



## MINUTES

SUBJECT	<b>MINUTES:</b>  <b>Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee Workshop – Connection to water</b>
WHEN	Monday 30 January 2017, 3:00-6:00PM
WHERE	Carterton Events Centre
ATTENDEES (COMMITTEE)	Andy Duncan, Vanessa Tipoki, Mike Birch, Russell Kawana, Peter Gawith, Colin Olds, Aidan Bichan, David Holmes, Philip Palmer, Mike Ashby, Ra Smith.
ATTENDEES (PROJECT TEAM)	Alastair Smaill, Natasha Tomic, Kat Banyard, Hayley Vujcich, Horipo Rimene.
ATTENDEES (MODELLERS & FACILITATORS)	Margaret Kilvington, Jim Sinner, Mark Newton, John Bright.
APOLOGIES	Chris Laidlaw, Rebecca Fox, Esther Dijkstra.

### 1. **Concept of connection to water**

Mark Newton gave a presentation on the concept of connection to water. The presentation referenced the full report provided to the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee in advance of the meeting ‘Considering sense of place in freshwater planning’ by Mark Newton and Jim Sinner.

[Connection to water presentation by Mark Newton - 30.01.2017](#) (Presentation)  
[Considering a sense of place in freshwater planning by Jim Sinner and Mark Newton - 30.01.2017](#) (Report)

A few key points:

- When looking at improving an area, it’s worth bearing in mind that an improvement for one person might not be an improvement for another. Sometimes any change can be seen as detrimental.
- Different cultures may see and use the river differently. There might be different strengths of connection, or different things that contribute a sense of place for different people.
- To design a policy you need to understand the attributes of the connection to a place.
- The community values developed by the committee talk about a sense of place. The question in this workshop is how we use the concept of ‘connection to water’ to help formulate recommendations for the Whaitua Implementation Programme?

**MINUTES****2. Committee connections to a place**

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee were asked to identify a place which they had a strong connection and identify what those connections were:

<b>Place</b>	<b>Connections</b>
Lake Onoke	Spiritual attachment/significance (freshwater meets saltwater) Recreation – swimming, fishing Ecological significance – estuary Childhood memories
Tauanui Awa	Saving fish – community project. Low water/degraded water. Recreation – used to be the site of a community swimming hole.
Turanganui Awa	Memories – river runs through childhood farm. Love of nature.
Kopuaranga River Valley	Family home and values. Visual appreciation. Place of business. Special environment.
Tararua Forest Park	Beautiful native bush in all catchments. Memories of adventures over many years. Rivers full of life including everything from macroinvertebrates to eels and trout. World class fly fishing. Pristine water quality (crystal clear water)
Ruamāhanga River at Kokotau Bridge	Family picnics and BBQs. Meeting friends and their children. Informal gatherings. Peace. Relaxation. Winding down from busy day. Reconnecting with the family. Recreational activities – fishing, swimming, kayaking.
Pakaraka – Our special place on the Ruamāhanga	Beautiful spot. Good fishing. Great for family picnics. Good swimming. Natural.
Ruamāhanga River – behind my marae out the back of Te Ore Ore (the village)	The number of families that used to swim there. 40-50 there sometimes. You always felt safe swimming there. Each family used to take food to eat. Mums and Dads used to catch up on local gossip.
Rivers and streams coloured green on the map of the Wairarapa	Nature. Fun. Adventure. Peaceful.



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	Cool (temp).
Cobden Road, Carterton – where I live	Biodiversity. Views/scenery. Wetland development. Family.
Kourarau Boardwalk – community project	De-stressing. Home of taniwha. Inspiration for the landscape architecture. A gift to a manaaki ancestor. Hundreds of crayfish. Hydrological miracle. The launching pad for peace. 1 water, 2 catchments. The power behind hydro power. 11m waterfall.
Longbush Valley	Grew up here. My business. My family. My community.
Ruamāhanga River diversion	Boating. Water skiing. Camping. Boating.

The committee discussed some of the common themes:

- Memories – personal and community
- Fun
- Relaxation
- Connecting with family and friends
- Different for many urban families

The Committee was then asked to consider why Connection to Water (or Sense of Place) is important to its work, bearing in mind the points in the presentation from the Cawthron report. What is the RWC hoping to achieve by improving Sense of Place?

