



Wairarapa Water Use Project

Media information

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**Wairarapa water project
enters new phase**

Investigations into what could be one of the largest economic development projects in the greater Wellington region are set to increase with the establishment of a detailed project plan and additional staff and funding.

The potential for Wairarapa to store excess water off-river in the winter and release it for a variety of community and agricultural uses during the dry season has been explored since 2007. Following an independent review of project investigations to date, and a \$750,000 allocation in Greater Wellington Regional Council's proposed annual plan, a series of more in-depth investigations are now planned.

"While irrigation of farmland had been the early focus of this project, a range of other potential uses for water, including urban and recreational use, could benefit wide sections of the Wairarapa community and will become a key part of future investigations," said project leadership group chair Fran Wilde, who also chairs the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Extensive pre-feasibility work completed over the past four years has identified potential sites for storage and indicated a potential demand for water, with strong economic returns. The plan for the next 12 months includes an assessment of the demand for water, and further engineering, environmental and economic studies.

"We need to find out who wants water, where and when they want it and how much they want," Fran Wilde said. "Assuming the budget is passed as part of Greater

Wellington's Annual Plan at the end of this month, this work will begin in August and involve on-going face-to-face discussions with iwi, environmental and recreational groups, farmers, urban communities, and, potentially energy companies."

At the same time a series of more detailed technical studies will get underway, with a storage area south of Martinborough first on the list. An earlier report on the economics of irrigated farming will be reviewed and updated over the next few months.

The potential for high-value land uses such as horticulture, which might also attract processing facilities, will be investigated as well as liaising with local councils on opportunities for urban and recreational water use.

"We recognise the need for more resources and are now recruiting a technical co-ordinator to work with the overall project management team," Fran Wilde said. A website to help interested parties stay in touch with the project has been set up at www.wairarapawater.org.nz

The Wairarapa project investigations are separate but parallel to other recent work undertaken by Greater Wellington. "As part of a Regional Plan review we are looking at water allocation and storage issues and how we can manage the impact of land use in an environmentally, culturally and economically viable way," Fran Wilde said. "We have also invested in upgrading our scientific knowledge of the behaviour of ground water and its relationship with surface water, and this data will assist with both the Regional Plan review and development of the Water Use Project".

The Wairarapa Water Use Project is overseen by a leadership group of representatives from Greater Wellington Regional Council, the three Wairarapa district councils, iwi groups Rangitāne o Wairarapa and Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, the Wairarapa Regional Irrigation Trust, environmental and recreational groups and Grow Wellington.

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