

What do we do about Waikatuku realignment

Restoring a taonga

Whakakā is taonga to the Whakakā community. The wetland is considered of national importance. The lake currently has poor water quality, is heavily silted and is unsafe for swimming. However, aquatic vegetation will recover and stabilise the lake **if action is taken now**. Our goal is to **restore Whakakā Lake** so tuna (eels) are fit for consumption and people can swim safely. Restoration will help ahi kaa to provide a self-sustainable future. **Let's work together to make this happen.**

The issue

A desire to realign the Waikatuku Stream has been a strong message repeatedly conveyed to the Regional Council during community meetings.

It is believed that if the Waikatuku Stream was pointing to the east at its confluence with the Rahui Channel, then sediment-laden water would settle out in the Rahui Channel, rather than flowing directly into the lake, which happens now.

Current situation

The Freshwater Improvement Fund application provides an opportunity to fund this realignment. As part of our proposal to secure Government funding, money has been allocated to help meet the wishes of those in the community who have been championing this for some time.



Community gather at the edge of Whakakā Lake during a Wānanga.



Satellite image shows sediment entering Whakakā lake



Options considered

1. Do nothing

Parts of the community will remain unhappy and may be less willing to engage in other restoration initiatives. Therefore this will be a missed opportunity to respond to community concerns

2. Return to 1940s channel

The channel that existed in the 1940s was at right angles to the Rahui. **This may cause erosion issues** on the opposite bank and has less chance of achieving any water quality improvements.

3. Realign stream junction to flow to the east

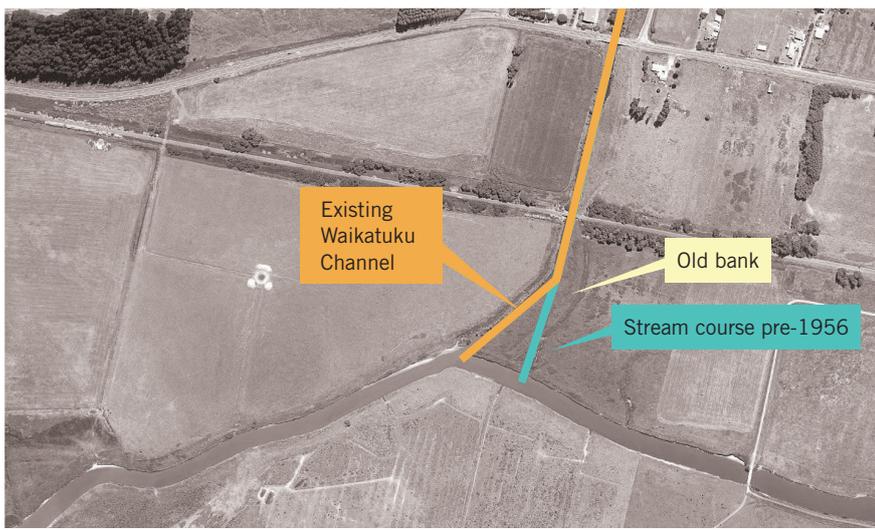
This is the preferred option. It is favoured by the community and it is believed sediment from the Waikatuku Stream will settle out in the Rahui Channel rather than flowing directly into the lake.

Hutia te rito o te harakeke,
Kei whea te kōmako e kō?
Kii mai ki āhau; He aha te mea nui o te Ao?
Māku e kii atu; He Tāngata,
He Tāngata, He Tāngata.

Pluck the centre shoot from the flaxbush
Where will the bellbird roost?
You ask of me; What is most important of this world?
I will respond; It is the child,
it is the family, it is people.