- Solidified why I behave as I do - what makes me tick?
- Social cohesion and happiness, community shared purpose and achievement of goals.
- Community buy-in for catchment and sub-catchment groups.
- Acceptance and adoption of WIP and continue to be delivered.
- Help us to prioritise development of the WIP.
- Historically what has been our own connection to water and where has it been lost?  
Everyone used to catch koura and swim in the creek, now no one does.
- Water is life and without it we shrivel and die.



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- Want to have water in good quality as it leaves our area and goes downstream to others.
- Sense of place as catalyst for change and also as an end in itself.
- Primary, objective in itself.
- Community meeting in Featherston – a lot of talk about ‘disconnection’ to water, people trashing the waterways.
- First step in achieving behavioural change in increasing people’s connection to water.
- People with water tanks use less water. Those with septic tanks are more aware of their waste. Connections can have practical effects e.g. country vs town differences.
- Sense of place may be stronger at smaller scales e.g. at the Mangaterere Stream where it has motivated restoration initiatives.
- In urban areas people have a very low connection to water and consequently the ability to motivate changed behaviour is limited.

### 3. Place where the committee has diminished connection

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee were asked to identify a place which they had a diminished connection and identify why:

Place	Diminished connections
Longbush Valley	Riparian strip. Stock exclusion. Willows invading the stream. Will force water to go around and widen stream bed. Stream for 1400 acres of catchment. Source of sediment discharge. Solving one problem may create another.
Rivers and streams coloured red on the map of the Wairarapa	Gravel abstraction. Channel alignment works. Vegetation or lack of. Wastewater discharge. Rubbish dump. Water quality. Low flow. Railway irons etc.
The whole Ruamāhanga catchment	Pharmacy Wairua health. Can’t swim at some places. No more fish at some places. Food sources. Lots of tributaries and creeks have dried up.
Mangaterere below Carterton Wastewater Treatment Plant	Water quality. Algae. Life in the stream.



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	Image of wading in polluted river. Clarity of water. Weeds.
Turanganui Awa	Swim in headwaters only. Low water. Cyanobacteria – toxic algae.
Degradation of water quality from low summer flows (across the catchment)	Algae. Sediment. Risk to plant and fish life.
Lake Onoke	Flood control, drainage, diversion of the Ruamāhanga River. Impact of fisheries/estuary. Lake is now eutrophic. Fish deformities – fungal growths on fish from environmental stressors.
Tauanui Awa	No water. Cyanobacteria – toxic algae.
Councils persistence to keep disposing wastewater to rivers	Cost to ratepayers. Poor maintenance by authorities. Lack of understanding by councillors. Lack of leadership.
Waipoua/Ruamāhanga junction	Henley Lake discharge – warm and full of duck shit. Algal bloom – sources – nutrients, temperature, flow? Less people swimming – perception of quality of poorer water quality. Perceived or real risk to health. Lower river flows. Climate change or normal distribution of rainfall?
West Gladdy	No boxing day picnic. No more eeling. No more storing alcohol in the water. No Tohi rites, no pure rites, no gathering of water for healing. No more tents, no more identification with the marae. Too shallow to swim.

- Noted that there is no one single place that needs improvement. The committee noted places with diminished connection across the catchment.
- When the committee noted their strong connections with a place, they were mainly around what they do at these areas. When talking about disconnect it was about the water quality and the physical attributes. If the physical is fixed will that necessarily lead to people's actions changing back to what they were or will they also need to try and reconnect people?



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### 4. Final discussions

Finally, the Committee was asked what actions it might take to help improve Connection to Water in the Wairarapa.

- Start with building small connections. These small projects can lead to tipping points and larger change.
- Connection can also be visual e.g. if people never see white water kayaking happening in the river they may not know about it and connect.
- Sense of place is more than conceptual. There are also physical and financial connections. If we're talking about looking after water we're also talking about looking after recreation, threatened birds, economic connections etc.
- Working with and alongside people. Value of community conversations over regulation – working with groups rather than against them. This could provide better cohesion and connection opportunities.
- Getting/building community involvement – small community scale, multiple communities – people who feel like they are a community.
- Access – finding a way to manage 'freedom camping' if access is opened up. Can consider freedom in another way e.g. freedom to have a picnic, freedom to access knowledge.
- Knowledge goes hand in hand with 'valuing'. Telling the narrative of Wairarapa. Champions of the community need to clearly say how we want things to be. Promote champions who are innovating.
- Want to innovate and inspire people to find solutions. Non-regulatory programmes can allow for competition and inspiration.
- Build on kid's connection – enviro-schools.
- Marae – recognise the loss for them has been significant and recognise them as a source of knowledge and monitoring.
- Weave in different knowledge bases. Science, farming, recreation etc.
- High trust/risk consents to encourage innovation.
- Provide the perspective that something might not work. There is always the opportunity to come up with something better and try again.
- Implementation – linked to 'Wairarapa brand'.
- In the Whaitua Implementation Programme (WIP) – how do we feed people's understanding, their role, the opportunities and problems? How do we provide an imperative for action?
- Build on existing knowledge.
- Too many disincentives to improvise.
- Fastest progress is through partnership and this strengthens implementation.
- Foster learning and solutions from mixing of ideas.
- We operate in a resource constrained world – that in itself can drive innovation. How do we build regulation that allows for this innovation?
- Plan for innovation. Change occurs over time, rather than being forced at the last moment.



