



RURAL FOCUS



GW flood protection manager Graeme Campbell supervises Otaki MP Nathan Guy and Environment Minister Nick Smith as they plant a kahikatea near the Otaki River

Environmental flood protection praised

The native plantings mixed with flood protection work on the Otaki River is a great example of "practical environmentalism" says Minister of the Environment Nick Smith.

Mr Smith was a guest speaker for the 100 people on Greater Wellington's annual walkover of the Otaki River on November 4 that was inspecting new flood protection and environmental enhancement work.

In the past 10 years Greater Wellington has been spent \$10million on the Otaki River and supported the Friends of the Otaki River who have grown and planted 25,000 native trees along its banks.

Mr Smith says New Zealand faces a real challenge of maintaining native species and this project is definitely meeting that challenge.

Mr Smith spoke fondly of picnicking and swimming at Otaki Forks with his family, and that New Zealand is rated among the 10 best countries in the world for freshwater resources.

He says a lot of work has been done to reduce water pollution from specific discharge points, but there were still some areas where water quality is going backwards.

He says more needs to be done to manage effluent and nutrients running off the land and into waterways.

"The best way to do deal with that is with native plants around the fringe of our waterways."

Kapiti Coast District Council mayor Jenny Rowan says the native plantings were "pretty serious mitigation" by GW, KCDC and the Friends of the Otaki River.

"This is a very big deal on the edge of very magnificent river."

Friends of the Otaki River chairman Max Lutz says much of the planting and the maintenance work is done by volunteers, some in their nineties.

Mr Lutz says the project has many funders including GW, KCDC, DOC, Transpower and BOC gases.

GW Flood Protection manager Graeme Campbell says the native plantings are working well to stabilise the land between the stopbank and the riverbank.

"We often use willows to establish quickly and strengthen the banks. The natives go in later and we take the willows out."

Millions for rural projects

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An estimated 145,000 extra poplar and willow poles will be planted under the new soil conservation initiative



Millions confirmed for possums and erosion control

Millions of dollars for new projects in Wairarapa has been approved in Greater Wellington's Long Term Council Community Plan (10 year plan) says Wairarapa Councillor Ian Buchanan. Councillors approved the plan in June.

GW funds an extra \$2.1 million for erosion control

Greater Wellington will be spending an extra \$2.1 million in the next 10 years focusing on Wairarapa's erosion prone eastern hill country in the Wellington Regional Erosion Control Initiative (WRECI), says Cr Buchanan.

"This is a partnership initiative proposed by the Government, where the Crown, Greater Wellington and landowners each contribute a third share for new soil conservation initiatives. The Government plans to put in another \$2.1 million over ten years, bringing the increase to \$4.2 million. Landowners contribute a further \$2.1million to the initiative.

"The prospect of securing central government money for soil conservation was too good an opportunity to miss. It makes sense for the sustainability of the region's economy and environment to invest in this."

In the next 10 years GW estimates 2000 hectares will be planted with 145,000 poplar and willow poles, a practice which stabilises land while grazing continues. Another 1000 hectares are planned to be fenced and retired from grazing under the initiative.

The initiative is expected to half the amount of time it will take to treat the remaining erosion prone hill country in Wairarapa – from 60 years to 30 years.

\$3.6 million for possum control

Cr Buchanan says the council has earmarked \$3.6 million of new money to spend on possum and predator control over the next 10 years, to pick up where the Animal Health Board (AHB) will be finishing as it gets Bovine TB under control in Wairarapa.

"While the AHB possum control has targeted Bovine TB, there have been substantial economic spin-offs for farming, forestry and horticulture with possums at low numbers in Wairarapa, and our native bush and birds have made a big comeback.

"Farmers and landowners have asked Greater Wellington to put in a replacement possum control programme to maintain the economic and biodiversity gains already made. This is part of our commitment to maintain a profitable agriculture sector and healthy native biodiversity in the region."

Cr Buchanan says the new possum control programme will start in part of northern Wairarapa that is scheduled to be declared free of Bovine TB. AHB-funded possum control will soon finish in these areas.

Spending will start modestly at \$30,000 in 2010/11 and gradually move up to \$765,000 a year in 2017/18 and 2018/19 as the programme moves south.

"Farmers have been telling us for several years that they are delighted with the increased productivity and native birdlife that low possum numbers bring. They made it very clear through submissions that they didn't want to go back to the bad old days when possums were chewing on everything, including their bottom line."

GW will be spending a further \$330,000 in rural Otaki where AHB possum control is due to finish in two years.

The government and industry-funded Animal Health Board began possum control in Wairarapa in the early 1990s to curb Bovine TB.

Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee

Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee chairman Peter Gawith says farmers will be very happy with the extra spending on possum control and soil conservation.

"This is the first opportunity in 20 years to take advantage of Government funding for soil conservation. Farmers were pretty excited to hear about this and we had a strong delegation go down to Wellington to present our submission in support of the initiative.

"It is very encouraging to hear Greater Wellington will continue possum control as the Animal Health Board finishes their Bovine TB programme in parts of Wairarapa. Farmers, foresters, fruit growers, anyone who gardens in a rural area or enjoys our native birds and forests will benefit from this."

Other rural initiatives

Greater Wellington is also planning a major upgrade of the flood protection works for the Waiohine Floodplain and Greytown,



Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee chairman Peter Gawith says farmers will be pleased with the extra spending

and ongoing work in the lower Ruamahanga River.

