

MEDIA RELEASE

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Horizons Region to receive over \$5.84 million for freshwater improvements

The Horizons Region has been successful in securing over \$5.84 million from central government under the Freshwater Improvement Fund. This will contribute towards \$12.3 million worth of projects over four catchments within Manawatu-Whanganui.

Horizons, in conjunction with territorial authorities, iwi, and landowners submitted five applications toward the fund in April this year. Four of these applications have been successful from a total of 33 projects throughout the country that will share \$44 million from the fund collectively.

Horizons Chairman Bruce Gordon says three of these applications are for initiatives for the Manawatū River, Whangaehu River, and Lake Waipu, which Horizons will manage. The fourth successful application was made by the Lake Horowhenua Trust to further action lake improvement programmes on behalf of the Lake Horowhenua Accord partners.

“It’s really pleasing to have secured such a significant amount of funding for projects that will make direct improvements to the quality of freshwater in our Region,” says Mr Gordon.

“All of our applications that included upgrading wastewater discharges from water to land were successful, which is a positive step forward.”

The Manawatū River project will cost a total \$7.24 million and include the upgrade of Tokomaru’s wastewater treatment plant to discharge to land, 250 kilometres of stream fencing, 200,000 riparian plants, 20 fish pass fixes, 45 community-led projects, Palmerston North City Council’s urban streams project, and matauranga Māori and cultural monitoring.

“As a member of the Manawatū River Leaders’ Forum, Horizons will contribute \$1.96 million towards these projects. A further \$2.3 million will come from Palmerston North City Council, Horowhenua District Council and landowners. The Ministry for the Environment’s (MfE) Freshwater Improvement Fund will cover the remaining \$2.92 million, equating to 40 per cent of the project cost,” explains Mr Gordon.

The Ngā Wai Ora o te Whangaehu Freshwater Improvement project will cost \$1.68 million, with \$590,000 being contributed from MfE. This project will include 60 kilometres of stream fencing to prevent stock access, 12,000 riparian plants, 5 fish pass fixes, and 10 community-led restoration projects.

“We’re collaborating very closely with Ngati Rangī iwi and landowners, who are providing a combined contribution of over \$450,000 towards the Whangaehu River initiatives. Horizons have also committed over \$450,000, with the Freshwater Improvement Fund covering \$590,000,” says Mr Gordon.

Lake Waipu will see improvements through effluent discharged to land instead of into the Lake. Horizons will oversee this project and contribute \$75,000 towards a science and monitoring programme over three years. Rangitikei District Council has committed \$950,000, with the

Improvement Fund providing the balance of \$875,000 towards the estimated \$1.9 million total project cost.

“The Lake Horowhenua funding has a primary focus on stormwater management and will help increase the body of cultural and scientific information about the quality and movement of groundwater within the catchment,” says Mr Gordon.

“As a partner of the Lake Horowhenua Accord, we’re pleased to see the Horowhenua Lake Trust has been successful in their application as it will build on the significant progress made since the establishment of the Lake Horowhenua Accord (He Hokioi Rerengatahi) in 2013.

“This funding project includes assessment and flushing of the stormwater system, establishment of a silt interceptor, shallow groundwater monitoring and implementation of two cultural monitoring programme activities. These will all complement the Accord’s key interventions aimed at addressing toxic algal blooms, sedimentation, and reducing the amount of nutrients entering the Lake, as well as improving habitat for native fish populations.”

Horizons natural resources and partnerships group manager Dr Jon Roygard says to have been the third most successful region to have secured central government funding and to be able to progress freshwater interventions throughout the Region is really pleasing.

“These projects will add further value to the regulatory and non-regulatory work already being undertaken, for which we are seeing improved freshwater quality results,” says Dr Roygard.

“Water quality trends across the 36 sites monitored Region-wide from 2006-2015 show 16 per cent of sites have improved in turbidity, 22 per cent have improved in bacteria levels, 28 per cent have improved phosphorus levels and over half of the 36 sites have improved nitrogen levels.

“We know there is still more work to be done, and these newly funded projects will continue to move us in the right direction to improving freshwater for our communities.”

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