

WHAKAKI LAKE AND WAIROA RIVER

We want a better place for Wairoa people

Whakaki is a shallow, brackish lake system about 10km east of Wairoa. A narrow strip of beach dune acts as a natural dam between the lake and the ocean. It is occasionally drained to relieve flooding on surrounding farmland. The lake is in the care of the Whakaki Lake Trustees and is monitored by Hawke's Bay Regional Council environmental science team.

The Wairoa River catchment is largely hill country, where shallow soil can be easily eroded in storms. The low lands can flood and sediment affects the lower reaches of the river.



WHAT DO WE WANT TO FIX?

The amount of sediment coming into the Wairoa rivers and lakes from erosion in the hill country is a continual problem, and brings unwanted nutrients into the river environment.

A decline in water quality for Whakaki Lake over recent decades has diminished mahinga kai and other cultural values. One of the main issues in 2016 was the dominance of blue green algae, which are potentially toxic and can taint fish and macroinvertebrates.



WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO?

We want to develop a catchment enhancement plan to improve land use opportunities and reduce sediment from erosion.

There is the opportunity to continue to work with Wairoa District Council and the community to reduce erosion of the Wairoa river bank and enhance the river sides with planting native trees.

We will continue to work with Whakaki Lake Trustees on their goal to restore this valued lake to a healthy state and improve the habitat for tuna (eels) and bird life.



WHAT IS BEING DONE?

Farmers continue to take steps to increase the resilience of their hill country, to reduce the loss of soil off hillsides and maintain productive farm land. HBRC land management team provides advice. Retiring some areas or planting forestry are options, and HBRC is a partner in investigations into the use of mānuka on hill country as an economic honey crop and environmental asset.

HBRC asset management team advises on flood protection. Community groups, Wairoa District Council and HBRC have planned to reduce river bank erosion.

Whakaki Lake Trustees are working to restore the lake by collecting information on water quality and providing insights into what needs to be done to maintain water quality and cultural values. They have planted some of the lake surrounds which is an ongoing process because of the harsh coastal conditions. HBRC has provided advice and support in consultation with the Trustees.