Councillors have ear-marked \$100,000 a year to go towards the development of a wetland park for Lake Wairarapa, Lake Onoke and their surrounding wetlands.

The proposed 10-year plan outlining council projects and spending was released for consultation on March 23, and closed for public submissions on 24 April. A summary of the plan was sent to every household in the Wellington region. There were 464 submissions and 90 oral submissions.



A further \$3.6 million will be spent on rural possum and predator control over the next 10 years

Bovine TB reaches historic low

Only five cattle herds and no deer herds were infected with Bovine TB in the Wellington region going into summer. This is an historic low for the disease in the region since it became a problem in the 1960s and 1970s and a far cry from the mid-1990s when more than 300 herds were infected.

TB is a threat because humans can become infected with it, mainly through the consumption of milk or by handling infected animals or carcasses. In the developing world TB still causes thousands of human deaths annually. In the developed world the risk is greatly reduced because of high standards of meat hygiene and milk pasteurisation.

Despite the high standard, Bovine TB is still regarded as an unwanted disease because of the negative consumer perceptions and adverse market reactions it could generate. High levels of Bovine TB would also cause significant production losses for New Zealand farmers.

Bovine TB can infect most warm-blooded mammals but possums, and in some areas ferrets, are the main source of infection (or vector) of TB in domestic cattle and deer herds.

The aim of New Zealand's current Bovine TB control programme is to achieve official TB free status by 2013. This goal was endorsed by farmers, industry and local and central government who want to protect our reputation as a supplier of safe, high quality meat and dairy products.

Possum and ferret control to curb Bovine TB is primarily funded by central government through the Animal Health Board, with contributions from farmers and regional councils.

Greater Wellington's BioWorks team is one of the contractors that does possum control for the Animal Health Board in the Wellington region. In the year ending June 2009, BioWorks completed possum control on 176,500ha, about 22 percent of the Wellington region.

The biblically named apple of Sodom is a great example of pest plant with a mass of spikes, inedible foliage and fruit and the ability to takeover pasture

Spotting weeds: the basics

There are approximately 25,000 introduced plants in New Zealand. Of these about 300 are considered pest plants or weeds. This number is growing all the time as plants spread from gardens into our natural and rural environments when they are given the opportunity. The unsettling thing is that some of the world's worst weeds have not yet been found in New Zealand and others have not yet become established.

Greater Wellington Biosecurity officer Ben Winder says tradescantia, old man's beard, blackberry and gorse are all native plants of other countries.

"In their country of origin they are not weeds, they are natives."

A lack of natural enemies often means that some plants do much better in New Zealand than they do in the country they are from.

Many weeds have been sold or unintentionally spread up until very recently. This has been minimised

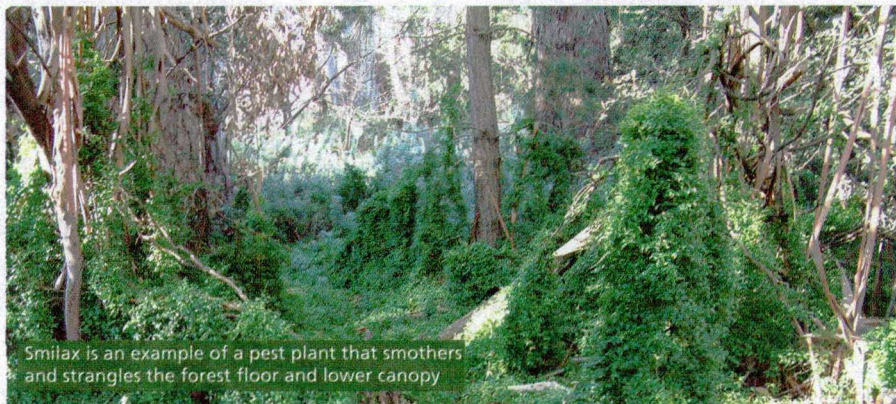
with stricter border security at our ports and rules around the sale of plants regarded as pests.

Greater Wellington is interested in finding pest plants that are not known to be in the region or are in small numbers so they can be still be stamped out.

"It obviously costs far less to treat pests when they are not everywhere," says Ben.

"You may not realise you have a weedy plant until someone tells you. People are often surprised to find that an apparently harmless plant is quietly taking over an area.

"If the plant has berries or seeds then it is often spreading further than is immediately obvious. Many pest plants are not particularly interesting and blend into the surroundings and most of the time you may not notice them. Once you are made aware of a particular plant you will begin to see it more often and see how far it has spread."



Smilax is an example of a pest plant that smothers and strangles the forest floor and lower canopy

Here are a few tips for what to look out for as far as weeds go on your property. These are very general and some non-weedy plants may exhibit the same characteristics.

A plant that:

- Has just turned up in your garden
- Is covering the ground
- You have to prune several times a year as it grows so fast
- Has seedlings growing underneath it, near it and through your garden
- You thought you had controlled but it keeps coming back
- Has unusual looking flowers, colourful fruits or seed heads, pods, spines
- Stock won't eat
- Has started spreading out into paddocks, onto the roadside or along shelterbelts.

