Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee - Featherston Community Meeting

Date: 2 August 2016, 6:30-8:30PM, Kiwi Hall

Committee attendance: Esther Dijkstra, Colin Olds, David Holmes, Ra Smith, Vanessa Tipoki, Mike Ashby.

Project Team attendance: Alastair Smaill, Murray McLea.

Public: 22 members of the public were present.

Q1: How should we manage rivers to improve natural character while safe guarding community assets, income and households?

- Different ideas for channelling river.
- Opportunity for better character (bank).
- More water into.
- Climate change – more flooding.
- Use more natives.
- Preventative measures are good.
- Understand the effects on fish.
- Eating from the lake?
- Flush of sediment.
- History of the lake.
- Dumping.
- River management is wider than flood control.
- Equity within generations – Zika threat, gold medal.
- Planting from the mountain to the sea.
- Many options rather than a silver bullet.
- Willows removed – biodiversity.
- Research – plant uses/more education. Propagating trees and colonising plants.
- More trees.
- Community owned river management.
- Dams (water storage) in headwater can help manage flows in rivers.
- Some willow (crack) are a problem.
- Need to protect fish life by maintaining habitat diversity in rivers.
- Get fish managers involved with the people doing flood management.
- Make sure rivers have room to move (so they are not just straight channels).
- One entity should manage each catchment, not a number of bodies (organisations).
- Catchment committees would sit under a single organisation.
- Rivers need to managed holistically.
- Are floods being managed better than before?
- Swimming holes should be looked after.
- No-one mentioned blading in rivers.
- More pools for fish and swimming.
- Can we choose where flooding can occur?

- Restore wetlands.
- Can we learn from other places?
- Target where gravel extraction occurs.
- Put the river back into the lake.
- Replace willows.
- Restore riparian margins.
- Remove willows – re-vegetate natives/wetlands.
- Restoration of natural character and habitat for aquatic life.
- Sedimentation mitigation.
- Limit gravel extraction (detrimental effects on biodiversity).
- Re-divert the Ruamahanga River back into Lake Wairarapa. Key for natural character.
- Increase natural floodplain area – widen riparian margin (where to have flooding? Less flooding risk on east coast (climate change)).
- More natural landscaping – island sanctuaries along river – researched ecological control.
- Funding/ecological investment.
- Recognising intrinsic value of water – natural character – education, change mind sets.

Q2: What do we need to do to make our rivers swimmable and how long should it take to get there?

- As long as it takes.
- Unanimous feeling that yes rivers should be swimmable.
- Must pass on improved river conditions to next generation.
- Government must decide where government policy direction is. More investment, tourism, less dairy.
- Issue here with modification of rivers – diversion from Lake Wairarapa.
- Solutions:
    - Re-direct the Ruamahanga River back into Lake Wairarapa.
    - Reinstate wetlands, re-vegetate, re-naturalise the river channel.
    - Deeper pools around the perimeter of Lake Wairarapa and wetland planting.
    - Native plantings.
    - Stop illegal extraction of groundwater takes in Featherston – particularly along the Tauherenikau. Hit water below 4m.
    - No soak pits at residences – stormwater run-off pollution.
    - Problem with enforcement by GW staff. Discharges, takes, stock access.
    - Policy change required at regional and national level. Tourism no.1 industry yet National Party not prioritising.
    - Erosion – increased sedimentation on steep land. Alternate land use – good business sense to spread risk.
    - Investment in Manuka – marketable crops on marginal steep land. Harakeke.
- Can see the degradation in the river – want to take kids down to the river but this has changed.
- Stock exclusion.
- Wastewater improvement.
- Sediment – trees, wetlands. Nutrients.

- Will take time – 20 years? Can't just turn it around overnight. Must start doing something.
- Algae quality (bloom)/Climate change MALF.
- Top end of Tauherenikau normally good. Confluence of Tauherenikau and lake was good. Conflicting information difficult. Ruamahanga has some problems.
- Stopping discharge – sewage, leaching.
- Stop littering.
- Youth group planting at McDonalds.
- Need a recipe with N&P.
- Planting to take up.
- Landscape architecture students. FC gardens. St J C Gardens. Sustainable FF. Beautification. School groups.
- Land irrigation especially for summer.
- Leasing land for discharge to treat effluent.
- Land filter good to use.
- We need progression.
- Thinking in 5 and 10 years processes.
- Shortest time possible.
- Proactive constructed wetlands.
- Affordability/grants – government/private.
- Forcing everyone to be responsible.
- Information about flow.
- Communication to bring everyone together.
- Common philosophy and agenda.
- Need to stop degrading – further improvements can be made.
- Wastewater treatment has to improve.
- Will current council actions be enough.
- Should go from river to land (wastewater) – current plans are for only part of the year.
- Other side of the wastewater issue is who pays.
- Need plan to get nitrates out of the rivers (farm plans).
- Steps must be taken by the farming community.
- Dairy cows must be kept out of the river.
- Need to review town wastewater consents.
- Damming – storage will intensify farming and result in more nitrate discharge.
- Need nutrient plans (farm plans) to reduce nitrogen discharge.
- Stormwater also needs to be controlled – swales, wetlands.
- Education programme to make sure town residents are aware of what their discharges are doing.
- Key points – wastewater is a resource, length of wastewater consents, stormwater, farming will intensify with storage (more nutrients), need farm nutrient plans.

Q3: What's the fairest way of restricting water use during the summer?

- Water can be taken at high flows and stored.

- Encourage farmers to store water.
- Communities can also store water for larger scale storage subject to nutrients.
- Water conservation as part of community supply.
- Water metering will reduce water use – question of whether it is per unit or allocation amount per person.
- Needs to be a charge for water taken on farms – charge can be put back into the environment.
- Make sure irrigation is efficient.
- Households should have water tanks.
- Metering of town water.
- Some restrictions in summer.
- Consistency in restrictions (same for everyone).
- Water tanks in towns. Start with new builds.
- Use grey water (local regulation needs to change).
- Education – water conservation, better awareness.
- Equitable allocation.
- Water races (increasing water quantity). Supports efficiency, groundwater and good access for stock.
- Other water resources – groundwater, bore for drinking and stock, flood plain diversion?, stop bank efficiency, surface eater mix.
- Consent conditions – efficiency test, use test (water).
- Too much out – drinking stock.
- Farming communities, life stylers, horticulture, urban use.
- Storing water – community storage, industry storage, individual storage.
- Informed communities.
- Informed decision makers.
- Climate change.
- Equity within the catchment.
- Water metering.
- Taking care of leaks.
- Paying for the infrastructure.
- Shared and fair cuts to water quantity.
- Recognising investment.
- Primary industry requires high water use to grow grass. Change crops (less water, deep rooted) to ensure water is more efficient.
- Inefficiencies around dairy/beef water use.
- Better management of water – wastage in urban areas and rural irrigation.
- Tanks.
- Incentivise water capture and recycling of water.
- Incentivise on farm storage – dams – as long as it's not damming rivers.
- Restrictions needed on groundwater takes. Equally distributed.
- Meters on all takes.
- Tanks on new houses.
- Charge for excess water – water rates.

- Education – Reduce, reuse, recycle. Make focus on conserving water and reducing wastage.
- Water restrictions in showers, timers, online gauge (app) – Innovate.
- Credits – water transfers – if conserve water have a surplus then can trade (incentivise).
- Urgency because of climate change.
- Water transfers across country – high to low rainfall users. Capture water on West Coast – East Coast.