



Media information

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Water distribution systems investigated

Work to narrow the options for water storage and distribution schemes in Wairarapa is progressing as planned. Three of the six sets of investigations in the current phase of work have been completed and two more are underway.

Preliminary investigations have, to date, identified five preferred storage options in the Tividale, Black Creek, Te Mara, Mangatarere and White Rock Road which could provide water for irrigation and other community uses.

The latest work to be completed, an investigation of how water could be distributed from possible storage sites to the valley floor, has not discounted any of the five possible schemes being considered. It has however, identified further work needed to test how scheme costs would be impacted by various factors that influence the distribution networks.

The study of water distribution arrangements was part of a wider pre-feasibility study that began in February this year and will be complete by mid-2015. The aim of this work is to reduce the number of scheme options so that a more detailed full-feasibility study can be done on the remaining ones.

Wairarapa Water Use Project director, Michael Bassett-Foss, said the distribution system study, done between July and September, looked at how water could be supplied to areas of expected demand. The cost of distributing the water, together with that of water storage reservoirs, was a major consideration in determining a scheme's viability.

"The work was highly technical and involved modelling supply and demand, then drawing up initial distribution arrangements. Geotechnical assessments were made during site visits after which the systems were refined, initial cost estimates done and risks and opportunities identified for each."

Mr Bassett-Foss said the study had identified many different distribution-related factors that influenced the viability of each scheme option. They include the amount of water required per hectare on different soils for different land uses, how much of a farm would be irrigated, levels of reliability needed by farmers, water pressure requirements, allowance for water lost during distribution by pipe, canal or rivers, and pumping requirements.

“These risks and opportunities will be further considered in the next stage of work which will explore the opportunities for optimising each scheme while also considering any risks. Changes to scheme arrangements may result in significant changes to preliminary scheme costs and therefore overall viability.”

Other current work includes economic, social and recreation impact studies which will be available next month and further technical work on distribution arrangements for individual schemes.

Preliminary geotechnical investigations of the possible water storage sites were completed in June. Additional geotechnical testing of gravel depths at the Black Creek and Te Mara storage sites in August found that they were not deep enough to eliminate either site from current investigations.

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Background

- Project information and reports are available at www.wairarapawater.org.nz
- The current phase of Wairarapa Water Use Project work builds on preliminary studies over the past four years and aims to determine the viability of storing water then distributing it for a variety of economic and community uses in an environmentally sustainable way.
- Current investigations focus on five preferred schemes with three reserve schemes only being brought into the investigation if others proved unsuitable.
- The current phase of work has been designed to pinpoint factors that would prevent the development of individual schemes.
- Funded by the Greater Wellington Regional Council and the Ministry for Primary Industries’ Irrigation Acceleration Fund, the Wairarapa investigations run alongside related work by the Ruamāhanga Whaitua catchment committee which will advise the council on the rules for land and water management under the new Regional Plan.
- Information and lessons from a number of similar projects being investigated and established around New Zealand is being shared.