Tips to avoid new weeds from taking over your property:

- Have new weeds identified and controlled before you notice them everywhere
- Buy plants from a garden centre or nursery
- Be aware that bringing feed, soil/metal, or mulch in from elsewhere may introduce new weeds
- Hot spots for rural weeds include stockyards, woolsheds, feed out areas, dry areas, edges of ponds, poultry sheds, drains, water races
- Hot spots for environmental weeds include: gullies, bush areas, wetlands and swamps, scrub areas all close to houses.

Dairy farmers win supreme farm environment award

A mix of smart farming practices and sound environmental principles helped South Wairarapa dairy farmers Tim and Jo Loe become supreme winners in the 2009 Ballance Farm Environment Awards for Wellington region.

The flat and fertile property, south of Kahutara, has 11ha of fenced kahikatea forest, which is one of the few remnants of native lowland forest left on the Wairarapa Plains. The judges were impressed with the couple's commitment to protect these native remnants, also their fencing of all open drains, minimal nitrogen use, and sound soil management.

On their way to winning the supreme award the couple won the LIC Dairy Farm Award, NZFEA Trust Habitat Improvement Award and the PGG Wrightson Land and Life Award.

Going back 22 years, the Loes arrived at Oporua when it was a low intensity sheep and beef farm, much which had never felt the plough. Fifteen years ago, one block of the original sheep and beef farm was converted to an 189ha (163ha effective) dairy farm. The 202ha support block two kilometres up the road is used for combination of cropping, supplementary feed supply and fattening/grazing.

Tim did all the development, installing the necessary drainage, fencing and water systems. The couple started out as 50/50 sharemilkers and then acquired a share in the property. Tim was a great supporter of local dairy farming discussion groups as he worked to improve his dairying knowledge.

Originally 326 cows were milked but that number has lifted to 528 Friesians this season. Production in the past few years has ranged between 190,000-194,000kg of milk solids. The dairy farm has irrigation over half of its area and a spray effluent irrigation system over 26ha.

The leased block is largely flat with around 20ha of sand hill ridges. It's



Tim Loe discusses fencing on farm bush remnants at an open day to showcase his farming practice

used for growing crops of barley or peas for sale, triticale for silage for the Oporua herd and rearing and fattening bull calves. Farming the bull calves instead of taking in grazers allows them to use the grass available, but the flexibility to offload in favour of the core dairying operation when required.

Tim's policy is to farm with his eye on the future, both in land stewardship terms and with the expectation that farming activities will be increasingly


restricted and regulated to meet consumer demand.

There are annual soil tests and Tim applies minimal amounts of nitrogen (40kg per ha a year) and he consistently uses less water than he has consent for. There are heavy soils on the property, so irrigation is limited to dry spells in the growing season. The judges commended Tim's efforts to protect the soil and minimise pugging.

His aim is always to strive for a good balance.

Judges points

- A very good understanding of the properties soils, both in terms of productivity and risk factors
- Soil testing completed and fertiliser applied under the recommendation of the Overseer Programme. Minimal use of nitrogen
- Fencing and protection to areas of lowland native bush including supplementary planting in light canopy areas
- All open drains are fenced to exclude stock
- Solid milking platform and dairy operation
- Top level per cow and per hectare production
- A sizeable lease dairy support block that not only supports dry stock, winter spelling and supplementary feed requirements but allows for alternate cash and feed cropping as well as grazing/fattening income.
- A well organised farming system with good staffing and support in place
- An intensive network of open and sub-surface drains supported by intensive mole drainage
- Excellent pasture swards with a very noticeable clover content



A section of the Waingawa River where the channel has been re-aligned to stop erosion problems. This was part of the 1km where insect life of pools, riffles and runs were monitored

Managing our rural rivers

Draining the Tararua Ranges

Managing the rivers that drain the Tararua Ranges is always going to be a challenge. The Tararuas are perfectly angled to catch the maximum amount of water from northwest rain bands that blow in off the Tasman Sea. And some of the rivers have very large areas for catching rain before they flow onto the Wairarapa Plains.

Take the Waiohine River. It begins in the ranges well north of Masterton and collects water from many peaks as it winds through the valleys before hitting the Wairarapa Plains west of Greytown. Some of these peaks collect up to 10 metres of rain a year and during heavy rain events the Waiohine rises very quickly. It is confined by steep valleys and gorges until it reach-

es the plains, and it's there where the problems begin.

From the Tararuas it is just over 20km before the Waiohine joins the Ruamahanga River, but that is plenty of space to cause damage.

All that energy that has been confined has the chance to spread out across the flat land and that's exactly what it used to do. Now the plains are developed with farms, towns, roads and a railway, a free ranging river would be hugely disruptive, so a series of stopbanks have been built to keep the river on a set path. That is what GW have inherited and that is what flood protection staff have to manage.

It takes constant work and repairs to keep the river from bouncing around and chewing away at the flood defences and bursting out on to the plains.

How should we manage the rivers of Wairarapa?

Who should they be managed for? Should they be managed to protect communities, property, roads and bridges? Should they be managed to support trout fishing, native fish, cultural interests, swimming, kayaking and other recreation?

"Ideally, we would like to manage them to suit all those purposes," says GW Flood Protection manager Graeme Campbell. "This isn't an easy task but it is something we would like to do better and we are working to find the right balance."

