

Grovetown Lagoon Te Whanau Hou

Stage one in the grand plan discussed

Plans are afoot to encourage public enjoyment of the Grovetown Lagoon.

To identify areas where recreational use could be encouraged, Marlborough District Council (MDC) environmental scientist, Peter Hamill walked the area with Dave Barker and working group member, Howard Sadd. He then called on MDC monitoring officer Inna Alex who has landscape architecture training, to draw up plans of possibilities for the Lagoon and present them to the working group's June meeting.

"It's not the grand plan, just stage one to show that something's happening down there," Peter told the meeting. "Trees are growing and weeds are going, but people don't always notice that."

Inna (who has since left the MDC) identified the Department of Conservation (DoC) reserve behind the Wairau Rowing Club building as a potential welcoming area where an entrance gateway could be built symbolising the Lagoon's history and iwi connection. The gateway could be the entrance to a riverside nature walkway extending to the beginning of the southern culvert, ending at a discrete bird-watching hide.

Another area with public potential was around the pumpshed and spring.

To attract funding, Inna suggested people could plant trees in the recreational area then pay to have their names recorded on low-key plaques. Plantings would also screen the picnic area one from the road and Rowing Club.



Working Group member, Howard Sadd, takes in a view of the Grovetown Lagoon from a maimai, something like the discrete bird-watching hide that could be included on a the riverside walkway.

Working bee makes clean sweep of broom



Broom was cut from near the Grovetown Lagoon's northern outlet, at a field day this winter. Stems were cut and sprayed, in an area which will eventually be planted in natives, when work on the outlet has been completed.

At the end of the morning's work, Working Group facilitator, Lynda Neame cooked up sausages for the hungry crew.



Grovetown pupils to grow plants

From this spring, Grovetown School pupils will help propagate and grow out seedlings for planting at the Grovetown Lagoon.

Building of the shadehouse began in the autumn, with volunteers at a working bee helping to hoe the area, lay weedmat and put posts in place.

Grovetown School principal, Selena Tonks says the project will mean pupils feel even more closely involved

with restoration of the Lagoon, where they have helped plant trees. The shadehouse will be built with child-height benches, where the pupils will re-plant seedlings in polythene bags then look after them for about a year.

Liam Stonely and Dave Barker put posts in place, at a working bee to start building the shadehouse at Grovetown School. Mike Harvey helped hoe the ground before the cover was laid.



Deposition raises level of Lower Wairau

Since the 1964 construction of the Wairau Diversion – which is taking an increased proportion of flood flows - the lower Wairau River has slowly filled with sediment.

The Wairau Diversion was constructed as an alternative channel to the Lower Wairau by the then Marlborough Catchment Board. The idea was to reduce flow through the river, thus reduce the risk of flooding.

Until 1999, the Diversion was scouring and enlarging at a faster rate than the Lower Wairau was silting up.

Then, a 2005 resurvey found that the Diversion was no longer enlarging but the Lower Wairau was filling up as fast as it ever had.

Concerns include the effect on water quality, drainage issues, environmental impacts of changing flows and shallow channels being unsuitable for rowing.

In November last year, the Marlborough District Council (MDC) approved a package of works to improve the lower Wairau for environmental, ecological and flood capacity reasons.

One solution is partially blocking the head of the Diversion with an erodable guide-bank. This would be

designed both to increase flow through the Wairau to scour out sediment and to give way when there's a flood that requires the combined capacity of the Diversion and Lower Wairau.

The MDC intends to apply for resource consent later this year, so construction of the guide-bank can begin.

It's also planned to extend the rock guide-bank at the mouth of the Lower Wairau River, this summer. For the last year this guide-bank has been partially blocked, raising the Wairau's low tide river level by 300mm, up as far as the Grovetown Lagoon.

This guide-bank was built in 1960, to encourage river water to push through the beach gravels that build up in southerly storms. For 47 years it has been very effective, with a very efficient mouth and full tidal cycles in the river and the Vernon Lagoons.

The programme to reduce sedimentation in the Lower Wairau also includes removing silt, trees and vegetation blocking floodways. Where stopbanks are low, sections are being raised. An initial meeting has been held, to discuss the measures with all affected landowners and more detailed discussions will follow.



Engineering works will boost water quality

The volume of water flowing through the southern arm of the Grovetown Lagoon should triple, once the two stages of a project aimed at improving water circulation and thus quality, are complete. Work on the southern outlet (beside Steam Wharf Road) was recently finished. A second culvert has been installed to double the outlet's capacity and a one-way-valve type floodgate put in place to prevent water from back-flowing from the Wairau River into the Lagoon. Now, fresh water from Kelly's Creek is circulating throughout the Lagoon, with more exiting through the southern culvert in the area most accessible to the public. Previously, this clean water flowed out the northern culvert, a short distance from where it entered. Flow out of the Lagoon from the southern culvert has been increased from 40% to 60%.

The next stage – to begin next year - involves the northern inlet. Controllable floodgates will be built, enabling water from the Wairau River to enter the Lagoon but with the ability to shut off this flow if there's a flood. For about 100 years, stopbanks and one-way floodgates have prevented Wairau water from entering the



Contractor, Fulton Hogan installs a 1600mm diameter pipeline on a reinforced foundation bed, doubling the capacity of the Grovetown Lagoon's southern outlet. On top of the pipe, adjusting the width of shields which held the walls of the six metre deep trench in place, is excavator operator Peter Strange. Below are job foreman John Moses and carpenter, Trevor Woodhouse.

Lagoon, explains Marlborough District Council rivers and drainage engineer, Brin Williman. This improved drainage of the Grovetown area and protected it from flooding. The water in the Lagoon now has drained off the Wairau Plains, much of it coming from Drain A which collects run-off and seepage from Grovetown township and surrounds. At times, this water contains high levels of nutrients

(which promote the growth of oxygen weed) and of health-endangering faecal coliforms.

