WAKAPUAKA – BURSTING WITH LIFE

The Wakapuaka River and its catchment have been the focus of much community attention recently, with a community barbecue in early March, and a river care workshop just before Easter.

Children at Hira Kindergarten will be especially pleased, as they recently put together a letter asking the community to help them keep the river clean and promising to play their part.

The river care workshop saw Nelson City Council team up with NZ Landcare Trust and local consultants FutureEcology to present information and activities about looking after the river. Locals were able to find out the results of recent river health monitoring, learn about the ongoing monitoring programme and talk about strategies for improving the river.

The main issues for water quality in the area are *E.coli* contamination, warm water temperatures, cyanobacteria blooms and sedimentation.

When all the consented and estimated permitted water takes are considered cumulatively, the water available in the Wakapuaka catchment is over-allocated. This means there is currently no further water available. This over-allocation is an "on paper" estimate – actual use may be more or less during certain seasons or times of the year. There is a work stream in place to define actual water usage to help manage this resource better.

Interesting facts from the presentations included:

- The catchment has 134km of waterways.
- Local land use is 38% indigenous bush, 33% exotic plantation forestry, 22% pastoral farming, 9% other exotic trees, and 1% unproductive land.
- Average annual rainfall measured at Hira is 1400mm, with average monthly totals ranging between 85 and 172mm.
- Rainwater harvesting in the Hira area could (depending on the area of your roof) collect between 126,000 and 630,000 litres of water a year.

Nelson Nature has made a video about the Wakapuaka project – to view, go to:

nelson.govt.nz/wakapuaka-bursting-with-life

WAKAPUAKA
Bursting with life
Healthy River - Healthy Community

A letter from the children at Hira Kindergarten

Dear Adults

This is our river and we love it. Please can you look after it and keep it clean for us,

- *So we can swim in it and put our heads under and even open our mouths*
- *So little and big fish can live in it and grow stronger and swim out to the sea*
- *So birds can find things to eat and have little drinks*
- *So we can play in it*
- *So it can keep on being a river forever*

We are going to help by

- *Wearing our pants when we go swimming in it and not do poos and wees*
- *Never ever throwing rubbish in it or anywhere else*
- *Tell our parents to do the right thing...no rubbish, no fish guts, no poos, no poison stuff, no plastic*

Thank you

MANAGING WATER USE FOR RIVER HEALTH

Wherever your water comes from, unless you are entirely self-supporting on rainwater tanks, the amount of water you use in your home will impact on river or groundwater flows in your area.

Typically, we need to take more water during summer which is also when the river flows are at their lowest.

It is part of the stream's natural cycle to have low flows at certain times of the year, but taking water during these periods can make the low flows unsustainable.

When the river flows are really low, nutrients may be less diluted, fish habitat is reduced, and the likelihood of algal growth is increased. River temperatures can become too high for aquatic life. Amenity, recreation and cultural values can deteriorate.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Every drop of water counts, especially during low flows. There are lots of way you can reduce water use around the home and garden. Most likely you are already aware of and implement many water saving practices every day.

These include things like:

- Mulching the garden to retain the moisture available for as long as possible.
- Hand watering the garden rather than putting a sprinkler on.
- Washing your car with a bucket. Using a hose can use up to 400L of water.
- Fixing any drips and leaks – they can add up to a lot of water in a short time.
- Taking shorter showers and lower baths, and checking the pressure of your shower.
- Turning the tap off when you are not using it – teeth washing and shaving are big water wasters.
- Making sure you have a full load in the washing machine or dishwasher before you start it.
- If you are upgrading appliances, considering water efficient models first.

GREYWATER REUSE

Water from the shower or bath and your laundry can be reused in the garden for irrigation. Guidance on greywater recycling can be found at smarterhomes.org.nz/smart-guides/water-and-waste/re-using-greywater.

RAINWATER HARVESTING

If you are not already, you could consider harvesting the free water from the sky.

- Rainwater can be a valuable supply.
- It will give you water to use during water shortages or restrictions.
- Rainwater harvesting minimises pressure on streams, especially during low flows.
- You will help to reduce the energy used to transport water from source to end user.
- By catching and holding water during rain events, you'll reduce storm water which can reduce flooding and erosion.

For more information on rainwater harvesting, visit smarterhomes.org.nz/smart-guides/water-and-waste/collecting-and-using-rainwater.