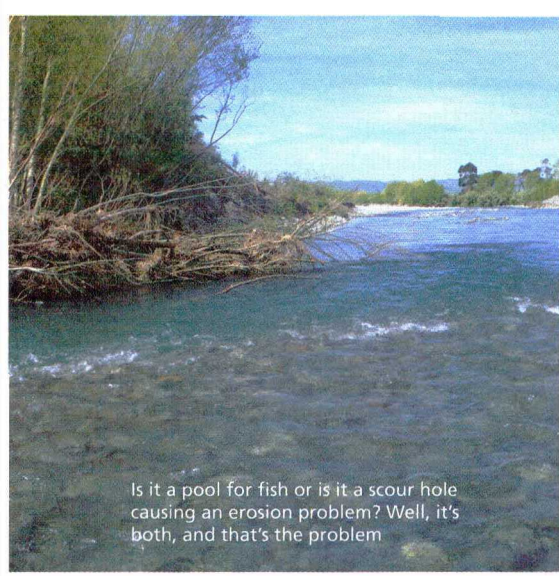
Part of the problem in finding the right balance is that a desirable pool against a riverbank that suits trout and trout-fishers, native fish and swimmers can be an erosion problem that threatens flood protection works. While it is providing good habitat for fish and depth for swimmers, it may be eating away at the riverbank with the potential to threaten stopbanks or other flood defences.

Another part of the problem is money. These pools could be stabilised with rock groynes, which would maintain all the benefits of deeper water and reduce the risk of continuing erosion. The groynes are made up of big chunks of rock stacked against a riverbank that can withstand the rigours of most floods. Even if they do move they can usually be found again and put back in place.

Rock groynes work very well and generally suit all parties. Unfortunately they are expensive, Wairarapa has lots of rivers and there is not enough money to use rock where ever there is an erosion problem. And they don't look very natural.

In the absence of rock groynes, flood engineers are left with using willows to reinforce banks, or taking the river channel away from the erosion point with a bulldozer or a digger. This mechanical work is called channel re-alignment and is a short term, but affordable way of dealing with bank erosion.

Graeme says channel re-alignment



Is it a pool for fish or is it a scour hole causing an erosion problem? Well, it's both, and that's the problem

helps GW protect property and roads, but it can change the natural diversity of a river.

“Greater Wellington had concerns over the impacts of channel re-alignment. We are looking into how it changes a river with the help of a freshwater scientist from GW’s Environment Division. This should help us do our flood protection work, while maintaining parts of the river that are suitable for fish and swimmers.”

A diverse river - pools, riffles and runs

GW fresh water scientist Alton Perrie has studied a 1km stretch of the Waingawa River, just south of Masterton, that had a substantial channel re-alignment, and how this affected river habitat and invertebrate numbers.

Alton says a natural gravel river usually organises itself into a series of pools, riffles and runs, which provides a diverse range of habitat for fish.

“The pools are areas of deeper and slow moving water with eddies and back currents. They typically develop against a riverbank and provide important habitat for large fish such as trout and eels”

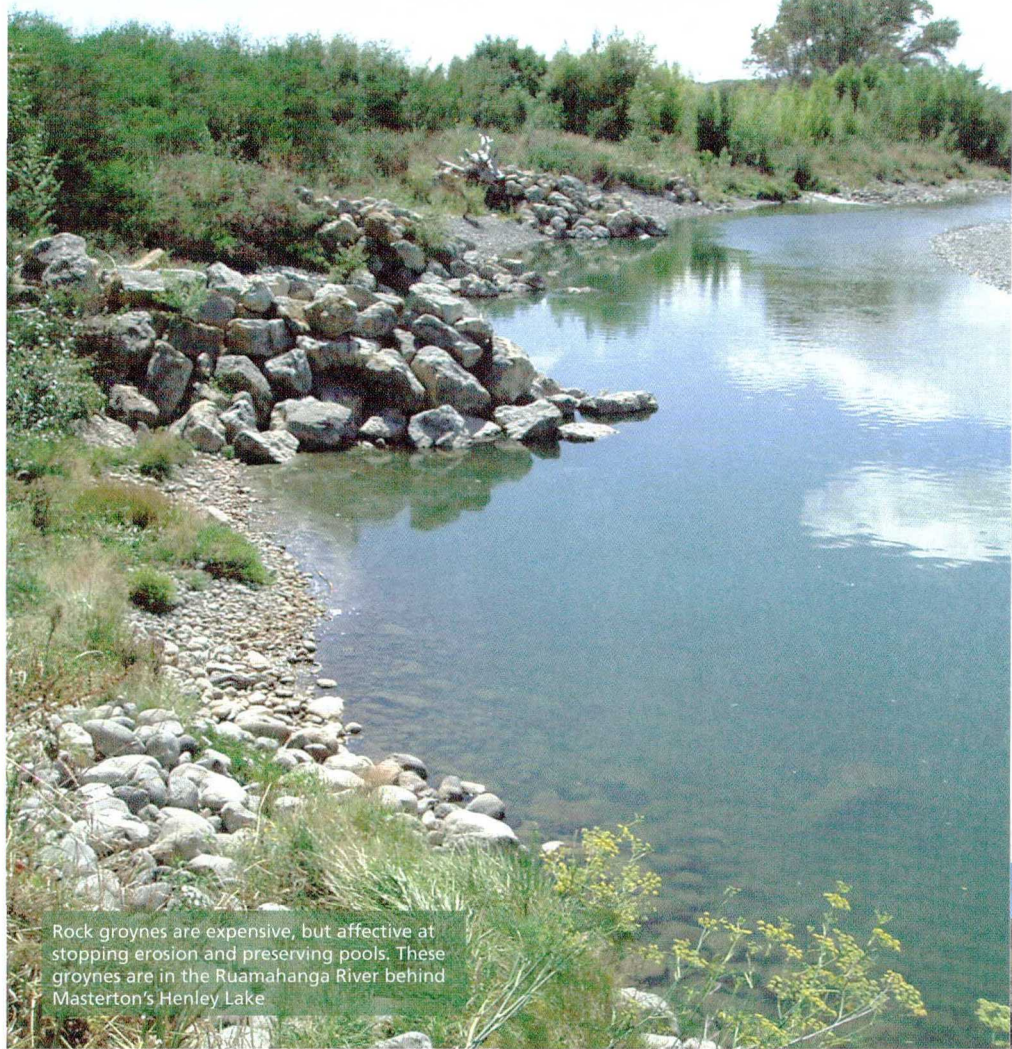
“The riffles are fast flowing and turbulent, like a miniature rapid, and usually occur just before a pool or a run where the water flows over a shallow area of stones before dropping into deeper water. They are the highly oxygenated and are often the most productive part of the river.

