

OURS.

THE MANAWATŪ RIVER LEADERS' ACCORD

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

FEBRUARY 2012

GOALS

- The Manawatū River becomes a source of regional pride and mana.
- Waterways in the Manawatū Catchment are safe, accessible, swimmable, and provide good recreation and food resources.
- The Manawatū Catchment and waterways are returned to a healthy condition.
- Sustainable use of the land and water resources of the Manawatū Catchment continues to underpin the economic prosperity of the Region.

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In August 2010 the members of the Manawatū River Leaders' Forum signed an Accord to take action to improve the state of the Manawatū River.

The Accord includes a focus, vision, and goals for the river. The leaders agreed to champion and give life to the Accord and made a series of commitments.

One of these commitments was to establish a collaboratively owned Action Plan ready for implementation by 1 July 2011. Six months on the leaders regrouped to review the progress made towards realising the Accord's goals. This is their summary of progress to date.



To view a map of the Manawatū Catchment, scan this QR code with your smartphone or visit www.manawaturiver.co.nz



KEY ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Achieving the goals set out in the Accord will require considerable effort over a number of years. We believe the delivery of the following key actions across the Catchment will result in significant progress towards the rehabilitation of the Manawatū River.

THESE KEY ACTIONS ARE:



Reduce sediment run-off from erosion prone farmland, the rural road network, and areas of major earthworks through:

- implementation of the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI),
- meeting resource consent conditions, compliance monitoring and enforcement, and
- use of earthworks and road maintenance best management practices.



Reduce the nutrient and bacteria load from point source discharges through:

- resolution of outstanding resource consent applications,
- ensuring consented discharges meet regional plan water quality standards,
- meeting resource consent conditions, compliance monitoring and enforcement, and
- requiring and obtaining resource consents for storm water discharges.



Reduce the run-off of sediment, nutrients and pathogens from intensive land-uses such as dairying, horticulture and cropping through:

- meeting resource consent conditions, compliance monitoring and enforcement,
- meeting the Clean Stream Accord targets and successive schemes introduced by the dairy sector, and
- adoption of Nutrient Management Plans and promotion of nutrient use efficiency.



Protect areas of habitat for native fish, birds and trout, and enable movement between these areas:

- fencing and planting streams and bush/wetland areas, and controlling pests,
- removing fish barriers (unless there are likely to be negative effects on native fish populations),
- meeting resource consent conditions, compliance monitoring and enforcement.



Reduce the impact of flood control and drainage schemes on the physical character and natural processes of the Manawatū Catchment by:

- ensuring all works are undertaken in accordance with relevant Codes of Practice,
- meeting resource consent conditions, compliance monitoring and enforcement, and
- making greater use of plants (particularly natives) in riparian zones.



Prevent over-allocation and use of the water resource by:

- ensuring consented takes meet regional plan water allocation and efficiency of use standards,
- meeting resource consent conditions, compliance monitoring and enforcement, and
- metering and telemetering of all major takes.

PROGRESS GETS UNDERWAY

Implementation of the Action Plan is now well underway and actions are being taken in each of the six key areas. In addition, there are also measures being taken in the areas of education, awareness and monitoring to keep the public informed and engaged in the clean up of their river.



Reducing sediment run-off from erosion prone farmland, the rural road networks, and areas of major earthworks

Horizons Regional Council's Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI) has completed 26 Whole Farm Plans and retired 404 hectares of erodible land in the Catchment. By protecting our valuable hill country SLUI addresses water quality issues and improves downstream flood protection. This programme has been successful through the commitment from individual farmers to be involved and the financial assistance of central government.

Organisations like Federated Farmers have helped the regional council promote land protection through day-to-day contact with landowners, regular articles in farming magazines, and public talks.

"404 hectares of erodible land retired in the Catchment"

Horizons has regulations relating to vegetation clearance on erosion prone land, and provides advice assistance programmes. In partnership with district councils and major contractors, Horizons has developed a Code of Practice for major earthworks. This means those responsible for carrying out major earthworks have guidelines to ensure the amount of sediment entering our waterways is minimised.



