

News from Marlborough District Council.

The Wairau Aquifer: a precious resource under pressure

Marlborough's Wairau Aquifer, a vital regional water source, faces unprecedented challenges. Based on 52 years of monitoring at Conders well near Renwick, observations show water levels are at their lowest ever for this time of year.



While water abstraction for irrigation and town use does impact aquifer levels, it's not the primary cause of the decline.

That is attributed to reduced recharge from the Wairau River, a recent national study has shown.

Hydrologist Charlotte Tomlinson said it was a complex picture, and several factors had contributed to less recharge.

"Wairau riverbed levels have fallen over the past 50 years relative to the aquifer, meaning water can't flow into the aquifer as easily," she said.

"This was caused by less gravel arriving from the hill catchment and/or local extraction, together with the side effects of essential flood protection works. Consented abstraction from the Wairau River also reduces summer flows with less water available for aquifer recharge than historically."

"Climate patterns are also playing a role, with Blenheim receiving only two thirds of its average rainfall since June 2023. The 2024/25 irrigation season started wet but quickly turned dry, with December 2024 being the warmest since 1930. These conditions mean that when it does rain, more water is absorbed by dry soils, resulting in less runoff to replenish rivers and aquifers."

"The consequences of declining aquifer levels are becoming visible. Spring Creek and other spring-fed streams on the Wairau Plain show reduced flows and this trend is likely to continue."

Senior Groundwater Scientist Peter Davidson said Council was actively seeking solutions.

"Council's science and engineering teams are working together on potential solutions to stabilise groundwater levels by increasing aquifer recharge rates," he said.

"One option being discussed is making the Ruakanakana Stream channel 'leakier' by removing silt, so more water diverted from the Wairau River infiltrates into the underlying aquifer."

"We are also looking to have more targeted gravel extraction and trial localised flood management approaches in the river reach where most Wairau River water is naturally lost to the aquifer."

While climate change isn't the primary factor in the aquifer's decline, projections are for more frequent and prolonged droughts. Adapting water management practices and aligning river floodway approaches now will be essential to mitigate these effects and ensure the long-term sustainability of the aquifer.

For further information go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/environment/groundwater/wairau-aquifer-project

Havelock Estuary aspirations to be aired

A restoration plan for the Havelock/Motuweka Estuary funded by Te Hoiere Project will be a legacy for the community and chart the future of the inland waterway.

Te Hoiere Project has engaged SoluCom and Salt Ecology to develop the plan by June 2025 which will be guided by cultural, social, economic and ecological values.

Council Principal Coastal Scientist Oliver Wade said this was a collaborative process involving Ngāti Kuia, Rangitāne, Council, Department of Conservation, Marlborough Marine Farm Association, Port Marlborough and the Havelock community.

"The restoration plan will provide different options that can be picked up by individuals and organisations as and when funding becomes available in the future," Mr Wade said. "It's a great chance to capture people's aspirations for the estuary and it will be a wonderful legacy for Te Hoiere Project."



Council Principal Coastal Scientist Oliver Wade (right) with Matt Hippolite from SoluCom at a recent Te Hoiere Project Field Day



Initiated in 2019, Te Hoiere Project is a community-led partnership with iwi, Council, Government and other groups to promote landscape-scale restoration across Te Hoiere / Pelorus catchment.

High Court decision on East Coast bylaw welcomed

Council has welcomed the High Court's judgment regarding the judicial review brought against Council by Te Rūnanga a Rangitāne o Wairau Trust.

The Trust challenged the lawfulness of the East Coast Beach Vehicle Bylaw 2023, which limits vehicle access to Marlborough's East Coast beaches in order to protect the natural environment and its fauna and flora.

In her judgment, Justice Helen McQueen ruled that none of the challenges advanced by the Trust were established and their claim had failed overall.

Mayor Nadine Taylor said it was a significant decision for Council and the protection of Marlborough's ecologically significant East Coast.

"Council can now move forward and promote the protection of this very special coastline through public education."

