

WHANGANUI WEST CATCHMENT GROUP 2023 UPDATE



Happy New Year! We hope 2023 brings you good health, fulfills your personal dreams and aspirations and that our farmers, catchment group and wider community will achieve strong progress towards our mission of

“Sharing sustainable land and water management practices to improve our legacy”.

Here’s an update on what the group’s been doing and what’s ahead:

1. The Whanganui Region Catchment Group (WRCG) was formed in 2022 and is a regional group that spans from Taumarunui to Whanganui and the Whanganui West Catchment Group is a member of this group. The regional group has made some very good progress with a funding application with MPI in order that coordinators can be employed, who will be working on behalf of land owners and other stakeholders on farm environmental opportunities for both groups.
2. Alastair Cole, from MPI, has confirmed the funding application by Whanganui Region Catchment Group, together with a proposed contract, have been approved, in principle, by MPI. We are looking to have details finalised by the end of February.
3. The interview process has been completed with applicants for the three Catchment Group positions, and, pending the finalizing of the MPI contract, will “hit the ground running” later this month.
4. Representatives from WWCG met with MPI at Kai Iwi Hall during November, outlining progress to date, as well as to discuss what the current pressures and stresses are on farmers and land owners, and how MPI could assist.
5. An online meeting with Ministry for the Environment was held during November which included a powerpoint presentation outlining perspectives from our catchment group. Feedback from MfE was very positive - we outlined some of the challenges that were presented to us, as a group, with respect to the formation of the group, the lack of funding, and the time that has been taken to get to where we are presently. We also outlined the Ototoka project plan with MfE who were genuinely interested in this. Once we have a coordinator employed, WWCG are planning to bring all stakeholders together to plan and start the Ototoka project. It is likely that it will be the first project that will be undertaken within the greater Whanganui region.....**Watch this space!!!!**
6. Donald Richards and his team completed their 3rd round of water testing on 15th December. Unfortunately, due to a courier malfunction with the Christmas rush, the test samples failed to arrive at the Hawkes Bay test house within the designated time, and were unable to be utilised for accurate testing. We are looking to retest in mid-February, as part of our agreed bi-monthly testing plan.
7. Members of WWCG have been made aware that Horizons presently have a specific focus on improving water quality of the Ototoka Stream, and, in some circumstances, are offering a 50% accretion fencing and/or planting subsidy for unfenced areas within this catchment. We would like to ensure Ototoka catchment land owners are aware of this subsidy and recommend you contact your local Horizons representative (Gracen Coe) straight away for further information.

8. Changes to the low slope map – Nationally, MfE have reduced the area covered by the low slope map by some 13%. This does impact on low slope land within our patch – and may impact on what still needs to be fenced prior to 2025 under proposed legislation. The latest edition of the Low slope map can be viewed at <https://data.mfe.govt.nz/layer/111150-stock-exclusion-low-slope-land-2022/>



Left: Exploring the Birch Pools and former Maxwell Water Supply site on the Ototoka – Anne-Marie Broughton, George Matthews and Richard White.

9. Horizons have made it evident that fencing and planting subsidies available for areas covered under the (latest) low slope map will only be available until 2025. If anyone is considering fencing and/or planting in low slope areas, Whanganui West Catchment Group are recommending land owners contact Horizons immediately, in order that subsidies can be planned (funding is limited) , as well as fencing materials and fencers (if needed) are booked. Horizons have advised that low slope subsidies are unlikely to be available after 2025, and it will be incumbent on land owners to have waterways fenced under legislation, ensuring that beef cattle, dairy cattle, pigs, and deer, are excluded from waterways.

10. We have been advised that at this stage it is likely fencing and planting subsidies will continue in hill country, beyond 2025, via Horizons, and include a 1.5 metre setback.

We would like to thank the hard working Tania Bramley, from Land care Trust, our strongly committed committee members, including Donald Richards and his water testing team, who have driven all over the district obtaining water samples, our members, some of whom have made significant donations that have been utilised for water testing fees, and our land owners who have already taken action to improve the quality of water that flows from their properties.

Kind Regards - Whanganui West Catchment Group Committee

George Matthews & Mike Russell (Co-Chairs)

Committee Members: Alan Davison, Anne-Marie Broughton, Bruce Cave, Chris Blair, Don Richards, Duncan Matthews, Erin Carver, Fraser Middleton, Harriet Horrocks, Jason Reid, Kate Lynch, Macy Duxfield, Rawiri Walsh.



Above: Don Richards out and about collecting water samples.

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