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- Committee are more pro-active about communicating the issues you want to address in the WIP. The media is driving people towards different ends of the discussion and part of the committee's role could be to define the problem better. Stop the allegations and denial of problems. Develop understanding and plan the change.
- Telling our story.
- People need to be able to see themselves in the plan the committee comes up with. Part coming from industry, part coming from iwi etc. Build innovation on GMP.

### 5. Telling the story from this work – Jim Sinner

In order to make sense of the workshop and be able to carry what we've learned into the next phase of the committee's decision-making, we need to have a story that we can tell ourselves and others about 'connection to water' and 'sense of place' and how we will use those concepts in designing the WIP.

Jim offered the story that he will take away from the workshop:

This is my story, based on things that have caught my attention and made sense to me, and based on my perspectives and opinions. You will all need to adjust this and craft your own story, a collective story for the Committee, on how you think the WIP will improve Connection to Water, that is sense of place, in the Wairarapa.

We talked about why we want to improve Connection to Water. For me, what came through most strongly was the idea that you want to build a shared sense of purpose, public support for the changes that the WIP will promote, and a community commitment to help deliver those changes. This is also a way to promote behavioural change, because community commitment will generate social norms and peer pressure that help to create an imperative to act at the individual level. And we also recognised that improving sense of place will improve people's well-being, so it is an end in itself as well as a means to support other objectives. So how will we improve people's Connection to Water?

We identified that memories, of personal experiences and social or community experiences, are key to creating a Connection to Water, and that improving water quality, increasing summer flows, and restoring vegetation can all help to make it more attractive for community members to get back in the water. But we also noted that an improvement for one person isn't necessarily an improvement for another, so transitions might need to be made gradually to allow both people and the natural environment to adjust.

But how will we get people in behind improving water quality and flows, if that first depends on restoring Connection to Water?



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We talked about getting people working together at local scales, at places meaningful to them. And starting with people working together at one or two areas that we can use to inspire the wider community about what can be achieved and why it matters.

Creating change requires that people have three things. Understanding of both the problem – not just technically but also why it matters – and the solution. It requires Ability to change – both the knowledge and the resources to do things differently, whether on the farm or in town. And it requires an Imperative to act, which can be social norms and peer pressure, a financial incentive or a regulatory requirement.

We didn't talk much today about Understanding and Ability, but these need to be addressed if you are going to have a realistic chance at motivating change.

Connection to Water is about creating an Imperative, a social norm that gets everyone in behind the objective, it creates a sense that 'this is the right thing to do'. But regulation also has a role to play in creating that imperative, because it is a clear and specific statement of community aspirations and expectations. It doesn't have to stifle innovation, if it specifies what must be achieved and then leaves it to land users, or a group of land users working with their local community, to decide how to achieve it.

In my story I can envisage a WIP that sets a clear vision of what you want to achieve and establishes some measures, including regulations, that requires people to do their part to help achieve that vision. I can see an approach that supports people at the sub-catchment scale, land holders and community members, working together with the flexibility to innovate and figure out the best way to tackle the problem, one that makes sense in their place, on their land, but also demonstrates to the wider community that they are committed to achieving the outcome.

So that is the story that I have crafted from today, one that makes sense for me based on my values and perspectives, about how Connection to Water fits into the work of this Committee. I encourage you all to think about what you've discussed today and adjust or change my story into something that makes sense to you. Debate it with each other until you have a shared story that you can all get behind and can promote to the Wairarapa community, because ultimately that is what your task entails, that is what the WIP needs to be: A shared story that enhances Connection to Water and builds community support for the project of improving this place called Wairarapa.

Committee members offered some further reflections on the workshop, including additional points that they wanted others to think about. Jim encouraged the committee to continue to think about what they wanted to achieve by promoting a greater connection to water and how they would do that, bearing in mind the things discussed today.