Reduce nutrient and bacteria load from point source discharges

There has been a lot of work by district councils and industry with the aim of improving their treatment processes or finding alternative solutions to discharging to water.

Since the Action Plan was launched, DB Breweries has renewed its consent to discharge wastewater to the Mangatainoka. This consent now requires a much higher level of treatment and has a shorter life span, meaning further improvements can be made in a shorter time-frame if required. The Fonterra plant at Pahiatua is also in the process of consent renewal and is making provisions for land-based disposal during times when the river is low.

Manawatū, Tararua and Horowhenua district councils are all in the process of renewing consents. Significant upgrades to the Feilding sewage treatment plant are underway with the council proposing improved treatment standards and land-based disposal during low flows.

Tararua District Council is also undertaking a programme of treatment plant upgrades which includes lining of its effluent storage ponds, land-based disposal investigations and improved treatment standards. These improvements will be made over the next three years.

Horowhenua District Council has applied for a short-term consent for the Shannon waste water treatment plant while they secure land for disposal and a pipeline is constructed. The district council has also completed a feasibility study on land-based disposal for the Foxton treatment plant.

Palmerston North City Council is currently investigating options to reduce the impact of the Ashhurst Sewage Treatment Plant on phosphorus levels in the river at low flows. Once this is complete they will be able to identify any actions needed to address this.

Massey University, along with Horizons is also looking at ways to use tephra to improve the treatment levels at small scale wastewater treatment plants and will conduct a pilot study of this potential technology in Tararua. If successful, this technology could be adopted by other plants across the Catchment.



Reduce the run-off of sediment, nutrients and pathogens from intensive land-uses such as dairying horticulture and cropping

A number of the signatories to the Accord have been working collaboratively in this area to help provide advice and assistance to farmers. Fonterra, Federated Farmers and Horizons have been working with dairy farmers in Tararua to improve the way farmers manage effluent and make use of the nutrients it provides.

Stock exclusion has been a key focus and will now form part of Fonterra's supply agreements with dairy farmers. To help farmers speed up stock exclusions on farm, Horizons last year helped fence off 125km of waterways in the region.

Landcorp, a signatory to the Accord and large dairy operator in the Catchment, has completed stream fencing and implemented best practice on all its properties in the Catchment. This has included installing GPS units on effluent irrigators to monitor the use of nutrients more efficiently.

Fonterra, Fish and Game and Horizons have worked together on riparian planting projects involving more than 7,000 plants. With the right plants, nutrients leaching from the land can act as filters reducing the amount ending up in our waterways.

Fonterra and Federated Farmers continue to reinforce the need for dairy farmers to comply with their consent conditions which Horizons monitors. Last season's compliance rate was 81%. That's 12% higher than the national average of 69%.



Protect areas of habitat for native fish, birds and trout, and enable movement between these areas

A number of habitat restoration and protection projects around the Catchment have been identified and work on some is already underway. One such project is Whitebait Creek in Horowhenua. Led by Landcare Trust this project involves a number of partners including Fish and Game, Horizons, Forest and Bird, and individual landowners with the goal of restoring the native habitat and encouraging more fish and native wildlife into the area.

In 2011, with the support of the Game Habitat Trust, Fish and Game has enhanced six wetlands in the Catchment. In addition, Horizons removed ten fish barriers and provided financial assistance to the restoration of five bush remnants and five wetlands in the Catchment.

"Fonterra, Fish and Game and Horizons have worked together on riparian planting projects involving more than 7,000 plants"



Reduce the impact of flood control and drainage schemes on the physical character and natural processes of the Manawatū Catchment

Horizons manages a number of flood protection schemes in the Catchment, all of which include some element of stream bank protection. One of the largest in the Catchment is the Lower Manawatū Flood Protection Scheme which protects 28,000 hectares of land, including Palmerston North. All works completed in the past 12 months have been in accordance with the Good Practice Standards as set out in the Environmental Code of Practice. This code of practice considers the values (such as recreational, cultural, waahi taonga, ecological) of the river as well as flood protection.

When carrying out flood protection work Horizons looks for opportunities for river enhancement. In 2011, a total of 45,000 willows were planted in riparian areas within the Manawatū Catchment and over 2,600 native species planted.



