



# The Inlet

Newsletter for Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet

APRIL

2026

*The Inlet is a newsletter that brings together local and regional news affecting the Pāuatahanui Inlet and its environs.*

*The Inlet comes out three times a year and current or back issues can be downloaded from our website.*

*The newsletter includes items of concern that affect the area as well as general interest topics for everyone.*

*Please contact us if you would like to contribute to The Inlet.*

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[www.gopi.org.nz](http://www.gopi.org.nz)

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## FROM THE CHAIR

In its 'State of the Climate Report' dated the 25th of March 2026, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), said:

*'The Earth's climate is more out of balance than at any time in observed history, as greenhouse gas concentrations drive continued warming of the atmosphere and ocean and melting of ice. These rapid and large-scale changes have occurred within a few decades but will have harmful repercussions for hundreds — and potentially thousands — of years.'*



The WMO's report confirms that:

- 2015-2025 have been the hottest 11 years on record;
- Earth's energy imbalance is the highest in the sixty-five-year record of observations;
- the ocean has been absorbing about eighteen times the annual human energy use each year for the past two decades;
- as a result of warming ocean temperatures, extreme weather impacts are increasing and will impose huge costs on countries and communities.

What does this mean for the Pāuatahanui Inlet?

There are two related impacts that will affect the Inlet and its surrounding catchment.

The first is sea-level rise. The second is flooding caused by increasing storm events.

Ocean warming expands water and this, coupled with melting ice from land-based glaciers (especially those in the Antarctic), could deliver sea-level rise from the current 11mm or so through to at least 1 metre affecting New Zealand by 2100.

The WMO says:

*'In 2025, global mean sea level was comparable to the record-high levels observed in 2024. It was around 11cm higher than at the start of the satellite altimetry record in 1993.'*

On the subject of glacial ice melting, the WMO says:

*'In the 2024/2025 hydrological year, glacier-mass loss from reference*

### *From the Chair cont...*

*glaciers was among the five worst on record. This continues a trend of accelerated glacier-mass loss since records started in 1950, with eight of the last 10 years having the largest glacier-ice loss since 2016.*

*'The annual average Arctic sea-ice extent for 2025 was the lowest or second lowest on record in the satellite era (1979+), and the average Antarctic sea-ice extent for 2025 was the third lowest after 2023 and 2024.*

*'The annual minimum daily extent of Antarctic sea-ice (after the summer melt) tied for the second lowest in the observed record. The past four years have seen the four lowest Antarctic sea-ice minima on record.'*

Once the Antarctic sea-ice has melted, huge ice sheets, such as that in the West Antarctic, will slide into the ocean and cause rapid sea-level rise. Once this is in play — probably by 2100 or even earlier — it will be unstoppable. The effects of sea-level rise will lead to progressive changes to the Inlet foreshore. Parts of Grays Road and SH58 will disappear underwater, along with parts of Pāuatahanui Village, and Paremata foreshore. Sea rush (*Juncus kraussii*), especially at the head of the Inlet, will be forced back and progressively reduced. This plant fuels some 60% of the biomass of the Inlet.

We can't do anything much about sea-level rise except, in the short term, use shoreline planting (such as sea rush) to absorb wave action and help limit shoreline erosion. Constructing embankments and raising road levels are other solutions but these can lead to ecological damage. For example, if Grays Road was raised on an elevated embankment it would limit or even stop sea rush migrating further inland and thus reduce its benefit to the Inlet. And once sea levels rise into the metre or more range, much of the sea rush will not survive.

On the subject of flooding, adaptive measures can provide more help with the increasing effects of storms and floods. These events are fuelled by ocean warmth that is at record levels and the oceans will continue to absorb yet more heat caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

Greater Wellington Regional Council has produced a flood-hazard map: ([Regional Flood Assessment](#))

One look at this shows the at-risk areas — namely all the lower catchments of contributing streams, especially the Horokiri and Pāuatahanui Streams.

What can we do about these, now certain, impacts on the Inlet and its catchments caused by increasingly severe storm events?

The best defences against flooding are careful catchment management, ensuring contributing waterways have appropriate riparian planting and also lots of protective vegetation in their upper catchments. In addition, wetlands are very useful and, at the water's edge, saltmarsh wetlands such as the sea rush meadows also help by providing buffers to slow and help absorb flood water.