“And the runs are the stretches in between where the river is a similar depth. There are deep runs and shallow runs.”

Alton says each of the different habitats has different animals and together they make up a healthy and diverse river system.

Graeme says that a side-effect of channel re-alignment is that it often changes the diversity of a river by creating more shallow runs and riffles and removing pools.

“We hope Alton’s studies will tell us how flood protection works affect the different factors that make a healthy river. The diversity of depths and water speed, shaded areas and water



Rock groynes are expensive, but effective at stopping erosion and preserving pools. These groynes are in the Ruamahanga River behind Masterton’s Henley Lake

temperature, and how all this affects animal and plant life in the river. This will help us do our flood protection work while keeping enough diversity for fish and river users.”

Measuring aquatic invertebrate life in the river

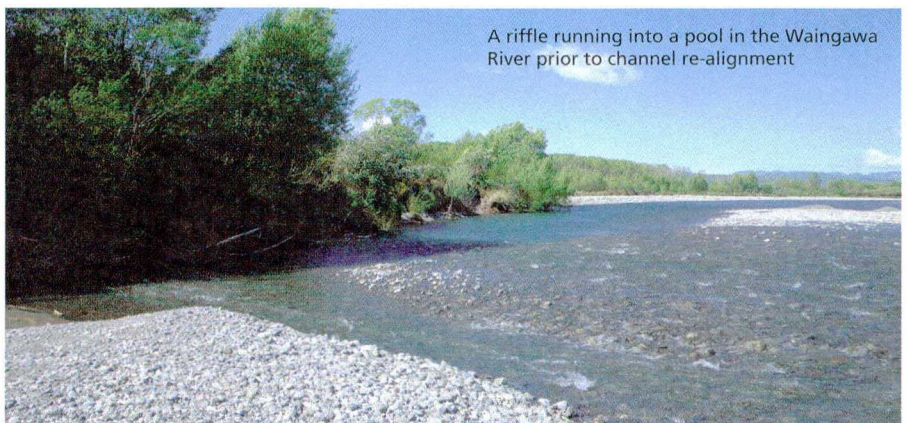
Invertebrates in our rivers are made up of insects, such as mayflies and stoneflies, snails, worms and other animals without a skeleton. The invertebrates in the river are food for all the fish and one of the indicators of river health.

Alton says aquatic invertebrates are typically well adapted to the aggres-

sive rivers of New Zealand, which are prone to large and frequent floods. The high frequency of floods means that these river invertebrates need to be able to quickly recolonise a river after a disturbance event, such as a flood and potentially a bulldozer.

Monitoring of aquatic invertebrates in the Waingawa River showed the numbers built up again quite quickly in newly constructed river channels, just as they do after a flood. In just over a week the numbers of stream invertebrates were fairly similar to what they were prior to the works or to sites upstream of the works area.

However, there were still some



A riffle running into a pool in the Waingawa River prior to channel re-alignment

differences in the types of invertebrates in the new river channels and the old channels, which is probably due to the differences in the habitat. The old channels were deep, slow flowing runs which were more suited to invertebrates like snails while the new channels were shallow swifter flowing riffle/runs more suitable to invertebrates like mayflies. Alton will be looking at this further to see what it means for the aquatic ecosystem as a whole.

After the re-alignment, the 1km stretch of river had less habitat diversity with fewer deep areas, such as pools, that provide important habitat for native fish and

recreationally important species like trout. Alton says it can take many months for the river to re-establish its habitat diversity after channel re-alignment. "This is concerning, as a stretch of river with fewer types of habitat is likely to have less natural diversity of invertebrates and fish."

Another issue is bulldozers and diggers working in the river stirring up sediment and making the river dirty. Alton says native fish that have bred or hatched at sea and are moving inland up the rivers and streams, like whitebait, are put off by large plumes of sediment pouring down a waterway.

"Fish might bypass a waterway that

is really dirty and settle elsewhere. Getting around that is largely a matter of timing river work to when the fish aren't returning from sea."

Graeme says this is just the sort of information that GW flood protection staff need to manage the river better.

