



# Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee

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

Contact us: 0800 496734 | ruamahangawhaitua@gw.govt.nz | www.gw.govt.nz/ruamahanga-whaitua-committee

## Community values discussion



Discussion with community members began at the Whangaehu Hall, Bideford in late February. The economic value of water for farming and the value of flood protection were discussed at length.



Values discussions in larger centres brought a diversity of issues to the table including waste water treatment, recreation and mahinga kai or traditional food source areas.

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee has been meeting with people from across the Wairarapa over the last six months in country halls, marae and event centres. They have been establishing a picture of how our waterways are 'valued' by people in the Ruamāhanga River catchment, what importance people place on water for its life sustaining properties as well as recreational, economic or cultural use.

"We were not surprised that there are some general aspects of land and water management that, if asked, most people want such as healthy water to drink. Most people like the idea of being able to enjoy walking by, swimming or fishing in our rivers and lakes if they choose to," said Peter Gawith, Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee chair.

"In addition many people understand the need for businesses and farmers to use water for production or to limit soil erosion; some reflect on the spiritual aspects of water in general."

Community workshops were held in

Masterton, Taueru, Carterton, Pirinoa, Gladstone, Kopuaranga and Featherston. A structured approach allowed all thoughts, ideas and comments to be recorded and maps were used to identify areas or topics of particular concern.

Pollution in general was raised frequently. Other key values and concerns included:

- clean water for the sake of clean water, or for the sake of the future
- the need for people to respect and understand their connection to local waterbodies
- recreation and public access
- tourism
- the economic value of water for irrigation and livestock drinking water
- the influence of changes to the Ruamāhanga River on the coastal environment
- the dependencies between groundwater and surface water, wetlands, forests and attenuation and recharge
- site-specific mana whenua values.

The discussions were designed to move past generalisations and bring forward site and topic specific information.

"Establishing differences of opinion and finding the areas or topics that community don't agree on is particularly valuable. Eventually our plan will need to balance competing values for the benefit of the community in several areas: health, recreation, economic and spiritual," says Gawith.

One common theme that emerged from each of the meetings was the recognition of two values that could be seen to be in opposition:

- the value of natural flow and shape of waterways, versus
- the value of flood management work to economics and public health.

"It's been a very uplifting experience speaking to so many people with such passion for their special places in the Wairarapa."

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee members have used their own experience and what they have learned from the community meetings to group 'values' into the following:

- public health and wellbeing
- recreation
- economic use, resilience and prosperity
- our culture - our traditions, heritage and whakapapa
- mauri, habitat, biodiversity and natural character
- Māori use including mahinga kai.

The next step is for the committee to develop options for future management of land and water resources in the Ruamāhanga. They will discuss these options with the community and assess how they impact on the value groups. This analysis will inform the committee's decision making.

"Hearing and incorporating new ideas into our understanding of land and water management in the Ruamāhanga River catchment is ongoing as we work to define objectives based on community values and aspirations."

<http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Ruamahanga-Whaitua/CommunityMeetingValuesreview.pdf>

### Developing a way forward

Information gathering

Community input

Values Identification

Land and Water Management Options

Community feedback

Analysis of impacts of option on values

Solutions

Community feedback

Ruamāhanga Whaitua Implementation Programme

### 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](http://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 Ruamāhanga River catchment.

#### What have we been doing?

The committee has been assessing a wide range of information and finding out what the people who live, work and play here value about the water and land they share. They are involved in a major region-wide project to develop a scientific model to help build this information into a clear picture that can support decision making.

#### What happens next?

Once the information is gathered and analysed the committee will write a Whaitua Implementation Programme (WIP) for the Ruamāhanga catchment. This WIP will set out how water and land will be managed locally. The Ruamāhanga WIP will have its own place in the final Natural Resources Plan that is being developed now for the Greater Wellington Region.



Celebrate Wairarapa's Waterways

Celebrate Wairarapa's Waterways with us. Tell us what you think, share your pictures and news about land and water in Wairarapa. Search 'Celebrating Wairarapa's Waterways' and click 'like'.



Masterton office  
34 Chapel Street  
PO Box 41  
Masterton 5840  
T 06 378 2484

Follow the Wellington  
Regional Council



info@gw.govt.nz  
www.gw.govt.nz



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