



## COMMITTEE COMMENTS

### Chair: Stu Farrant

Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Committee is in the information gathering phase of its work and has been on a number of fieldtrips to learn more about issues in the catchment (Whaitua).

Our committee is learning about how the water runs in the Porirua catchment and, while we're not quite Livingstone looking for the source of the Nile, on our first fieldtrip we were a bus-load of committed and passionate people immersing in the complex issues which we will confront over the next couple of years.

Our trip began in the upper reaches of the catchment where Wellington's northern growth areas spill over into the watershed. Bill Stevens from Wellington City Council, explained the challenges to urban development posed by the steep topography, dispersive soils and increasingly stressed ecological niches. This discussion brought home the real impacts of earthworks, erosion and sediment control and stormwater runoff, particularly given more frequent flooding events.

The 1976 floods wreaked havoc in the Porirua Stream catchment, and as a result large detention dams have been constructed in Churton Park and Newlands. Greater Wellington Regional Council flood management experts explained that these dams are designed to hold back peak flows of 100 year events but do not help in anything less than a 20 year return interval.

At the Grenada water quality monitoring site Regional Council's aquatic ecosystem scientist Juliet Milne explained the impacts that flooding and contaminants can have on freshwater ecosystems.

A trip to Spicer Landfill and the industrial areas within the Mitchell Creek catchment focused on the more acute toxicants these land uses have on receiving waters which ultimately flow into the harbour.

Still following this flow we travelled to the Porirua Stream mouth. Once the site of extensive estuarine saltmarsh and tidal mudflats and favoured for mahinga kai, this area is now constrained by reclamation and subject to ongoing contamination flushed out of the catchment. We are aware of the impact this has on the harbour ecosystem and terrestrial margins, and significant work has been carried out over the years through the Porirua Harbour Strategy and Action Plan including plans to transform the stream mouth environs through good urban design.

Another "high" point of the day was our trip to the Porirua Waste Water Treatment Plant. Here storm water infiltration into the network and growth limitations of the wastewater infrastructure are the biggest challenge.

On Gloaming Hill we met up with Porirua City Council's knowledgeable Planning Manager Matt Trlin to discuss the city's urban growth plans. Growth is expected along the northern growth area north of Plimmerton with the introduction of new zoning and the construction of the Transmission Gully Highway.

My impression overall is that coming to grips with these catchment scale challenges will require a massive collective effort from members of the Whaitua Committee, the three local authorities and many expert services involved and especially the members of the community who live in this fascinating geographic basin.



Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Committee members (l-r): Richard Cook, John Gibbs, Natasha Tomic (project team), Stu Farrant, Warwick Lyon, Sharli-Jo Solomon, Larissa Toelupe

**More information:**

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The quality of our water reflects  
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