"The staff are very interested in this study and are thinking about how they can do their work differently to suit fish and people who use the river."

Graeme says the flood protection staff have many issues to consider in managing the rivers, but there is one thing that is certain.

"No matter what we do on the rivers or how we do it, Mother Nature likes to have the last word."

The native torrent-fish, in the Waingawa River, prefers the fast moving, riffle areas of our rivers, while other fish prefer the deeper runs and pools



Key issues to consider when thinking about channel re-alignment

- How many pools do we leave?
- If we need to fill in a scour hole/pool to protect an area, can we use a digger to put in pools where they will not cause an erosion problem?
- Can we maintain pools with a digger?
- Can we dig deeper pools amongst the runs to break up long shallow runs?
- Is the sediment released in flood protection works a problem for fish?
- Can we look at the timing of flood protection works to benefit fish?

Insects, like this mayfly, in the Waingawa River, are an important source food for fish





Farmer Ed Beetham with Wainuioru School pupils in his bush covenants

Rural school boosts threatened tree

Eastern Wairarapa's Wainuioru School students are playing a key role in a bid to save a critically endangered native tree, *Olearia gardneri* and their efforts are already bearing fruit.

Olearia gardneri is a small leaved tree daisy that grows up to seven metres tall. It's endemic to the North Island, but is found in only a few valleys in the Rangitikei region (Taihape-Mataroa district), and in the eastern Wairarapa hill country.

There are only 160 adult trees found in these two areas, with just 23 known in the Wairarapa, giving it a nationally critical threat status.

Wainuioru School is ideally placed in the eastern hill country, and its 75 students have adopted *Olearia gardneri* as their special plant - for the past two years planting it on the nearby QEII covenant of Ed Beetham along the Wainuioru River.

This year the students planted 16 trees, which were germinated by the Department of Conservation at Pukaka/ Mount Bruce from seed collected from the 23 adult trees.

The Wainuioru River is a perfect spot for *Olearia gardneri* because the plant likes mudstone soils and its seed can fly onto slips, open ground or onto the papa cliffs found along the river.

"It's a very fussy plant because there are very few places for the seeds to germinate (the seed requires raw soil) and very few adults," says Tony Silbery, DOC biodiversity ranger.

Tony's had a long involvement with *Olearia gardneri*, first germinating it as a curator at Percy's Reserve in Petone, for planting at Pukaka/Mount Bruce some years ago, and saving the plant is a key priority for him.

"We've identified that the big gap was the lack of young plants coming through and we've been working on reintroducing these young plants," Tony says.

But there are still threats - many adult shrubs and trees are in poor condition because of browsing and trunk rubbing by livestock, smothering by vines, and erosion and soil compaction. Poor success of seedlings and limited habitat are also problems.

However, the plant's future seems brighter thanks to Wainuioru School's involvement. Greater Wellington's Community Environmental Projects Team Leader Robyn Smith says: "The work of the Wainuioru students is invaluable and they are some of the best propagators of native species I have ever come across."

"This summer we are hoping DOC will be able to collect seed for the school to grow in their shade house.

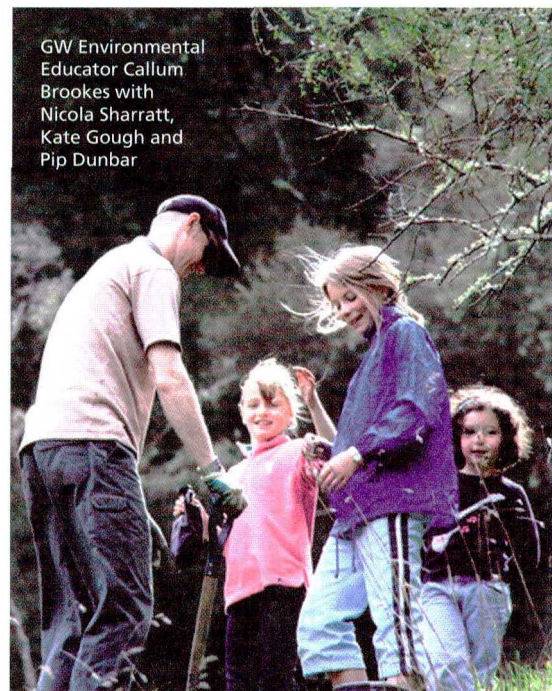
"Given the students' success with other species, we would like them to be able to grow a small number to plant next year," she says.

Landowner Ed Beetham has been only too happy to have the school children plant trees on his QEII block.

"It not only helps in restoration, it also encourages an interest in planting that will hopefully stay with students for their whole life."

Even after a day traipsing up and down the banks of the Wainuioru River with spade and plants in hand, school student Kate Gough agrees. "It's great fun planting native trees and I'm looking forward to returning next year and after that to see how they've grown."

For more information about *Olearia gardneri*, see www.doc.govt.nz



GW Environmental Educator Callum Brookes with Nicola Sharratt, Kate Gough and Pip Dunbar

Councillors briefed on river work



2200 tonnes of rock groyne being built to prevent further bank erosion

Balancing the demands of flood protection with cultural and recreational values was the focus of the Catchment Management Committee's field trip in October.

The committee visited the Cliffs at Dakin Road, on the Ruamahanga River just upstream of Gladstone, to look at the difference between constructing rock groyne and using a bulldozer to re-align the channel to stop bank-erosion.

