



## WAITOHU STREAM STUDY NEWSLETTER NO 2

SEPTEMBER 2004

# Waitohu Stream Study – update

## The study so far...

Since our first newsletter in April we are now well through our investigations and consultation with the community.

To briefly recap, the study involves investigating the flood hazard posed by the Waitohu Stream and reviewing its water quality and ecosystem health.

The technical investigations have now been completed. We shared the initial findings with you as we carried out the consultation programme.

We would like to thank you for sharing your experiences and information.

## Initial community feedback

Since February we have met with most residents, landowners and interested groups involved with the Waitohu Stream, in a combination of small group and individual meetings.

The interest shown has been extremely encouraging and bodes well for the future management of the stream.



Planting in the upper reaches of the Waitohu Stream has helped prevent erosion.

## Things people have said:

- We understand the frequency of flooding and accept it's going to happen but floodwaters need to be able to drain away as quickly as possible.
- Willows in the lower reaches have become overgrown. This restricts access by canoe and slows the escape of floodwaters. Planting of alternatives to willows should be encouraged.
- In the upper reaches, planting seems to have worked well to prevent erosion.
- Greater Wellington's stream mouth cutting policy and practices need to be reviewed.
- The dunes around the stream mouth are really valuable.
- Gravel build up seems to be a problem in parts of the stream.
- We are surprised at the poor water quality in the stream, even at the State Highway bridge and concerned about how bad it is at the mouth.
- The wider community uses both the upper reaches and the mouth area for recreation (e.g. canoeing, swimming, picnicking).

## Facts and figures

### Water quality and ecosystem health assessment

- Nearly half of the stream's 4580 hectare catchment is covered by native vegetation.
- More than a third, 1660 hectares, of the catchment is protected by covenants or in Department of Conservation or district council ownership.
- Eleven native fish species are known to live in the catchment.
- Downstream of the railway line, water leaks through the streambed into groundwater at a rate of about 60 to 80 litres per second, and at times parts of the streambed dry up completely.
- At the old water supply intake there is excellent water quality and the stream supports a diverse range of aquatic insects.
- Water quality near the mouth has been improving over the last few years.
- Average ammonia levels in 2000-2003 were about a third of what they were in 1995-2000. Nitrate and faecal coliform levels are also diminishing.
- Water clarity (a measure of the silt in water) has been increasing by 4 cm a year since 1998.
- These water quality improvements coincide with a change in dairymen's effluent disposal practices in the catchment.

### Flood hazard investigations

- Updated hydrology has indicated that flood flows, at a given frequency, are higher than previously thought.
- A 1-in-100 year flood would inundate approximately 300 hectares of the floodplain. Most of this land is used for dairying, grazing and lifestyle blocks. Several houses would be affected.
- Extensive flooding also occurs in more frequent floods.
- Flooding also poses risk to the eight bridges (including SH1 and the railway) across the stream, and to assets such as water supply lines and fibre optic cables. Bridge abutments have been damaged in the past.
- The stream is steep above SH1 and during floods the channel actively moves from side to side.
- Between SH1 and the railway, the stream is less steep – it flattens – and gravel is deposited. Approximately 1500m<sup>3</sup> of gravel is deposited there each year.

## What are we doing next?

A record of the meetings we have had is being prepared and will be circulated to people we have talked to.

We are also starting to prepare a summary report. However, we will need to meet with some people again to get a better idea of some of their concerns. All those people involved to date will have an opportunity to comment on the recommendations in the summary report.

Nearly everyone we talked to wanted to be kept informed about the study and stream management in general. Newsletters like this one will be sent at regular intervals to keep you up-to-date.

We still have some people/groups to make contact with in the community. If we have not talked to you and you'd like to be involved please contact us – details are below.



Streamside planting and fencing improves water quality.

### Project timeline

<b>August/Sept</b>	complete consultation
<b>September</b>	send out consultation summaries
<b>December 2004</b>	complete summary report and recommendations

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Greater Wellington  
P O Box 11646  
Wellington  
T 04 384 5708  
F 04 385 6960  
W [www.gw.govt.nz](http://www.gw.govt.nz)

#### Contact

Tracy Berghan  
T 04 801 1045  
E [tracy.berghan@gw.govt.nz](mailto:tracy.berghan@gw.govt.nz)

Phil Wallace  
T 04 801 1084  
E [philip.wallace@gw.govt.nz](mailto:philip.wallace@gw.govt.nz)

Nigel Clarke  
T 04 801 1030  
E [nigel.clarke@gw.govt.nz](mailto:nigel.clarke@gw.govt.nz)

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