

RANGITIKEI ENVIRONMENT

Treasured Natural Environment Group

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By Chris Shenton

Chair Treasured Natural Environment Group

The Treasured Natural Environment Group was formed out of the 2010 Path to Well-being conference which explored a number of environmental issues. Throughout 2012 a series of community meetings were held across the District to understand local issues and work to develop solutions for improving the environment.

The purpose of the group is to work towards increasing water quality of the Rangitikei River and its tributaries; improving biodiversity and reducing weeds; improving recreation opportunities; and increasing community collaboration in environmental projects.

Collaboration to improve environmental outcomes throughout the Rangitikei

Projects undertaken by members of the group include planting, pest management, the creation of walking tracks and the support of community groups, such as the Hautapu Catchment Care Group.

The Treasured Natural Environment Group comprises of representatives from the community, tourism operators, the Department of Conservation, Landcare Trust, Rangitikei Environment Group (REG), Nga Pae o Rangitikei, Federated Farmers, Horizons Regional Council and Rangitikei District Council.

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The Treasured Natural Environment Group would like to share the fantastic environmental projects occurring throughout the Rangitikei District, so has developed a quarterly newsletter. All contributions are welcomed!

Our hope is that the people undertaking environmental projects in our community are recognised and appreciated and that more people are inspired to get involved.



Rangitikei River

If you have any questions, comments or would like to join the group please feel free to contact Katrina Gray, Policy Analyst/Planner from Rangitikei District Council on 06 327 0099 or katrina.gray@rangitikei.govt.nz.

Hautapu Catchment Care Group

By Angus Gordon

On 29 April 2015 a public meeting for residents along the Hautapu River was held to discuss environmental issues.

The 'Hautapu Catchment Care Group' meeting was attended by approximately 15 locals, with staff from a range of agencies also in attendance (Horizons Regional Council, Landcare Trust, Rangitikei District Council, and Department of Conservation).

Horizons staff provided an overview of the health of the Hautapu River – which is generally in good condition, but is declining. Any insights into why there might be a decline would be appreciated!

Alastair Cole from Landcare Trust advocated the benefits of working as a community group, the improvements that can result are significant.

There were a number of topics of interest mentioned at the meeting including Old Man's



Hautapu River

Beard, willows, water quality, fencing native bush and riparian areas and provision of stock water.

Volunteers for a Hautapu Catchment Care Group Committee were sought, with members due to meet in September

If you are interested or have any questions please feel free to contact me –

Angus Gordon angusg@xtra.co.nz.

Rangitikei River Access Improvements

By Katrina Gray and Clare Ridler

Horizons Regional Council and Rangitikei District Council are both making plans to improve the existing access points to the Rangitikei River.

Horizons have a well-established plan of increasing planting and signage in these areas, while Rangitikei District Council is considering how they might best support these initiatives. The current focus areas are Bulls, Kakariki and Onepuhi, with planting already planned for 2016.

Working bees are likely to come! If you have any ideas or are interested in being involved contact:



Seating at the start of the Rangitikei River access in Bulls

Clare Ridler: clare.ridler@horizons.govt.nz

Katrina Gray: katrina.gray@rangitikei.govt.nz

The Growth of a Community Stoat Trapping Project

By Brian Megaw

We have not yet come up with a catchy name, so at the moment the project is called "*The River Valley and Pukeokahu Community Stoat Control Project*". Bit of a mouthful, so for this article we will simply call it the "The Project".

The Project started from very humble beginnings back in 2011. At River Valley we decided we would, over a period of time, buy a few stoat traps on a regular basis, and starting with the area around the Lodge, slowly create an area of control. We were focused on bringing back native birds, but did not have any particular bird species as a target (though we did see Whio on the river on occasion).

In early 2013 however, DoC learned what we were doing and offered us 100 DOC200 traps in boxes for free. Of course the catch was that we had to lay most of them out, bait and check them – a cunning move on the part of DoC as they got a greater area of predator control for very little ongoing cost. I believe these traps were funded through DoC's Whio protection initiatives.



Setting a Stoat trap on the Rangitikei River

Of the original 100 traps, 30 were laid out on neighbouring properties to be checked by them, while the balance were either laid out on the banks along the Rangitikei River, both upstream and downstream from River Valley Lodge, or in the surrounding area to be checked by us. This was the status quo for the first 18 months or so of "The Project".

Several things we did do during this time were enlisting the services of Bob Jordon and keeping the local community informed of what we were doing. Bob Jordon collates our catch data, the GPS positions of all our traps, and displays all this information on Google Earth. [You can access the file here.](#)

Results to June 2015

50 x Stoats	80 x hedgehogs
3 x Weasels	9 x Wild cats
158 x Rats	1 x Mouse

During late 2014 we held a district information evening at River Valley Lodge and updated the community on what we were doing, how successful it was, and put the question to them about who else would like to be involved.