Prevent over-allocation and use of the water resource

Palmerston North City Council has adopted a water conservation policy which will help reduce the amount of water being taken from the Catchment as well as reduce the amount of waste water being discharged.

Water conservation is also a topic that DairyLink (Fonterra, Dairy NZ and Horizons) provides advice to farmers on, promoting water recycling on-farm where possible.

Horizons automatically monitors over 70% of the consented volume of water use for irrigation, water supply, and industry. Water takes are monitored daily and compliance remains exceptionally high throughout the Catchment.

OTHER ACTIONS UNDERWAY

There are other measures being taken by the members of the Manawatū River Leaders' Forum to ensure the success of the Accord and Action Plan. Many of these tasks involve the education and engagement of the community.

Public Education and Engagement

- A website www.manawaturiver.co.nz has been developed to keep the public informed of the progress being made by the Leaders' Forum.
- Consent compliance reports are provided every two months by Horizons Regional Council Environment Committee.
- Forest and Bird and Taiao Raukawa have held a number of public talks and tours about a range of issues affecting the river and its inhabitants.
- A catchment care group has been established in Orouakiritaki area with more groups to be established in the future.

Safety and Accessibility

As well as having a healthy river, we want one that the community can enjoy safely. Every year Horizons checks the river for any potential hazards from debris and clears any found. They also report on the quality of the water at popular swimming spots each summer. This information is provided weekly via the Horizons website www.horizons.govt.nz

In 2011 Horizons commissioned a study of cyanobacteria at a number of sites in the Manawatū, finding that the bacteria were toxic in some instances. Further work is being undertaken to determine the cause of the bacteria so steps can be taken to reduce its presence.

Research and Monitoring

Understanding the state of the river and the drivers for improvement is important to the success of the Action Plan. Research and monitoring on the Manawatū River is carried out by a range of the Forums' organisations including iwi, Horizons and Massey University.

To help understand and address the cultural impact on the river, Tanenuiarangi o Manawatū has undertaken to develop a framework of cultural health monitoring,



Fencing and planting at Pukemiku



Fish ladder in a tributary of Manawatū River



Irrigator in operation on a Horowhenua farm

considering the mauri (lifeforce), mahinga kai (access to food resources), kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and ki uta ki tai (mountains to sea approach). Cultural health monitoring is also underway at the coast where the river meets the sea, led by Muapoko Tribal Authority.

“Cultural health monitoring is underway at the coast where the river meets the sea”

A major part of Horizons' scientific work is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing water quality, and monitoring plays a key role in that. Since the Action Plan was launched, Horizons has added an additional site in the Oroua River to its monitoring network and completed additional fish monitoring in the Region in collaboration with the Department of Conservation.

Water quality monitoring in the Mangatera area has also been carried out to identify the main sources of contamination. Some sources have subsequently been remedied and further actions have been identified to reduce the effects of Dannevirke's sewage on the Mangatera.



KEEP INFORMED

Cleaning up the river will take time and it's too early to see the impact our actions are having on the river. To be successful we need the community's support. We will continue to publish annual progress reports and use our website

www.manawaturiver.co.nz to keep the community up-to-date with progress as it comes to hand.

You can also follow the Manawatū River on facebook www.facebook.com/manawaturiver, hear what's happening in the Catchment and take part in the conversation.

Horizons Regional Council, along with the district and city councils in the Catchment are all signatories to the Accord. You can let your council know if there is something else you think they should be doing to improve the river by making a submission to their long-term or annual plan. Contact your local council or Horizons for more information about how to do this.



THE MANAWATŪ RIVER FLOWS THROUGH ALL OF US. IT SHAPES OUR REGION AND REFLECTS OUR PEOPLE. IT IS PRECIOUS BECAUSE IT IS OURS. NOW IS THE TIME TO STAND UP AND TAKE OWNERSHIP. WE NEED TO IMPROVE AND PROTECT THE MAURI (LIFEFORCE) AND ECOLOGICAL HEALTH OF THE MANAWATŪ RIVER CATCHMENT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.



FOR MORE INFORMATION
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