For more information go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/bylaws/east-coast-beach-vehicle-bylaw-2023



Looking north towards Cape Campbell



Seals near The Needles



Looking down on The Needles



Cape Campbell lighthouse and beach

Marlborough Seniors' Expo next month

In three weeks, 60 stall holders will set up at the Marlborough Seniors' Centre for the annual Marlborough Seniors' Expo.

Ranging from the Red Hat Society, Falls Prevention and Te Whatu Ora Health NZ to Marlborough Indoor Bowls and the Blenheim and Renwick Menz Shed, there really is something for everyone over 65, including music and refreshments.

The Seniors' Expo, on Tuesday 11 March, runs from 9am to 1pm and is free to attend.

While Council delivers the expo, this year Geoffrey T Sowman Funeral Directors and Summerset Blenheim have generously come on board as sponsors.

Council's Events and Community Partnerships Officer Natalie Lawler said while the expo was aimed at the over 65s, it was open to everyone. "It is designed for the whole community to help create awareness of services and activities available for older people - and is a perfect opportunity to get vital information for whānau and family members," she said.

"Whether it's helping older folk to maintain an active lifestyle or meeting other people in a bid to reduce loneliness, the expo can help, even if it's just wanting to know where to find advice and support."

For more information, Ph: 03 520 7400.



The Marlborough Community Vehicle Trust is a regular fixture at the annual Marlborough Seniors' Expo and will be there again this year

Creative Communities helps seniors capture vibrant past

A project funded by the Creative Communities Grants scheme has helped capture and celebrate the vibrant histories of Marlborough's senior community.

Called 'A Moment in Time' the digital storytelling exhibition for seniors was facilitated by Presbyterian Support upper South Island.

It featured at the Marlborough Art Society Gallery in Blenheim from 24 January to 7 February.

Digital Inclusion Coordinator Emily Ritchie said the exhibition showcased the creativity of seniors aged 65 plus.

It featured prints, photos, video, and audio recordings celebrating the vibrant histories of Marlborough's senior community. More than 80 attendees attended opening night, and 300 viewed the exhibition.

"The Creative Communities grant provided a platform for the digital inclusion project focusing on story telling using and developing digital skills and competency," Emily said. "By using each participant's personal experiences, we were able to weave in digital skill development."

"Everyone has a story to tell and the exhibition provided an opportunity for people to creatively record and share their stories using a range of new platforms. For many this was the first opportunity to do so in such a public forum - we saw this as a valued way to enhance the mana of all participants."

Future digital inclusion events will focus on navigating online accounts, digital safety and staying connected through technology.

Council's Arts, Culture and Heritage Manager Nicola Neilson said the seniors' digital storytelling project was a great example of a success story thanks to the Creative Communities scheme. "It shows how the fund can be used creatively, and it would be great to see a wider range of applicants in future," she said.

Now's the time to get your application in for funding through the Marlborough District Council Creative Communities NZ Scheme. Applications close at 8am on 3 March. For more information go to: www.creativenz.govt.nz/funding-and-support/all-opportunities/creative-communities-scheme or email: nicola.neilson@marlborough.govt.nz



Digital Inclusion Coordinator Emily Ritchie at the recent 'A Moment in Time' digital storytelling exhibition



A Creative Communities grant helped celebrate and capture Marlborough seniors' stories in digital format

Public Notices

Meet your Council



Mayor Nadine Taylor leads a team of 14 elected councillors. They are responsible for making decisions and developing policies that will help shape our province into the future.

Council's vision is that Marlborough is a globally-connected district of smart, progressive, high-value enterprises, known for its economic efficiency, quality lifestyle and wellbeing, caring community, desirable location and healthy natural environment.

For more information or to contact one of your elected representatives, go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/councillors or Ph: 03 520 7400.

Marlborough Youth Council calls for applicants

Rural secondary school students and rangatahi/young Māori are being encouraged to step forward for this year's Marlborough Youth Council.

Applications are open to any secondary school student in Marlborough to join the youth council which advocates for young people.