This led to a further 50 traps being supplied by the Ruahine Whio Protection Trust. These traps extended the area being covered on the river (checked by River Valley), and also covered some fenced off native forest remnants and small waterways on neighbouring farms (checked by individual farmers). There are some plans to extend coverage with some more self-setting traps, most probably up the Whakaurekou River, and also fill in one or two gaps on the main river.

Are we having an impact?

I believe we are. There seem to be more birds around, and certainly more bird song. The trap network covers 20km of river and several

hundred hectares of bush and farmland. Can we prove scientifically that we are making a major difference? The answer is we cannot, however we are consistently seeing more Whio.

What have we learnt?

- Somebody has to drive a project like this and keep it on track. You do not need a legal trust. You can just get on with it.
- Get the local school involved.
- It is easy for someone to say they will look after traps on their property. In reality the monthly checks can easily be overlooked as the initial enthusiasm wears off. Volunteers need to realise that this is a long term project without end.
- Records – A visual style of record keeping such as Bob Jordon created for us on Google Earth, not only tracks how we are going but also does wonders for motivation.
- Our stoat catch is 31% of the number of rats we catch. At Blue Duck Station at Retaruke their stoat catch is 6% of their rat catch. I have no idea why, only we are catching a lot of stoats.

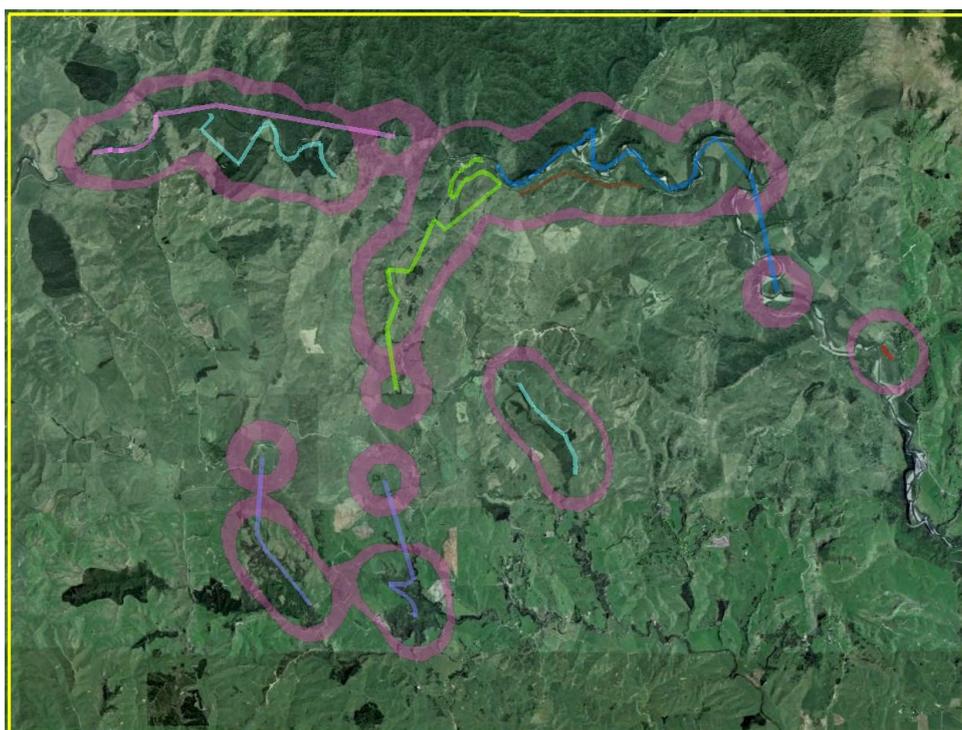
- There are resources available through DOC for these types of projects.
- Trapping can only do so much. Habitat rehabilitation has to be part of a long term plan.

Key to the picture

Bob Jordon is a scientist. He has developed algorithms that indicate the area where there is effective stoat control, and areas where there is some control. Control is based on the premise that a stoat needs to encounter a trap in order to be killed. On the map you can see each trap line, and out from that line a purple band. The purple band indicates the area where there is marginal control. The area inside the band is where there is enough trap density to allow effective control.

This is a great project with a good deal of community involvement and is good for the birds.

If anybody has questions, they can contact me – Brian Megaw, brian@rivervalley.co.nz



Map of stoat control area

Tutaenui Stream Restoration Project

By Greg Carlyon

In the early part of 2015, a group of interested local farmers and community members put together a proposal to restore the degraded Tutaenui Stream. In their minds they would see the dams at the top end of the stream open to public access, tracks designed and built for families to enjoy the environment, and an ongoing planting programme. Alongside this, the group would continue to work with adjacent landowners to ensure the streams feeding into the dams were free of stock and water quality maintained, as this is Marton's drinking water supply.

