

**Media information**

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## **Water storage options explored further**

Initial geotechnical investigations in five areas where water could be stored in Wairarapa have found that there are no technical reasons to dismiss any of them at this stage.

The work was part of a pre-feasibility study to further narrow the options for water storage and distribution schemes in Wairarapa. It potentially leads to selection of one or more schemes that show enough viability to undergo a more detailed full-feasibility study beginning in mid-2015.

The investigations were carried out during April and May to identify and understand any geotechnical or geological issues that could affect whether a site was suitable for continued study. The sites are at White Rock Road near Martinborough, Black Creek west of Masterton, Mangatarere west of Carterton, and Te Mara and Tividale north of Masterton.

Wairarapa Water Use Project director Michael Bassett-Foss said ultimately the geotechnical information would help better define construction costs which would affect the cost of water and the viability of developing any scheme.

“Until this year site investigations have involved desktop research and visual inspections only. This was the first time we have conducted any physical work - digging test pits, taking soil samples and looking more closely at surface material and land features. The work was at a preliminary level, based on observations and engineering judgement, rather than full analysis,” he said.

“There were no major surprises but we did learn more about several geological issues at the White Rock Road and Black Creek sites which we would like to look at further as soon as possible. The aim of this would be to establish whether these issues were sufficiently significant to discount either site.”

Mr Bassett-Foss said a study last year had identified a smaller subset of the Black Creek site which would remain an option should the larger Black Creek site prove not suitable.

Pre-feasibility investigations would continue as planned on all five scheme options with the next task a high-level assessment of possible water distribution arrangements associated with each storage site, to be completed by October this year.

“The distribution component is a very large part of any potential water scheme and can greatly affect overall viability so it’s an important piece of work to be done now,” Mr Bassett-Foss said.

“We expect to be in a position by December this year to start discounting the least viable storage sites, helping to give affected landowners certainty.”

The pre-feasibility phase of the project builds on preliminary studies and aims to determine the viability of storing excess water then distributing it for a variety of economic and community uses in an environmentally sustainable way.

Divided into six sequenced work streams, the pre-feasibility study has a series of review points at which the mix of schemes for continued investigation would be re-examined.

A parallel set of investigations between now until the end of this year included understanding more about water availability, social and economic implications and opportunities, environmental, commercial and financing considerations and alternative land uses.

On-going tasks included talking with farmers to further gauge their interest in the supply of reliable irrigation water, high-level economic assessments, and community engagement. Additional scheme-specific studies will be confirmed in October and completed by early next year.

Wairarapa Water Use Project information and reports can be found at [www.wairarapawater.org.nz](http://www.wairarapawater.org.nz)

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