We have engaged on a programme of expanding sea rush planting around the Inlet and Plimmerton Rotary has also started a complementary programme to do this.

However, we need also to ensure that work on catchment management, including upper catchment and riparian planting by Greater Wellington and Porirua City, continues apace. Both these agencies have active programmes in place. Recently, we supported the plans to turn Belmont Park from grazing land into a vegetated environment. So, we will ensure that we continue our productive relationships with our two councils, and Ngāti Toa Rangatira, to support and advocate for the continuance of these important initiatives.

*Lindsay Gow*

## NEW ENVIRONMENTAL BILLS

Two new bills are in progress through the Environment Select Committee to which we have made detailed submissions. The submissions are available on our website with hyperlinks included below.

These two bills preface a major reset of the planning and environmental laws currently embedded in the Resource Management Act. They comprise a Planning Bill, to manage land use and urban development, and a Natural Environment Bill, designed to put environmental limits in place within which land use and development plans and consents should operate. Taken together, and if enacted, these two Bills are likely to shape New Zealand's development and environmental management settings for years ahead. They contain some major and contentious matters:

- Regulatory relief (where compensation can be payable to landowners whose 'reasonable use' of their land is impeded);
- Environmental limits—specifying land and aquatic ecological thresholds that must not be crossed or adversely impacted by development—which are a good idea but whose implementation is unclear and is somewhat compromised by provisions in the land use Planning Bill.
- Standing and Public Participation—where environmental groups such as ours are mostly excluded from, or limited in relation to, plan and consent decision making.

The Planning Bill includes requirements for Spatial Plans that will set out where development can go and what infrastructure is needed and when to support various phases of urban development. We strongly support these provisions but consider they must operate within clearly set-out environmental limits.

Our submissions also have introductory summaries which give readers a good idea of the issues they traverse.

We requested that GOPI be heard when the submissions came up for review but, in the end, the ESC decided they didn't want to hear from us and instead chose submitters from the business sector plus some NGOs.

We don't hold out much hope that our proposals will make it into the legislation.

View the submissions here: [Planning Bill](#) and [Natural Environment Bill](#)

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## COCKLE SURVEY UPDATE

The 2025 Cockle Survey took place on Sunday 2 November and since then the data from this latest survey has been compiled and sent to NIWA (now part of Earth Sciences New Zealand) for analysis and publication of the report on the results.

When we receive this report we will put it on to our website and advise the membership via an email that it is available to read.

Preliminary feedback has indicated that the population of cockles in the Inlet once again experienced an increase in numbers, heading towards the levels that were once recorded in the 1970s (albeit using a different technique) before the development of Whitby. That is good news indeed.

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## FISHING REGULATIONS

On the website [Explore Wellington](#), a page is devoted to fishing regulations as they apply to Pāuatahanui Inlet. The concluding statement of the page makes the following claim:

*'Whether you're casting your line at first light or winding down with a catch as the sun sets, **Pāuatahanui Inlet** promises unforgettable experiences. The thrill of hooking a fish, the satisfaction of a fresh haul, and the peaceful embrace of nature await you. Respect the **regulations**, soak in the beauty, and treasure moments spent with loved ones. Let every trip to this stunning Inlet be a fresh adventure and a cherished memory of the water's allure.'*

This is such a wonderful view of our local 'jewel-in-the-crown' that it cannot but attract budding fishermen to come and experience it. There is a lot of useful information on the Explore Wellington page but the key message to take away from that concluding statement is: '**Respect the regulations**'. Strict fishing regulations are enforced in Pāuatahanui Inlet, including daily bag limits and size restrictions, to ensure sustainable practices for various species.

Of course, one needs to know what these regulations are in the first place. So, it was with huge disappointment when, in January this year, a routine visit by Greater Wellington staff to the Inlet to determine sedimentation levels, made a gruesome discovery. Twenty-three rig shark (in two piles), and a skate were discovered on the shores of the Inlet at Ration Point. All were dead and left to decay in the sun. The rig were found with their gills cut, suggesting they were caught in a net and had to be cut out. The skate's tail barb had been cut off. This distressing sight was reported on the [Porirua Harbour Trust](#) website, as well as ours, and sharp-eyed locals recognised who may have been responsible. Local police tracked down the culprits and advised them of their error and then reported back to us that the culprits now understood their mistake and had agreed not to repeat the infringement. We all felt relief that, hopefully, this tragic incident would not be repeated.