Downstream of the dams, the project would work with landowners on the section of the stream which runs for approximately 7.5km to Marton Township. There are a large number of activities that are affecting the stream, including discharges from the water treatment plant, stock access, flood protection activity, willow and other plant pests. Of course there are also a large number of landowners who have already done a great deal of work to fence and plant their part of the stream.

Through the Marton Township there is a great deal of waste thrown into the stream and there are many parts of the stream which are not loved by the landowners alongside it. The group plans to work with those service clubs (Rotary and others) who are already doing great projects alongside the stream, landowners who want to make a difference and the Regional Council.

The goal of the project is that the stream is accessible, our Rangitikei community has pride in it and our kids can continue to muck around in the stream in the same way many of us did when we were younger.

To date the project has been endorsed by Rangitikei District Council, with a commitment of

funding to the sorts of projects identified above, and a promise of consideration for new funding in the 2016 year, as the planning and initial works programme is complete. The team has met with the District Council's Utility Asset Manager and received a really positive response to provide access to the Tutaenui dams, and we can now begin planning for the spring work required to open up the existing track network around the dams.

Over the next few months, the Marton community can expect to see the Tutaenui Stream Trust formally constituted, discussions with landowners underway, and early work on a key section of the stream happening through a community working bee.



Tutaenui Dam

The toughest issue of all is the project goal of public access along the Tutaenui Stream. This depends on the goodwill and support of local landowners, should not be rushed and if it does occur, it may take many years. The project team has been hugely impressed with the support from the Marton and Rangitikei community. There is a great deal of support for the project, and all seem to look forward to the chance to get out and physically make a difference on our warmer spring days, coming soon.

For anyone wanting to support the project and get involved, please phone Greg Carlyon, 021 327774.

Farmers are the Best Conservationists

By Kristy McGregor

Federated Farmers regional policy advisor

With environmental practice often in the spotlight, farmers are always seeking to manage the impact they have on our fragile environment. The ability to change and innovate has been the distinction of New Zealand's sheep and beef farmers.

Seventy five percent of the Horizons region is considered hill country, with forty percent of this land having the potential to moderate erosion. The challenge is keeping valuable hill country soils on hills and out of waterways. Regional council programs such as the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI) provide advice and support for farmers to get there. Yet it is our farmers who are our best conservationists.

We have leaders in sustainability right here in our own backyard. Taihape farmer Fraser Gordon, Federated Farmers Manawatu–Rangitikei Vice President, is one local farmer that hasn't been afraid to try something new. In a bid to control erosion and be drought resilient, he has planted fodder willows. Providing shade and shelter, these willows have provided feed for 1000 sheep for six weeks during drought. This offers feed security and soil conservation, maintaining water quality. Mr Gordon is an entrepreneur, turning new knowledge into opportunity and has the largest crop of fodder willows in the country.



Stock eating cut willow

Many farmers are working to eliminate stock from waterways, and plant poplars to stabilize banks, something Marton farmer, Richard Morrison, describes as *“Good humble farmers that are trying to be good stewards of the land, and proud of it”*.



Wairere Drought 2013

What is Federated Farmers role in this? We advocate for policy that is workable for farmers, ensuring farming has a profitable and sustainable future. For farmers busy enough running large businesses and trying their best to be good custodians of the land and environment, Federated Farmers enables them to do that to the best of their abilities. In the summer, Mr Gordon will once again look to his fodder willows as a source of security to get him through the dry.



Stock eating cut willow

Not every farmer is prepared to take the risk and be an early adopter – but I suspect as the land gets drier, there may be more than just Mr Gordon's neighbours looking over his fence contemplating how they might better undertake conservation at their place.

Funding Opportunities

By Horizons Regional Council

Horizons Regional Council has funding available for landowners and groups wanting to undertake environmental projects on their properties – the environmental grant can provide a 30–50% share of the cost of approved projects.

Projects that may be eligible include:

- Fencing of streams/rivers;
- Fencing bush remnants and wetlands;
- Replanting streams/wetlands with native trees and shrubs; and
- Erosion control projects such as poplar pole planting, afforestation, and sediment traps.

Staff can provide free advice on site, which is specific for your property; as well as let you know whether the project meets funding criteria.

Free phone for assistance – 0508 800 800.



Taihape–Napier

Upcoming Events

Hautapu Catchment Care Group Committee Meeting

2 September

Contact Angus Gordon
angusg@xtra.co.nz

Tutaenui Stream Restoration Group

3 September 6.30pm

Contact Greg Carlyon
021 327774

Bulls River Users Group Meeting

Next meeting late September

Contact Jan Harris
bulls.community@xtra.co.nz

Treasured Natural Environment Group Meeting

21 October 3pm

Rangitikei District Council, Marton

Contact Katrina Gray

katrina.gray@rangitikei.govt.nz
06 327 0099

If you have any contributions to the newsletter, any questions, or wish to subscribe please contact

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katrina.gray@rangitikei.govt.nz
06 327 0099