"We encourage any young person who is keen to contribute to Council's decision making and have their voice heard to apply. It would be great to have an increase in representation from rangatahi and secondary students from rural schools this year," Council's Events and Community Partnerships Officer Natalie Lawler said.

"You'll gain valuable skills and learn about local government as well as get involved in some fantastic community events. And it will look awesome on your CV," she said.

The Marlborough Youth Council was established in 2000 to encourage participation by young people in civic and community activities.

Applications for the 2025 youth council close 28 February.

For more information and to apply go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/our-community/marlborough-youth-council

Sport NZ Rural Travel Fund closes soon

Get your application in soon for the Sport NZ Rural Travel Fund for young people needing help with transport costs.

Funding is available to rural sport clubs and school teams with young people aged five to 18 needing subsidies to help with transport costs to local sporting competitions in Marlborough.

Guidelines and the application form are available at: www.marlborough.govt.nz/our-community/grants-and-awards/sport-nz-rural-travel-fund

Applications close at 8am on 7 March 2025.

For further information contact Natalie Lawler, Events and Community Partnerships Officer at: natalie.lawler@marlborough.govt.nz or Ph: 03 520 7400.



Commercial Events Fund open now

Round 2 of Council's 2024/2025 Commercial Events Fund is now open for applications.

This contestable fund was established to help create economic benefit to Marlborough by attracting new events and helping to build on existing ones. Council's Commercial Events Fund sub-committee considers the applications and there is a budget of \$130,000 available for allocation for 2024/2025.

To be eligible, commercial events must be held within the Marlborough District Council boundaries. Community events, conferences, conventions, trade shows and exhibitions are not eligible. Funding is granted on an annual basis but it does not mean that all funds must be

distributed each year. Past applicants who have been unsuccessful may re-apply.

Key dates:

- Applications close: 5pm Monday 10 March 2025
- Funding decision by: 5pm Friday 4 April 2025

Further information and the online application form can be found at: www.marlborough.govt.nz/recreation/events/commercial-events-fund

Any enquiries to Events & Community Partnerships Manager, Samantha Young, Ph: 03 520 7400 or email events@marlborough.govt.nz

Awatere and Dashwood rural boil water notice

Water from Council's reticulation network to the Awatere and Dashwood rural areas should be boiled.

It does not currently meet the NZ Drinking Water Standards and may contain bacteria or protozoa that are harmful to human health.

All water used for drinking, food preparation or cleaning teeth should be boiled before use.

Treated water is available at the public taps on Marama Road, outside Seddon School. For further information contact Council on Ph: 03 520 7400.



Blenheim Customer Service Centre

15 Seymour Street, Blenheim 7201

Ph: 03 520 7400

mdc@marlborough.govt.nz

Mon - Tues 8.30am - 4.30pm

Wed 8.30am - 12.30pm
1.30pm - 4.30pm

Thurs - Fri 8.30am - 4.30pm

Picton Library & Service Centre

2 Dublin Street, Picton 7220

Ph: 03 520 7493

pictonlibrary@marlborough.govt.nz

Mon - Tues 8.30am - 5pm

Wed 9am - 5pm

Thurs - Fri 8.30am - 5pm

Sat 10am - 4pm

Sun 1pm - 4pm

Council & Committee Meetings

The following meetings are open to the public and anyone is welcome to attend. Copies of the agendas will be available online and at Council's Office, 15 Seymour Street, Blenheim.

Council

Thursday 27 February at 9am

Assets & Services Committee

Tuesday 11 March at 9am

Environment & Planning Committee

Thursday 13 March at 9am

Economic, Finance & Community Committee

Tuesday 18 March at 9am

A public forum will be held prior to the Economic, Finance & Community Committee meeting, starting at 8.30am. If you wish to address the committee please confirm your attendance and speaking time with the Committee Secretary on the Friday prior to the meeting. Topics are restricted to the agenda items or those within the Committee's delegation.

The times and dates may be subject to change, please contact the Committee Secretary, Ph: 03 520 7400 for confirmation.

Proposed road closures, navigation warnings and alcohol licensing

For the latest public notices, please go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/latest-news-notice-and-media-releases/public-notice