Photo: Megan Melidonis (Senior Environmental Scientist, GW Knowledge and Insights team)

GOPI published the relevant details of the fishing regulations some years ago in one of our newsletters, but after this event we believe that it's time to repeat the message. By doing so now, we hope that we can educate everyone who fishes in the Inlet, especially new fishers who are not aware of the regulations which are in fact published in a number of places.

So, to reinforce the importance of the regulations, the key parts of the 2013 Fisheries Act are summarised here together with links to the relevant documents.

In summary, the *Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013* explain that, when planning a fishing trip to Porirua Harbour, understanding the regulations specific to the location is essential, to ensure compliance with the rules and to protect the marine environment.

In certain zones of the harbour, netting is completely banned, with only hand-held lines permitted, to minimize impact on the ecosystem.

Additionally, daily bag limits and size restrictions apply to various species and recreational fishers must familiarize themselves with these rules before heading out, to avoid penalties and to support sustainability.

## Fishing Regulations cont...

First and foremost are the Prohibited Fishing Methods. Specific to Pāuatahanui Inlet is Clause 88 of the *Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013*:

***‘Prohibition on using set net in Pāuatahanui Inlet’***

*(1) A person must not use a set net for fishing in Pāuatahanui Inlet.*

*(2) A person who contravenes subclause (1) commits an offence and is liable, on conviction, to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.*

These restrictions are designed to sustain healthy fish populations and promote responsible fishing. Always check signage at access points for the latest local rules before casting your line.

Secondly, there are bag and size Limits. Specific to the Central FMA (Fisheries Management Area) are the clauses 78-81 and 82-83 of the *Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013*. These refer to the quantity caught and the physical size of specific fish species. Sub-clause 78 (6) states:

*A person who contravenes*

*(a) subclause (4) commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.*

*(b) subclause (5) commits a serious non-commercial offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$20,000.*

Adhering to bag and size limits is also critical for responsible fishing in Porirua Harbour. The regulations stipulate a combined daily bag limit with specific limits for individual species to ensure conservation. For example, in certain areas, you may keep up to 10 Blue Cod with a minimum size of 33cm.

The actual quantities are specified in the Ministry of Primary Industries website. To view the full set of regulations for amateur fishing go directly to:

[Fishing Regulations](#) and [MPI Central FMA](#).

These links are also available on our [‘Handy websites and links’](#) page.

For more useful information regarding the Inlet as it relates to the marine ecology and how it applies to fishing in the Inlet, go to that website mentioned at the beginning of this article:

[Explore Wellington - Pāuatahanui Inlet Fishing](#).

This really is worth a visit. For example, the following is an extract from this site:

### **‘Common Fish Species in the Inlet’**

*‘Curious about the fish species thriving in Pāuatahanui Inlet? Knowing their behaviours and seasonal patterns can significantly boost your fishing success. Here’s a snapshot of species you’re likely to encounter.’*

Type	Common Species	Notes
Resident	Yellow-eyed mullet	Abundant juvenile and adult
Seasonal	Kahawai	Adults visit at high tide
Transient	Lamprey	Freshwater fish passing through
Other Notables	Snapper	Common juvenile in summer

## INLET CLEAN-UP 2026

Ever since the formation of our organisation we have endeavoured to conduct activities that monitor and care for the health of the Pāuatahanui Inlet. This has included stream monitoring in the earlier years, identifying and responding to risks of pollution and sedimentation from surrounding suburban and roading developments and a regular statistical analysis of the population of the iconic shellfish, the cockle.

Also, every year regardless of weather conditions (except for one severe event in November 2022), we choose a day when we do what we can to remove as much as possible of the litter that our regular and transient population decide to throw away into the Inlet and around its shores.

That activity is our annual Inlet Clean-up.

We encourage the general public to come and help with this activity and we couldn't achieve what we do without them.

