

Grovetown Lagoon Te Whanau Hou

Eight hectares of wetland could be added to the Grovetown Lagoon reserve, following farmer John Sutherland's willingness to sell this land to the Marlborough District Council.

John Sutherland has been very positive about the sale and it would be great to get the land purchase moving, says Council Rivers and Drainage Engineer Brin Willaman. First, however, there is a long legal process and Council funding approval to go through.

Council's goal is not only an extended wetland but also the securing of legal public access to the Wairau River and proposed wetland area from the north via Watsons Road (providing an alternative entry point to Steam Wharf Road), says Brin. This requires detailed survey plans to be drawn up then the amendment of 14 titles, as well as clarifying ownership of accretion areas that were previously in the riverbed but are now solid ground.

Legalising public access with the moving of legal paper roads will require a Council public submission process. The accretion claims will be made through Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) with final details of the purchase (including funding) then to be ratified by Council.

"This will all take some time," says Brin.



Project facilitator, Dave Baker, describes plans to extend the Grovetown Lagoon reserve, at the World Wetlands Day field day on February 5.

Wetlands Day celebrates progress at Grovetown Lagoon

World Wetlands Day at the Grovetown Lagoon on February 5, celebrated three years of effort into transforming the site into a place of natural beauty.

Welcoming words from Rangitane spokesman Jeffrey Hynes were followed by a run-down on the project's significance and history by Marlborough Mayor Alistair Sowman, Department of Conservation representative Colin Davis, Wairau Rowing Club spokesperson Rosanne Marsden and project facilitator, Dave Barker.

A walk around the Lagoon area with Dave spoke louder than words of the commitment of those responsible for planting then follow-up release clearing, mulching and weed control. A wet spring had promoted magnificent growth in the around 1527 trees planted last winter, but on the downside, grass also received a boost until volunteer Alf Norton "came to the rescue with a weed-eater."

The Wairau Rowing Club had supplied "a huge amount of mulch, plus plenty of volunteers who turned up in the mud and rain to place it around the trees."

A massive weed control effort continues, with spraying of periwinkle, wandering jew and cape ivy now starting, the group was told. Dead old man's beard vines draped about the site provided evidence of efforts by contractor, Tom Stein. Selected willow trees have been drilled and injected with herbicide.

Another positive has been the removal of a number of pig sties from the northern side of the drain near Steam Wharf Road, providing a great opportunity to control blackberry then plant the banks to shade out waterweed. Farmer, Kevin Sadd's plans to plant trees on the site is more good news.

World Wetlands Day has become a marker post in the Grovetown Restoration project's calendar, when progress is assessed and celebrated.

It is now three years ago since more than 60 people met at the site to take part in a symbolic tree planting ceremony, marking the formal beginning of this restoration project; an initiative by Rangitane, Ngati Rarua and Ngati Toa iwi working alongside the Department of Conservation, Marlborough District Council and local community.



Mike Harvey and Jan Roxburgh of Marlborough Forest and Bird took a walk at Grovetown Lagoon on World Wetlands Day, and checked out the growth of a *Coprosma grandifolia* they helped plant last winter.



Planting Guide features Grovetown Lagoon

A planting guide for South Marlborough will be launched at a seminar at the Marlborough Research Centre on May 11.

The Grovetown Lagoon features in the book, with the cover picturing Spring Creek School student Jordan Taukiri-Waaka during a restoration planting day.

“Native Vegetation for South Marlborough; A Planting Guide”, advises on the selection, establishment and maintenance of native plants for a range of conservation, aesthetic and practical purposes. Copies are available from the Marlborough District Council at a cost of \$10.00.

The “Native Plant Restoration in the South Marlborough Environment” seminar and book launch begins with presentations and a panel discussion in the morning, followed by field trips to wet and dry sites in the afternoon. To attend, contact the MDC.



Five working bees planned before August

Ten working bees have been held at the Grovetown Lagoon over the three years of the project.

Working bee participants meet at the Grovetown Lagoon, opposite the Wairau Rowing Club and enjoy a sausage sizzle and cup of tea before heading home after a couple of hours hard work.

For those who prefer to work alone, any offers of help are gratefully received. For more details, contact Dave Barker 579 5092.

Meetings and working bees, May - July, 2005

Sunday, May 22,

Working bee, Grovetown Lagoon, 9.00-11.00am

Tuesday, May 24,

Working group meeting, MDC committee room, 2.00pm

Sunday, May 29,

Working bee, Grovetown Lagoon, 9.00-11.00am

Saturday, June 25,

Working bee, Grovetown Lagoon, 9.00-11.00am

Tuesday, July 5,

Working group meeting, MDC committee room, 2.00pm

Saturday, July 23,

Working bee, Grovetown Lagoon, 9.00-11.00am

110 possums down

Grovetown area residents should feel the benefits of possum control at the Grovetown Lagoon, with 110 culled from the area last winter.

Despite the intensive trapping and night-shooting, the tally didn't include “Russell”, a possum who has made his home in the Wairau Rowing Club shed, representative Rosanne Marsden told the World Wetlands day gathering at the Lagoon. The habitual stowaway has a habit of sleeping hidden in the front of a skiff, surfacing as the team reaches the middle of the river when their screams alert those on shore to Russell's unwelcome presence.

The only means of evicting Russell from his favoured spot is a high pressure hose.

Public facility ideas sought

Picnic tables, an inconspicuous bird-watching hide ...have you got any ideas about what public facilities should be provided at the Grovetown Lagoon?

If so, Lynda Neame at the Marlborough District Council is hoping to hear from you, ahead of plans being drawn up for the area.

A changing of the guard

Grovetown Lagoon working group chairman and Rangitane representative Jeffrey Hynes - an initiator of the project - has stood down as Chairman and resigned from the group, to focus on other interests.

