



Blenheim's water to be chlorinated

Blenheim's water supply is to be chlorinated to ensure it meets national regulator Taumata Arowai's standards.

The water regulator requires a residual disinfectant, which is typically provided by chlorine, and while Blenheim's water is currently treated for protozoa and bacteria, there is no chlorine dosing.

Council's Planning and Development Engineer Stuart Donaldson told July's Assets and Services Committee that chlorination would initially be done on a temporary basis at the Central Water Treatment Plant (CWTP) until a permanent dosing plant was built. There is sufficient space to install permanent chlorine dosing at the secondary water treatment plant in Springlands.

"There is currently not enough room for a permanent chlorine dosing plant at the CWTP," Mr Donaldson said.

"Chlorine dosing would initially be at a temporary plant until the sodium hydroxide dosing plant is complete and there is sufficient space for a permanent dosing plant."

Chlorine is a safe, simple and inexpensive way to disinfect drinking water, capable of killing most common bacteria including campylobacter and norovirus. It's generally used alongside other processes such as protozoa barriers which remove single-celled parasites such as cryptosporidium and giardia.

Provision has been made in the Long Term Plan for chlorinating the supply.

Mr Donaldson said Taumata Arowai had reinforced the need for Blenheim's water supply to be chlorinated from

31 December this year. This was to ensure it met the Water Services Act and the Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules.

The committee recommended upgrading the existing CWTP site, which has been developed over time with the pH correction plant built in 2000 and disinfection, a reservoir and pump station added in 2012.

Changing the pH correction plant from hydrated lime to sodium hydroxide will free up space for a permanent chlorine dosing plant.

Mr Donaldson added that existing equipment would be re-used as much as possible to save money.

Chilean needle grass rust fungus approved

A rust fungus that affects Chilean needle grass could help slow the spread of the highly invasive weed in Marlborough.

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has approved the release of the fungus to control the spread of the grass which is widespread in Marlborough, with 2,615 hectares affected.

Councillor Barbara Faulls, who holds Council's biosecurity portfolio, said without an intervention such as the fungus, farmers, landowners and biosecurity staff were fighting an uphill battle against the damaging weed.

"Rust fungus (*Uromyces pencanus*) will hopefully give us the advantage of not having to search for the proverbial "needle in a haystack", as it will spread and do its job without too much human intervention," she said. "The fact that it is host specific is a comfort to landowners as well."

Chilean needle grass, a perennial South American grass, was first recorded in Marlborough in the 1940s in the Blind River area. Plants form dense clumps, excluding pasture species, reducing farm productivity with the potential to cost farmers millions of dollars in lost production. Animal welfare is also an issue as the seeds have sharp tips that can get into pelts and eyelids, causing blindness. Council applied to use a strain of



Biosecurity Manager Liam Falconer with an example of Chilean needle grass at the Wither Hills Farm Park

rust fungus, *Uromyces pencanus*, as a biocontrol agent against Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*) in New Zealand. Council's Biosecurity Manager Liam Falconer described the release as

"significant" and had involved many years of work from councils, Landcare Research, EPA and the community.

"We hope the rust will become well established in Marlborough, slowing the growth and seeding ability of Chilean needle grass and reducing harm to livestock and loss of production," he said.

"Testing shows this rust fungus can successfully slow infestations, killing the foliage of Chilean needle grass as well as reducing its growth and seed production." Liam said that biocontrol was a long game and it might take a number of years before an impact from the initial releases was seen.

"This rust fungus is highly host-specific, meaning it only lives on Chilean needle grass and is highly unlikely to harm native plants or animals. There is also no risk to people," he said.

A study has estimated the potential cost of lost production could reach as much as \$1.16 billion nationally, if the weed is left unchecked.

In recent years the EPA has approved other biocontrol agents for old man's beard, Sydney golden wattle and moth plant, amongst other pests.

Japanese delegation visits Marlborough



Mayor Nadine Taylor with Nakamura Yoshiaki, Mayor of Otari

Mayor Nadine Taylor hosted a delegation from Otari Village in Japan last week. The delegation included Mr Nakamura Yoshiaki, Mayor of Otari. Otari is part of Marlborough's Sister Cities programme.

It was a warm welcome - both mayors have sons of the same age who participated in the sister cities youth exchange programme while at high school. Gifts were exchanged including handmade cloth and whisky from the Japanese and native wood bowls and wine from Marlborough.

Mayor Taylor said it was great to see the 33-year relationship continuing with youth exchanges planned for 2025.

"The Sister City agreement with Otari came about through friendships made at Outward Bound - Otari is home to an Outward Bound School and there are still student exchanges going on between Otari and Marlborough today."

Otari Village is a small town in Nagano Prefecture, north-east of Tokyo, which hosted the 1998 Winter Olympics. Otari is a holiday resort with good skiing and snowboarding facilities.

Wither Hills submissions close soon

Balancing soil conservation and native plantings with recreational use and farming is the aim of the Wither Hills draft management plan, now open for submissions.

Parts of the farm park, which covers 1,029 hectares, were originally bought by the Crown in 1944 to address soil conservation and that role is still the overriding priority for management today.

Council Parks and Open Spaces Planner Linda Craighead said the plan sets out a strategic direction for community comment. "The review of the existing plan began in 2022 with discussions by Council staff, iwi and stakeholders and last year the public

was invited to provide their thoughts on future management options," she said.

That process resulted in 92 responses from which the draft plan was then developed.

"The farm park is iconic and a highly valued backdrop to Blenheim and the plan includes an overview of the values of importance to the community," Ms Craighead said.

Key issues include providing recreational opportunities for a wide range of participants and activities, restoring native



Wither Hills Farm Park

habitat, controlling pests, managing fire risk and protecting the landscape and cultural heritage of the area. Farming is an important management tool as well.

Consultation closes on 9 August - to have your say go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/have-your-say-consultations