

Whakamana te Waituna – Frequently Asked Questions

Is this going to be good for Waituna?

Waituna Lagoon and catchment is a jewel in Southland's crown, but its wellbeing has been affected. Doing nothing is not an option, so we're working together to ensure positive outcomes for water quality, supporting cultural aspirations, protecting Waituna Lagoon's biodiversity, and the farms surrounding it by testing at a larger scale land-use practices and systems for sustainable-farming.

Why do we need a trust?

The trust structure is to help the partners co-ordinate their activities across the work programme. The Trust does not replace or assume each partners' responsibilities, rather each agency delivers work on behalf of the partnership which is co-ordinated through the Trust, to reduce duplication and get alignment. For example, Fonterra is responsible for delivering farm plans, but is working with ES, which will support farm plan work for the non-Fonterra farms. Trust status was the preferred and recommended option for oversight of the partners' work, as it provides a formal and recognised structure.

What will the operating level of the lagoon be in the future?

The trust does not and will not set this lagoon operating level. This will be done through the RMA process as part of the lagoon opening consent process. This process will involve the current consent holder, the Lake Control Association, a range of interested parties and will include consultation, involving all stakeholders, considering issues including: impacts on surrounding farm land, recreational fishing needs, ecological need, cultural aspirations, recreational users (e.g. duck hunting), road access and water quality. The current consent expires in 2022. The level can only be decided after this process is complete and not prior.

Where is the scientific evidence around water quality?

Environmental monitoring shows that the water quality in the lagoon and the creeks that flow into it are under stress. Waituna is just one example of a number of lagoons and estuarine in Southland and across New Zealand, located at the end of agricultural catchments which are under stress. As such, the primary water quality concerns in the catchment are nutrient and sediment loss coming from land use, bank erosion, drain cleaning, and other activities associated with human activity. These issues are not new or unique to Waituna, and a lot of work from the Waituna community and the respective agencies over the years is making progress. The Whakamana te Waituna work programme aims to continue that momentum.

Information about the Lagoon and catchment water quality can be found at:

<http://www.waituna.org.nz/about-waituna/monitoring-sites>

What, how and when will the \$13.4m programme budget be spent during the five years?

The Ministry of the Environment has approved a \$6 million Freshwater Improvement Fund grant to Environment Southland for funding towards the Whakamana te Waituna project. The terms of that grant are such that any payments are made retrospectively on application by Environment Southland as the grant recipient. That is, after the money has been spent by the Council or other partners.

Partner's individual contributions will be made throughout the five-year programme, either to ES retrospectively, a one-off grant, or as a direct payment by that agency for planned work.

The partners have committed to giving the community more in-depth information about the programme, and this includes around the various partner funding commitments throughout the five years.

The programme has six main work streams – Waituna Creek transformation, Kaitiakitanga and Mahinga Kai, Monitoring and Evaluation, Biodiversity/Biosecurity, Landward Buffer establishment and Contaminant Intervention.

What consultation has taken place/will take place?

From 2013, the Waituna Partners Group has worked with the Waituna community to increase awareness and knowledge of catchment issues. In 2015, the Strategy and Action Plan for Waituna Lagoon was prepared by the Waituna Partners and working groups – including members of the Waituna community.

The Whakamana Te Waituna Charitable Trust has been established to help deliver the Strategy and Action Plan for Waituna.

The partners' immediate focus will be on listening to the community and working with people on their ideas for community representative structures. We will also give the community time to think amongst themselves. Community consultation will shape the nature of the projects, and through this, how funding is committed.

When are Trust meetings held?

The partners meet every 8 weeks.

Who are the Whakamana te Waituna trustees?

Dean Whaanga, Gail Thompson (Te Rūnanga o Awarua), Cr Lloyd McCallum, Chairman Nicol Horrell (Environment Southland), Mark Robinson (Fonterra), Cr Paul Duffy, Cr Julie Keast (Southland District Council) Michael Skerrett, Robin Campbell (Independent Trustees), and Aaron Fleming, Tony Preston (Advisors to the Trust, Department of Conservation)

Where is the farmer representation on the Trust?

A number of trustees are farmers, as well as Councillors or advisors. The Trust aim is to coordinate efforts by the agencies, not to cut across community initiatives. The Trust is looking to support community efforts, and is keen to work with groups within the catchment. We need to think carefully about the best way to achieve farmer input/representation to the work programme. One suggestion has been a reference group, another has been a catchment group, and still another is to use the existing structures such as the River Liaison Group and The Lake Control Association. The partners feel that how a community wants to work together around becoming more sustainable is a matter for the community, and will support and work with various groups.

What will happen to huts in the lower catchment if there are changes to land ownership?

This will be worked through on a case by case basis. Recognising and providing for recreational access to the lagoons is a key part of what makes the lagoon valuable to people, and so it is to the programme.

Why are creeks being sprayed?

A three-year weed spraying trial is taking place. The aim is to target the use of machinery to reduce cost and sedimentation. Working with the Waituna River Liaison Committee the idea is to see if we can better manage the drainage network to reduce the sediment transport to the lagoon. Most of the work is done by spot spraying weeds, with minimal spraying over water. This methodology has produced good results in other places around New Zealand and there are promising results to date in the catchment. Sprays used are regulated and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for use over water.

Does Whakamana te Waituna's Waituna Creek Transformation Project affect or occur on private land?

No, unless specific agreement between the landowner and the public landowner has been reached. A large proportion of the lower to mid reaches of Waituna Creek is adjacent to public land made up of scientific reserve, esplanade reserve, marginal strip, paper road and scenic reserve. Some privately-owned areas are also found directly adjacent to the creek. The proposed Waituna Creek Transformation project seeks to utilise these public areas in consultation with the Waituna community and adjacent landowners to improve the recreational, ecological and cultural aspects of the creek. If landowners are willing and interested then projects may occur on private land too, but only with full consultation and the express permission of these landowners. Consultation is currently occurring with these landowners before wider community consultation is carried out.