



**Media information**

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## **Possible water storage sites identified**

A preliminary study of water storage options in Wairarapa has identified around a dozen potential sites for further investigation.

The study is part of the Wairarapa Water Use Project's investigation of a multi-purpose regional water scheme. The scheme would collect and store water then distribute it for a variety of community and agricultural uses during the dry season in an environmentally sustainable way. It has the potential to irrigate up to 60,000 hectares of the Wairarapa valley.

A 12-month investigation by the project's consulting engineers, Tonkin and Taylor, has so far narrowed the possible storage sites from a large number down to nine, mostly on privately-owned land. The sites, outlined in a report released today, are in the south Martinborough, White Rock Road, Mangatarere, Black Creek, Kiriwhakapapa, Te Mara, Te Ore Ore, Dorsets Road and Mauriceville West areas.

The report's recommendation for further investigation of all nine sites plus several more possible options in the upper Tauweru catchment area was endorsed by the project's Leadership Group late last month after feedback from landowners and a community advisory group. The concept of including some smaller storage sites on the plains to complement the larger storages in the foothills will also be explored.

Wairarapa Water Use Project Leadership Group chair Fran Wilde said analysis of the storage sites was at a very early stage in the project's overall development. "This is just one part of a wide-ranging study that is taking into account many other factors including the identifying and managing the effects of more intensive land use as a result of irrigation, water availability, demand for water, and broad finance and ownership options."

"We do not expect all of these sites to be suitable, for a range of social, technical, economic, cultural or environmental reasons. The next step is to gather more in-depth information which will provide greater confidence as to which sites are most suitable for a more detailed pre-feasibility study."

This next phase is expected to be complete by the middle of this year. The pre-feasibility study will take about a year depending on the number of sites being considered, and will determine which sites are worth taking forward to a full feasibility study.

Work on the costing of potential schemes is extremely preliminary due to the large number of assumptions and uncertainties at this early stage of the project.

Fran Wilde said a combination of water storage sites and distribution networks may be the best solution for providing an increased and reliable water supply for Wairarapa. A staged approach to this is likely to be needed.

Project investigations are being jointly funded by the Greater Wellington Regional Council and the Irrigation Acceleration Fund (IAF) which is administered by the Ministry for Primary Industries.

IAF manager, Kevin Steel, expressed full confidence in the water project's work programme and said the speed of progress was reflected in the thoroughness of the investigations. "The IAF is committed to a collaborative partnership, not only as a funding partner, but also by providing lessons learnt from other projects and ensuring that good practice is observed," Kevin Steel said.

All project reports and further information are available at [www.wairarapawater.org.nz](http://www.wairarapawater.org.nz).

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