



Media information

29 October 2013

Community days

attract interest

About 200 people attended a series of five community 'drop-in' days held earlier this month to hear about investigations into a number of possible water schemes throughout Wairarapa.

At the meetings, held at community and school halls, local residents participated in discussions with project team members about various aspects of the proposals which would provide stored water for a variety of economic and community uses.

Wairarapa Water Use Project director, Michael Bassett-Foss, said he was pleased with the interest and responses from residents.

"The opportunity to meet face-to-face with people, provide information, hear their concerns and answer questions was a valuable one which we intend to repeat as the project progresses, along with a range of other activities to gain community input.

Mr Bassett-Foss said while there had been direct discussions with owners of property within the footprints of the possible water storage sites since last year, the drop-in days had been a chance to meet and talk with a wider group of people, including those living near the sites.

"People understood the reason for the investigations and had a variety of questions, comments and concerns which will be taken into account in future stages of the project.

"Generally, people appreciated the opportunity to discuss the project and wanted to be kept informed as it progresses. Talking with the community is an on-going priority throughout this project."

The Wairarapa Water Use Project is in the early stages of investigating the viability of a multi-purpose water scheme that would collect and store water then distribute it during the dry season in an environmentally sustainable way.

The plan to increase the supply and reliability of water in Wairarapa moved a step closer last month when 14 possible water storage sites were narrowed to five for further investigation. Three additional sites are being held in reserve and are not being investigated at this stage.

The project has the potential to increase irrigation in the Wairarapa valley from 12,000 hectares currently to about 42,000 hectares. Other uses could include increasing low summer river flows, recreation, stock water, frost fighting, hydro-electricity generation and urban water supply.

Mr Bassett-Foss said the project was still at a conceptual stage and it was not yet known how many schemes might be viable. He said any future development may be staged over time.

Expected to be complete by the end of 2014, the next stage of investigation will determine any schemes that are worth taking forward to a full feasibility study in 2015. Any storage sites found to be unsuitable as work progressed would be removed from the list at the time.

Further information about the project can be found at www.wairarapawater.org.nz

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