The committee got opinions on both methods from speakers representing the Upper Ruamahanga/Gladstone River Scheme Advisory Committee, Fish and Game, Maori cultural values and the Department of Conservation.

In one area the river was threatening a road and 2200 tonnes of rock groyne were used to protect about 250 metres of river bank, directly adjacent to an access road to a popular reserve and

a number of properties. This cost \$158,000, and, as it involved a road, was jointly funded by GW, Carterton District Council and Transfund.

Another area just downstream was eroding the riverbank and this was treated by re-aligning the channel away from the problem area and building up gravel to protect the

bank. The bank was then reinforced with cut willow trees, secured by driving rail iron and wired into place. Following a number of freshes, gravel had desposited in the area which allowed for the planting of willow poles. Both the cut trees and poles strike roots quickly and these help strengthen the bank and bind the gravel.

The work protected about 250 metres of river bank and cost \$25,000 and is expected to need minimal maintenance in normal flows. However, as with most flood protection works, a raging flood can undo things very quickly.

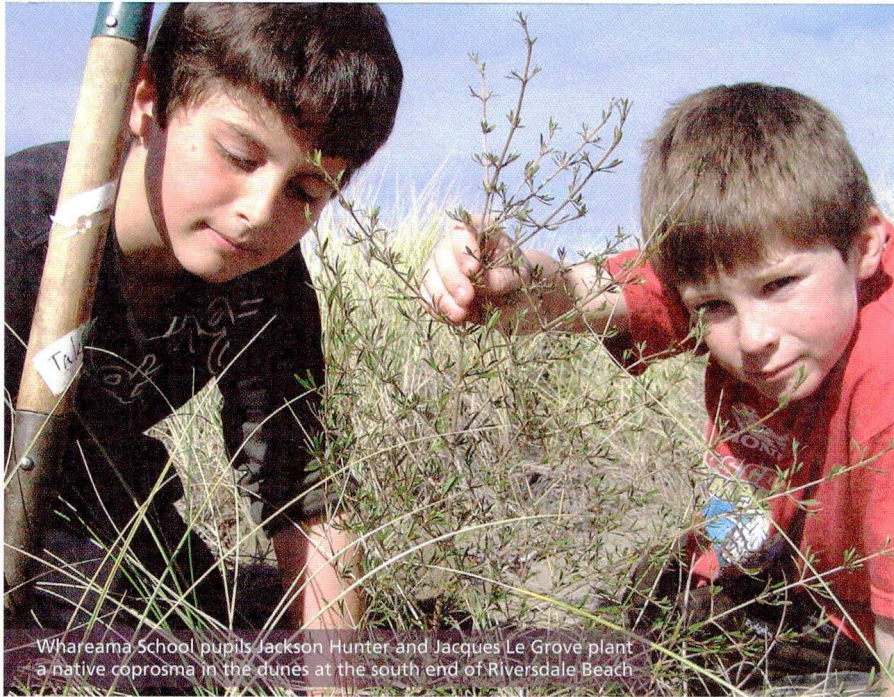
No road was threatened in this case, so GW pays half and the river scheme members including Carterton District Council contribution pay the other half. The river scheme members are property owners who benefit from the flood protection work and pay a special scheme rate to GW to fund these works.

The current scheme provides a rural standard of flood protection, which normally cannot afford hard protection such as rock groyne, which are seen more in urban areas or protecting roads and bridges. GW Manager Flood Protection Graeme Campbell says the region's rivers affect many peoples lives and it is important that GW considers all views when making river management decisions.

The Catchment Management Committee is made up of councillors and advisory members from around the region. It oversees the work of Greater Wellington's Catchment Division, which is made up of Flood Protection, Biosecurity, Land Management and the predator control contracting arm BioWorks.



Upper Ruamahanga/Gladstone River Scheme Advisory Committee chair Peter Nicol gives the landowners perspective on flood protection work



Whareama School pupils Jackson Hunter and Jacques Le Grove plant a native coprosma in the dunes at the south end of Riversdale Beach

Dune committee chairman and Masterton District Councillor Judith Callaghan was delighted with the ongoing work of schools, residents and council staff in the project.

The dune committee has been active for 15 years restoring the dunes and educating people on how to look after them, such as keeping quad bikes off them to prevent damage to the native plants and erosion to the dunes.

The committee received a \$24,000 grant from the Department of Conservation for 2009 and 2010 for improving the dunes, which funded this winter's planting.

Going native at Riversdale

People from all around the region with an interest in Riversdale Beach helped the Riversdale Dune Restoration Committee plant 4000 native plants to help stabilise the dunes this winter.

Greater Wellington land management officer Angela Stead says this winter's planting is part of a wider restoration plan for the dune system at Riversdale that will gradually replace the exotic plants with native dune plants.

These plants, include the sand-binding grasses spinifex and pingao

and the tough shrub coprosma propinqua, which are the natural sand binding plants for the area. These plants do a better job of keeping the dunes stable and protecting the properties behind them.

Whareama School have been helping restore the dunes for the past 10 years and got stuck in again this year.

Principal Pip Fairbrother says: "We started planting at the north end by the surf club about 10 years ago and have been working our way south. Some of our senior students have been involved since they were five."

