



Media information

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Water project aims to narrow schemes

The next phase of investigations to determine the viability of storing water for irrigation and other uses in Wairarapa aims to reduce the number of scheme options over the next 12 months.

The Wairarapa Water Use Project is investigating the viability of one or more multi-purpose water schemes that would collect and store water then distribute it for a variety of economic and community uses in an environmentally sustainable way.

Pre-feasibility work, beginning now, builds on previous work to determine which schemes, if any, show enough viability to warrant a more detailed full-feasibility study that would begin in mid-2015.

Preliminary investigations have, to date, narrowed the possibilities to five preferred options in the Tivdale, Black Creek, Te Mara, Mangatarere and White Rock Road areas along with three others identified as reserve options.

Project director Michael Bassett-Foss says the current phase of work was designed to pinpoint factors that would prevent the development of individual schemes.

“We want to move as quickly as possible to identify schemes that could be viable from technical, financial, cultural, environmental and social perspectives, and therefore suitable for advancing to a full-feasibility study. I expect that the project would be in a position as early as December to start discounting the least viable sites, helping to give affected landowners certainty.”

“While the pre-feasibility work is more detailed than that done before, some of it is still at a relatively high level because it is not practical to investigate each possible scheme in great detail.”

The programme is divided into six work streams with a series of review points at which the mix of schemes for continued investigation will be re-examined.

Work during March and April includes a review of the possible irrigable areas, work on how water from the Tivdale and White Rock sites could be distributed via rivers, and consideration of whether water can viably be stored on the valley floor instead of in the hills.

A geological assessment of storage sites is planned for April until June, 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 includes understanding more about the available water, social and economic implications and opportunities, 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.

Mr Bassett-Foss said the pre-feasibility work would initially focus on the five preferred schemes with reserve sites possibly being brought into the investigation if others proved unsuitable.

He said information and lessons from a number of similar projects being investigated and established around the country was being shared.

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.

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