

## Water investigations on track

Pre-feasibility work to narrow the options for water storage and distribution schemes in Wairarapa is progressing well with the first of six sets of investigations complete and two others started.

The current phase of Wairarapa Water Use Project work builds on preliminary studies 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.

Five possible schemes continue to be investigated to determine which, if any, show enough viability to warrant a more detailed full-feasibility study beginning in mid-2015.

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.

Project director, Michael Bassett-Foss, said at the first review point reached last week, results of the first set of three studies showed that there were no technical reasons at this stage to dismiss any of the schemes being investigated or to introduce changes to the work programme.

An initial assessment of whether the Tauweru and Huangarua Rivers could convey water from their respective storage sites to where irrigation water would be used found that this would be potentially feasible. The Tividale scheme could use the Tauweru River to convey water from the storage site north of Masterton to farms in the mid-lower Wairarapa valley. The White Rock Road scheme could likewise use the Huangarua River to transport water to areas around Martinborough. More work would be carried out should either scheme progress to a full-feasibility study.

A brief review of the area within which water could be distributed for irrigation found that it was appropriate for the project's current phase of work and, if anything, the high priority demand areas were likely to have been underestimated.

A third study broadly considered the concept of storing water in large man-made ponds on the Wairarapa plains instead of or as well as in storage lakes in the hills. It outlined the pros and cons of on-plains storage and concluded that it was a potentially viable storage option. It found that to provide the same amount of water as the hill storage lakes, 110 large ponds the size of the largest Te Marua reservoir would be needed. "This was a highly conceptual study which we expect to build on to

see on how on-plains storage could either supplement or replace dismissed storage lakes in the hills,” Mr Bassett-Foss said.

The second phase of pre-feasibility work, assessing the geotechnical aspects of the five possible water storage sites, began last month. “We have been working on this with landowners in and around each of the five sites and expect it to be complete by mid-June at the second scheduled review point,” Mr Bassett-Foss said.

This would be followed by a geotechnical assessment of the related distribution systems, finishing in September.

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

On-going tasks include 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, followed by selection of one or more schemes for a full-feasibility study beginning in mid-2015.

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

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