If you want to get involved in restoring the Riversdale dunes call Judith Callaghan 06 372 4804 or Angela Stead 06 370 5665



GW environmental educator Warren Field and works supervisor Nick Pratt share the finer points of dune planting with Whareama School

Evaluating Wairarapa's landscapes

Wairarapa's varied and dramatic scenery will be the focus of a landscape evaluation project jointly run by Greater Wellington and the three Wairarapa district councils.

In early 2010, the four councils will be seeking views from tangata whenua, farming and horticulture interests, environmental groups and the wider public.

Project spokesman Greater Wellington policy advisor Scott Ihaka says people have strong feelings about Wairarapa's landscapes.

"Locals and visitors alike enjoy the mountains, the plains, the coast and the rugged eastern hill country of the Wairarapa. There are some spectacular natural features and great examples of farming landscapes and native forests. Largely it is still a working and changing landscape."

Scott says there is some uncertainty, under the Resource Management Act, about what sort of development can be carried out on "important" landscapes in Wairarapa.

"While that uncertainty exists, anyone applying for a land-use change, sub-division or development may have to determine if it is in an important landscape, and then how they propose to mitigate any adverse effects on that landscape.

"This uncertainty can create tensions in communities and an expensive and time-consuming process for applicants, affected parties and territorial and regional authorities."

Scott says the landscape evaluation project will provide certainty for landowners and the wider community about the location and type of development that is suitable for Wairarapa's special landscapes.

He says the project will describe and characterise the various landscapes in Wairarapa, before evaluating them to identify, document and map the special landscapes.

This information, along with the management mechanisms (i.e rules and guidelines) for managing these landscapes will eventually be included in the Wairarapa Combined District Plan.

"We have set up a steering committee to help oversee the project with representatives from the four councils, Rangitane o Wairarapa, Kahunungu ki Wairarapa and Federated Farmers."

Environmental and planning firm Boffa Miskell will be carrying out the project work.

"From February next year, we will be asking the people of the Wairarapa what local landscapes they value and why. We look forward to hearing from people."

For more information please contact Scott Ihaka 06 370 5628

Bring out your rooks

The season of the rook will soon be upon us and Greater Wellington needs rook sightings from around the region to ensure they don't peck away at rural earnings this summer.

Traditionally rooks have been limited to Wairarapa, but there have been rooks in Ohariu Valley and occasionally on the Kapiti Coast in the past 20 years.

"All rook sightings are important and we're keen to hear about them," says Biosecurity Officer Steve Playle.

Rooks were introduced to New Zealand in the late 1800s to control pasture insects.

"Unfortunately, they also enjoy crop seed, crop seedlings and mature grains," says Steve.

"They can wreak havoc in summer when they band together in large flocks and arrive in crop paddocks en masse. In these circumstances rooks can wipe out newly sown or emerging crops, with precision planted crops such as maize, peas and beans especially at risk.

"Spring heralds the beginning of the nesting season and we are asking rural residents to be our eyes and ears to help locate breeding populations of rooks."

Typically, breeding rookeries will be located in stands of mature pines or eucalyptus trees. Often they are in close proximity to houses and other farm buildings.

Rooks are sometimes mistakenly referred to as 'crows'. They are extremely wary birds. The rook is slightly larger than a magpie and is black all over. It can be identified by its harsh call, "KAAH".

Any sighting of a rook or rookery is important. Greater Wellington will destroy them free of charge. You can contact Steve Playle on 06 378 2484 or email pest.animals@gw.govt.nz.

Top tips on minding your stream

People keen to look after the stream on their property can get a free book telling them how to do it from Greater Wellington.

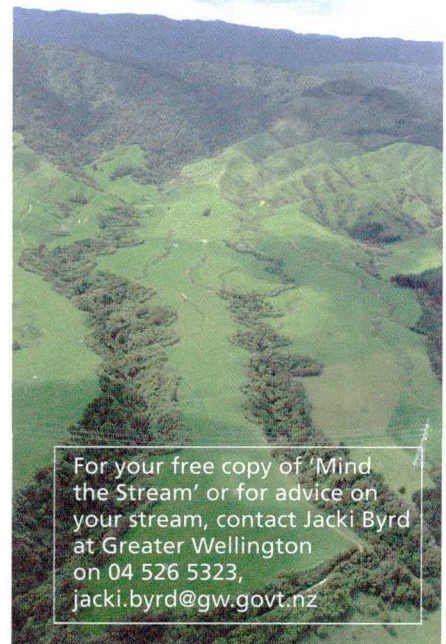
Greater Wellington land management officer Jacki Byrd says the 'Mind the Stream' book has 32 colour pages of what landowners need to know to improve the health of the stream on their property, whether it is an urban or rural creek or a full blown river.

"There are plenty of tips on what plants do well on streamsides and how streamside plantings filter nutrients and cool the water to make it

more habitable for the many species of native fish and all other aquatic life."

"Greater Wellington works with landowners, offering advice and support for improving waterways. There are many landowners who take wonderful care of their springs, streams and rivers, by fencing stock out of their waterways and planting them with native plants."

"Caring for our waterways from the mountains to the sea benefits everyone, from glorious summer swimming spots to clean shellfish gathering beds and productive fishing grounds."



For your free copy of 'Mind the Stream' or for advice on your stream, contact Jacki Byrd at Greater Wellington on 04 526 5323, jacki.byrd@gw.govt.nz

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