be about as tall as a person and will be shading out the weeds, starting to shade the stream, and providing habitat for streamside life.

In the long term, not only will the stream be healthier and much more attractive, you will also see more native birds in the neighbourhood. The stream will have cleaner water that will be more palatable to stock. You may even find that the stream becomes a feature that adds value to your property.



Well-fenced plantings on a stream margin



A well-fenced section of a stream

## More information

For more information on the *Streams alive* programme, contact Michelle Bird on 04 526 5323 or 0800 496 734, email [riparian@gw.govt.nz](mailto:riparian@gw.govt.nz) or check out our website at [www.gw.govt.nz/streams](http://www.gw.govt.nz/streams). If you are not in a *Streams alive* catchment, Greater Wellington staff are still available to offer advice and help you prepare a stream plan for your property.

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Greater Wellington is the promotional name for the Wellington Regional Council  
Publication date  
May 2006  
GW/WAI-G-05/262