

Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee - Whangaehu Community Meeting

Date: 26 July 2016, 6-8PM, Whangaehu Hall

Committee attendance: Rebecca Fox, David Holmes, Mike Birch, Mike Ashby, Esther Dijkstra, Russell Kawana

Project Team attendance: Kat Banyard, Natasha Tomic, Mike Grace, Horipo Rimene

Public: 7 members of the public were present.

Notes:

Initial questions from community:

- Do we have data for the current state of the river? Asked for this at the workshops last year.
- Are people asking about lack of water?
- Are we going to respond to requests for data so the community can distinguish perceptions from facts? What does the data show us?
- Need to model the removal of willows.
- There are no considerable trends showing.

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

Summary

- No public access on Taueru/Whangaehu.
- Straight line river management.
- Willow management for water quality benefits everyone – farmers need a subsidy to do this – too expensive for them alone.
- Managed riparian includes weed management.
- Regulation should support creation and restoration of oxbows and wetlands.
- Communities need to work together.
- Improve flood practice with other community priorities.
- A river that is healthy and flows and has places to swim – that's natural character.
- Build natural character from the top of the catchment, replace natives with willows and create shade.
- Who will pay?
- Removal of willows allows stock access.
- Clear silt – it won't dry up.
- Plant long term, build sustainable, native communities – matai, miro, totara, kahikatea.
- Tree Lucerne brings birds. Create corridors.

Full points

- Lovely access to a community asset such as Mt Holdsworth but had to accommodate the local rivers.
- Digging and straightening of rivers – looks dreadful. Formations of natural bedrock destroyed.
- To improve flow – get rid of willows - can Council get rid of willows?
- Give the supplement (subsidy) to people to get rid of willows.
- We are doing it for water quality so way should just farmers do it? It's not just for farmers.
- Where stock have been excluded from the waterways it is full of grass.
- Get rid of trout – will bring natural character back.
- There is lots of trout – water quality can't be bad if there are lots of trout.
- How much water do willows pump out of the stream?
- New wetland rules – artificial wetlands – the PNRP is not encouraging. If you have a natural wetland you can't build an artificial wetland upstream from an existing.
- What's natural for character? Henly Lake – does it have natural character?
- The drought has made rivers dry – this year the river stopped flowing completely.
- We are more aware of our rivers now than 20 years ago.
- How do you write a rule into the plan about protecting natural character?
- Allocation issues in some parts of the catchment?
- Like Jamie Falloon's idea for catchment groups.
- What about individual catchments saying what natural character is? For us it would be a river that is healthy, flows and has places to swim – not from a farming perspective.
- Would be interesting to see data since the river has been cleared. NIWA site?
- Work from the top end of the catchment and replace willows with native species– but who will pay for this?
- Spawning fish up the river.
- Hugh Neill? Willows removed up to his property.
- Be specific about the types of trees to plant – kanuka, Lucerne, trees. Don't plant flax and cabbage.

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

Summary

- Swimmability relationship with urban wastewater.
- Food/insinkerators in urban centres are an additional problem.
- Create awareness of how behavior affects water quality – legislation – education.
- People need to have better information to be engaged in improving swimability.
- Consider needs of other users.
- Competitions in schools, education of kids in river values.
- Cost: benefit of swimability - % of timr people want to swim and where in the catchment.
- Put a leader out to champion swimability.
- Visual description of objectives – stages of processes.
- What and where are rivers polluted?
- Need facts, not sentiment.
- Where people have turned rivers around? Where wetlands are good?
- Leadership and authority required.
- Farmers need recognition of their efforts.

- Start to focus on the urban.
- Testing kits – citizen science available for water quality. The community tests the water.

Full points

- Where is the water not swimmable? Where are those sites?
- Cliffs in high flows aren't swimmable because MDC releases from the wastewater treatment plant.
- Swimmable everywhere is ridiculous.
- Chemicals chucked in stormwater go directly into the river.
- Need awareness that individuals do affects water quality.
- How do we make people change? Stop bagging dairy farms. Education that insinkerators impact on rivers.
- Regulation – to change behavior.
- Grades about levels of e-coli – precautionary warnings.
- Have to hose off dogs after swimming in Henley Lake.
- Council should put in Dominion Post every week when the river is swimmable.
- Competition with schools, get kids involved – go out fishing – put out an award.
- Do we want to spend \$90million on fencing and riparian planting rather than put this money into something else?
- Need context about discussion for people to be constructive – not just saying swim everywhere.
- Give people something to do – is there something concrete people can do now?
- Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee can't move on unless you take people with you.
- What are the next steps for the Committee? You need to tell us where you are at? Brochure has information on this.
- There are no facts, only sentiment.
- Wetlands sounds like a really good idea – promotion by an authority figure to tell us what to plant.
- Stop beating the farmers – equal responsibility with town people.
- If there was a free water quality testing kit we could do this every week.
- Need to spell out how much it would cost and how much the Council will subsidise?

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

Summary

- Stock water is primary use of Whangaehu – not restricted.
- How much of the allocated water is not used?
- If the water is attached to land then it will always be worth more – consent.
- Don't hinder water storage.
- Storage is key. Tanks should be mandatory for life stylers and flag to urban.
- Rules should enable transfers between users.
- Ensure efficiency.
- Compare the run of the river against gravel and stored water.
- Get numbers re: allocation, efficiency. What are the targets for claw back of water?
- Why was the decision made not to have dams on the main stem of the Ruamahanga?

- Need to balance and prioritise human health needs against stock.
- Why has the proposed dam been sited at Tivdale when it doesn't have the rainfall of the Tararua ranges?
- Leadership of best options around product use and practice that supports better water quality.

Full points

- There is only place in the area that is drawing anything else other than for stock water.
- Wouldn't want to restrict stock water. Would look to build reservoirs on farms instead.
- Probably 0.5L/s is being taken at certain times. So small that restricting it wouldn't help. If someone used more there is already restriction.
- Council stopped water races – put down bore instead.
- How much water is allocated and not used? After 4 years if you don't use it, you lose it. What about the old consents? What are those restrictions?
- Water rights come with land so restrictions don't matter.
- Storing water makes sense.
- The km's of river cut out for the diversion – use for storage.
- Lifestyle blocks can take 20l/day with no restrictions – fair? Not fair. Need an independent scheme like the Opaki Scheme – scheme has a consent – buy per unit. It's a solution that could be used more widely. Cumulative effect. People on the scheme are very much aware of the water they use. Must have tanks to catch water.
- National level decision needs to be made on urban water use so don't need to worry about it here.
- If you know what you're using people will reduce.
- Awareness – people potentially being penalised will mean they reduce their use.
- Enable transfers (not trade away from the land), without long costly consents.
- Efficient use is most important factor.
- Cheaper for storage schemes over bores? Need numbers e.g. from central plains.
- What is the current allocation? Only trying to reduce by?? Could the gap be filled by efficiency only?
- Use adaptive technology e.g. only certain types of irrigation. However this can cause issues such as stopping water races dries up pumps.
- Why build a dam in a place where it doesn't rain much? Why not put in the Tararuas? Why not on the main stem? Whitua Committee will pass these questions along to Water Wairarapa.
- Even and odd side days for garden watering.
- House water different from farm water? There are already rules in place to protect people's right to bathe. Brings in health, stock water etc.
- Urban – if metering is the answer signal that to developers and get them to build it in e.g. highlighting problems with insinkerators.
- If urban were metered would that make rural cheaper?
- Education about soaps and detergents being used and how they get into the rivers. Encourage other healthy options.