Jeffrey has vowed to keep a close eye on progress at the Lagoon, and his input will always be welcomed. Kia ora, Jeffrey and welcome to new Rangitane representative, Howard Sadd.

Meanwhile Ngati Toa Rangitira general manager, Margaret Jacobson, is welcomed as a new committee member. Margaret was raised in Grovetown, where her father still lives, and returned to Marlborough in December, 2003 after over 20 years in Australia.

“When I left New Zealand, the Lagoon was absolutely disgusting, so I was delighted to see the improvement when I returned to Marlborough just over a year ago.”

Long term, Margaret would love to see the restoration project move further down the river, perhaps landscaping the section between the Wairau and Blenheim rowing clubs into an attractive family recreation area.

Margaret has one daughter living here, and a daughter and son plus two grandchildren in Australia.



Waka ama ply Wairau

A whanau day at the Grovetown Lagoon on March 6 introduced the public to a new, uniquely New Zealand sport of waka ama.

The open day was coordinated by the Mauri Ora Trust, which aims to promote positive aspects of Maoridom.

“We see a Blenheim waka ama club as a vehicle for promoting physical fitness, nutrition and awareness of Maori culture in especially Maori youth,” says Trust chairman, Kiley Nepia. About 80 to 90 people attended the day, from young children to kaumatua in their 50s and 60s.

Several kaumatua said this was the first time in contemporary history they had sat on the riverbanks and watched young people from their wider whanau enjoying the Wairau, with which they have a strong cultural connection.

“This is what waka ama is about; bringing communities together and re-connecting, especially local Maori, with their environment.”

The Mauri Ora Trust aims to establish intermediate, masters and open teams (male, female and mixed) and provide them with waka. Sufficient sponsorship has already been offered to “buy half a waka” and further sponsorship looks likely. Meanwhile, most Wednesday evenings Blenheim waka ama enthusiasts can be found on the Wairau River, paddling a Kia Piki for Life waka available on request to anyone in the top of the South Island.

A waka ama steering and coaching clinic was held for two days prior to the whanau day, at the Tuamatene Marae near Grovetown.

Swamp bequest good news for Marlborough wetlands

The bequest of a 12.56 hectares of swamp to Fish & Game New Zealand to augment their existing Para Swamp wetland development, is more good news for Marlborough wetlands.

All those involved with the Grovetown Lagoon Restoration Project are delighted with the generous bequest to Nelson Marlborough Fish and Game, which also includes funds to cover several years of development and enhancement.

About three quarters of the 120 hectare Para Swamp - adjacent to State Highway 1 between Tuamarina and Picton - is already owned or managed by Fish & Game New Zealand as a wetland habitat and for gamebird hunting.

“We are also excited about the large number of wetland entries in the Marlborough Rural Environment Awards,” says Marlborough District Council regional policy analyst, Lynda Neame. “Also pleasing, is an interesting trend for wine companies to develop wetlands during establishment.”



A 12-person waka haurua novice group (steered by Haimoana Hale) pictured during the Mauri Ora Waka Ama Club open day on the Wairau River.

Incorporation postponed

The Grovetown Lagoon - Te Whanau Hou - Working Group, has postponed the signing of a document making it an incorporated society, to ensure those with an interest in the project are happy with its content.

Rangitane have made some recommendations, which have now gone to the Marlborough District Council solicitor for consideration and Ngati Rarua and Ngati Toa are also being consulted.

Incorporated Society status will provide eligibility for a wider range of grants and funding.



Trees tallied

From August 2004 until early October, 1527 trees purchased from Morgan's Road Nursery and on-grown for a year at Selmes Road Nursery were planted at the Grovetown Lagoon.

These included kowhai, kohuhu, ribbonwood, lancewood, cabbage trees, toi toi, kowhai, silver tussock, kanuka, manuka, kahikatea, flax as well as karaka donated by Tuamarina conservation stalwart Margaret Peace, and some large flax cuttings from the Marlborough District Council.

Areas planted included the lagoon margin behind Sadd's piggery and to the north; the stream margin on the north side inside Sadd's piggery gate and the lagoon margin opposite John Sutherland's house (from the mown area where the sign is, through to Grueber Island). Working bees and volunteers helped plant the area between the two Lagoon outlet channels.

Infilling was also carried out of existing plantings including the DOC area on the north side of the southern outlet, and the sloping bank beside Steam Wharf Road on the cut before you get to the bridge to Maori Island.

"These plantings have been very successful due to the late, wet season," says project facilitator, Dave Barker. "I've been impressed with the ability of kanuka and toi toi to establish in dry conditions."

Dave suggests that planting will take place in May, June and July - a bit earlier than last year - concentrating on some of the shallow water areas beneath the willows in the old original river channels.

"This will create feeding, nesting and secluded areas for birdlife as well as discrete viewing areas."



The Marlborough District Council's loan of a water tanker was appreciated as dry conditions set in. Here, Jillian Allison takes advantage of the cool early morning conditions to water plantings.

Lagoon Briefs

- The Marlborough District Council has recently carried out water quality surveys at Marlborough sites – including the Grovetown Lagoon – to follow up on a 1999 survey. Results should be available by May/June.
- The Ngati Rarua Trust has applied to the Transpower Landcare Trust Grants Programme for funds to remove rubbish from the Grovetown Lagoon, and expects to hear back this month.
- Building of the new car-park will begin once Marlborough Lines has supplied upgraded underground cable to the pump-house (due to begin late this month). The next step will be building approaches to the car-park. Berm shaping along the outlet channel and undercutting of willows on the river frontage where the dinghy/kayak ramp will probably be formed, is also planned for this month.

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