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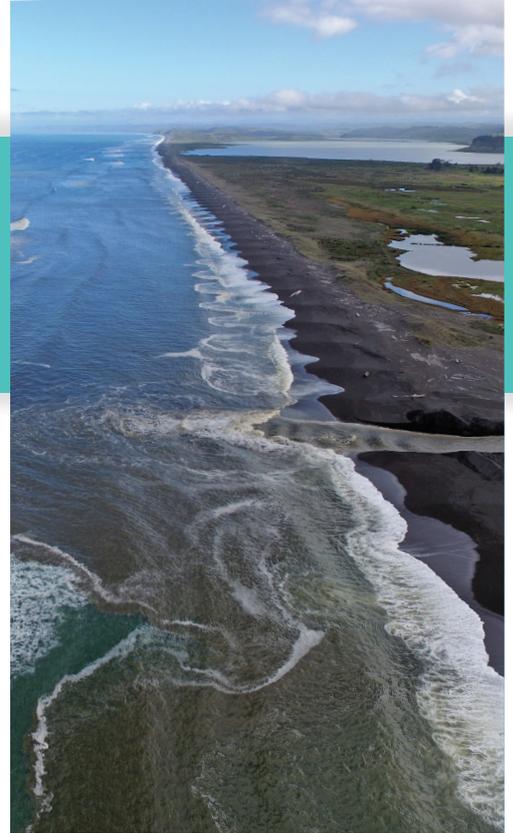
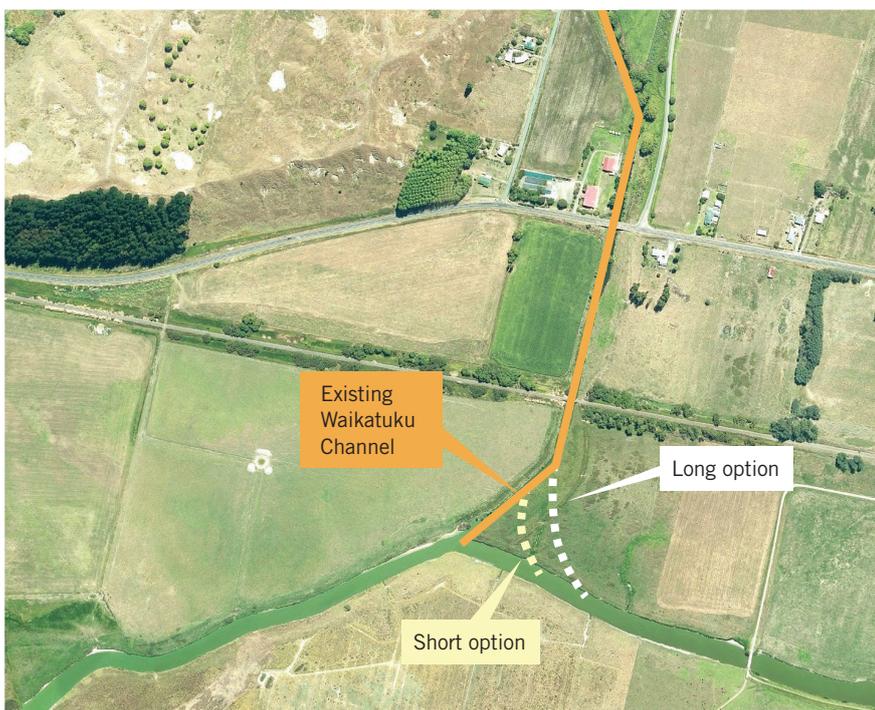
The long and the short of it: where should the Waikatuku meet the Rahui?



Realignment options: restoring the stream's natural flow

The **Waikatuku Channel** used to converge with the Rahui Channel at close to a right angle. This configuration was changed in 1956 so that the Waikatuku Channel **curved to the west**. The historic stop banks are still visible.

The reasons for this channel alteration are unclear. What appears quite clear is that neither of the above configurations are the natural flow of the stream.



Short option: pros

- Lower cost (\$50K).
- Benefits to water quality expected to be similar to longer realignment

Short option: cons

- May anger those who want the longer option

Long option: pros

- Preferred option by local supporters
- Sediment-laden water would enter the Rahui Channel closer to the coast

Long option: cons

- Construction costs twice as much
- Because more properties involved, consenting will be more difficult