When the project's finished, Wairau water will be tidally driven into the northern arm of the Lagoon. The increased flow will help drag clean water from Kelly's Creek down past Steam Wharf Road and through the southern outlet, without compromising drainage of the area.

Steve keeps pressure on pests and weeds

Filling Dave Barker's boots at the Grovetown Lagoon this winter, has been fellow revegetation specialist, Steve Dower.

Steve's been keeping on top of weeds and pests while Dave's taken time off to recover from a serious illness. He's coordinated three working bees, toured Forest & Bird around the Lagoon and is now gearing up for spring planting.

"This is a fantastic area with enormous potential," says Steve. "Dave's approach of gradually dealing with willows and pest plants is the right way to go. If a huge area had been cleared then planted, it would have been an impossible task keeping on top of weeds."

He's been wrapt with how well plants grow in the relatively wet and fertile Grovetown Lagoon environment. It makes a change from the harsh, dry conditions in the Wither Hills where he's done a lot of work in recent years, mostly for the

Marlborough District Council, working in with Landscape Marlborough.

Dave Barker (left) and Steve Dower.



Blind Creek group has vision

The second stage of a streamside planting project alongside Tuamarina's Blind Creek is about to begin.

With plenty of tender, loving care over 90% of the 750 trees and shrubs planted over the last two years have survived. The odd losses have been to sheep which have crossed from the other side of the creek, this winter's exceptionally hard frosts and rabbits.

Within six years, the pioneer species planted will form a close canopy which will suppress out grasses and weeds, says Margaret Peace, a key member of the Tuamarina Landcare Group which is returning the northern streambank to its natural beauty. In 30 or 40 years, they should be succeeded by secondary species including the kahikatea and totara planted, says Margaret (pictured).

In September, planting of a second fenced off area begins following the targeted spraying of aggressive grass species.

The spring-fed Blind Creek originates in the Hunter's Hills behind Tuamarina and flows between two sets of stopbanks that protect the township from the Wairau River then is fed into the Wairau Diversion.

The Landcare Group provides, plants and maintains all trees and shrubs while the Marlborough District Council's has paid for and organised willow removal and fencing to exclude sheep. So far, the group has spent over \$4000 in cash and 1000 hours in kind on the project, says Margaret. Grants have been received from the Transpower NZ Landcare Trust and Weed-busters (funded by the MDC and DoC). About 15% of the plants were grown in



her nursery, from locally sourced cuttings and seed.

Senior pupils from Tuamarina School have proved enthusiastic planters, and there's also been help from U3A (University for the Third Age) members and Outward Bound.

Margaret has a medium and long-term vision for the project, which she hopes the MDC will adopt to help fulfil its obligation under the Resource Management Act to protect threatened biodiversity, such as springfed waterways and natural wetlands on the Wairau Plain.

Eventually, she'd like to see a riparian strip on the opposite bank fenced from stock, then planting extended into a loop of land described by the original course of Blind Creek before it was straightened into a drain. Someday, she imagines the entire

Rowers' ulcer outbreak concerns Council

Rowers training on the Wairau River are urged to immediately contact Marlborough District Council environmental scientist, Fleur Tiernan, should there be a repeat of last summer's outbreak of skin ulcers.

The MDC would be keen to follow up on whether the ulcers periodically experienced by rowers are being caused by specific bacteria or viruses being present in the water, says Fleur.

Every week, water is tested at random times and places near the Blenheim Rowing Club, Wairau Rowing Club and between the Ferry Bridge and the Diversion. Results in February, when the infections occurred, showed up nothing unusual, says MDC of assets and services manager, Mark Wheeler.

The sewage impact on the stretch of the Wairau where rowers train is not thought to be major, says Mark. While faecal coliforms can be found in drains in Grovetown, levels are low by the time this water reaches the river. There are times when water quality around the Spring Creek sewage outfall doesn't meet bathing water standards, but this was not the case during the ulcer outbreak.

Run-off from land and contributing waterways are also potential sources of contaminants, says Mark.

Council will meet with Grovetown and Spring Creek residents again soon to discuss proposed sewerage treatment projects now that it's unlikely government subsidies will be available in the short term.

Club works through winter

The Wairau Rowing Club has been working hard in the off-season, to landscape the area around the new sheds and create an area that can be enjoyed by the public. Grass has been sown in the apron of land between the shed and the river onto topsoil donated by Ivan Sutherland, to make an attractive picnic area.

The old man's beard which once grew abundantly alongside the shed has been controlled by cutting back and spraying then ongoing poisoning of seedlings. Trees are being planted in its place, and kept clear of weeds. Once the earthworks involved with building the new culverts have been completed, there are plans for more tree-planting.

At a working bee in May, a willow tree was felled and cut up for firewood, with local Kevin Sadd providing a tractor with a bucket and Douglas Hislop his driving skills, which made loading much easier. Howard Sadd did the round of Grovetown's elderly folk, providing them with wood free-of-charge. A big disappointment was that while it's no longer possible to drive off the concrete pad in front of the rowing shed and down to the river, a vehicle has already done wheelies on the newly grassed area. Access was gained from the northern culvert and through the wooded area which has opened up as dead trees have been removed.

The rowing season should be back in full swing in September/October.

Grovetown Lagoon Meeting and Event Programme, 2007

- **Tuesday 25 September** Annual General Meeting, 5.30pm, Wairau Rowing Club boathouse
- **Sunday, 16 September** Working Bee, 9.30am, Grovetown Lagoon
- **Wednesday, 21 November** End-of-year drinks and dinner at the Grovetown Hotel, pay for your own. Contact Lynda Neame if you would like to attend, 578 2013.