Sunday 8 March was our latest date for this event, which coincided with poor weather conditions, something we normally avoid by luck, rather than by design. Sunday was marred by a damp start with accompanying stiff breeze. But the drizzle faded as the morning wore on followed by the breeze which was much less obvious by the time we had finished. We think that the starting conditions may have deterred some from turning up as we only counted about 20 volunteers, but GOPI was there, represented by 7 committee members to register arrivals, allocate a shoreline zone, distribute equipment and provide the H&S talk. A team of Geocachers as always was present, although, with just nine members, their presence was less obvious than usual by virtue of some members being overseas that weekend. We missed the Scouts altogether as they were on an alternative activity.



Registration at the Browns Bay car park  
(Photo: Caroline van Halderen)

Also present was a representative of the Porirua City Council, Dougal Morrison, the Riparian Operations Advisor who brought along the hi-vis vests, gloves and claw grabbers to save bending down all the time.

Making life a little more comfortable on this occasion, Andre van Halderen of the committee brought along a large fold-out canopy that sheltered the team at the registration tables and made welcoming the volunteers a more pleasant experience.

What was gathered by the volunteers was staggering. Despite our annual involvement in this activity, plus what several volunteers achieve by regularly doing their bit during the year, we collected an estimated 127kg of discarded material, some of which was heavy. This is the third year we have put a number to the amount of rubbish collected, giving us a time-based history that we are beginning to build. As well as the usual paper, plastic, cans and glass bottles brought back to base, there were large pieces of timber, car-crash residue and metal objects like a mattress spring and shopping trolley. One single item, a table top of some kind, must have weighed around 25kg. To put this into context, last year's estimate was 108kg while that of 2024 was 122kg. Also, some volunteers, for convenience sake, left their collection at the side of the road where they finished. Thus the actual collection weight was probably even higher.

### *Inlet Clean-up cont...*

So thanks to all the volunteers for a very successful outcome in helping us to reduce this type of pollution in and around 'Porirua's jewel-in-the-crown'.

We ended the morning with the usual sausage sizzle and the slightly improved weather helped us all enjoy the camaraderie that accompanies this welcome conclusion to the event each year.

Thanks go to Paremata Auto Services for supplying the food, to Toyota for the BBQ trailer, to Janet and Ray Ryan for the cooking, to Dougal Morrison for the support from PCC and to all the GOPI crew who contributed so much to the day.

And, of course to the volunteers. You are wonderful!



*Some of the morning's collection.  
(Photo: Caroline van Halderen)*

## FEATURE ARTICLE

*In the last issue we introduced the very significant environmental habitat called Taupō Swamp, and learnt all about the history of this valley. Following on from that is a look at the environmental aspects of the swamp in its current state.*

### Taupō Swamp Part 2: The Ecology



Environmentally, Taupō Swamp has both hydrological and biophysical features that play a role in sediment trapping, maintenance of water quality, controlling stream flow and flood risk, as well as supporting both aquatic and terrestrial food chains. It contains representative ecosystems that were once typical of the Wellington region with diverse habitats that include rare and endangered species. It is one of only a few lowland topogenous mires in the Wellington region to have retained a largely indigenous vegetation cover. For these reasons it is classified by Greater Wellington as a Key Native Ecosystem and also referred to as the 'Taupō Swamp Complex'.

A topogenous mire is a peatland that is fed primarily from ground water (rather than rainfall) and occurs in depressions where water-flow is restricted. Technically, Taupō Swamp is not a true swamp, a wetland dominated by trees, but some trees are present in this wetland area. Historically, the original vegetation in the low areas of the swamp was marine but uplift of the land over a long period of time with accompanying siltation resulted in a progressive succession of vegetation types as the depth of fresh water increased and salinity fell. Since then, a rising water table and build-up of associated plant material has resulted in increasing acidity and reduction of oxygen levels, both conditions that enhance the development of peat. That peat is now several metres deep. It is overlain, however, by a highly diverse mix of plant communities.

Taupō Swamp has long suffered attempts to drain it. It has been squeezed by national infrastructure on its two longest sides, had parts degraded or lost to farming or by excavation of the peat, and parts of it have

### Feature Article cont...

been altered by infill for industrial developments. (Under the industrial area a frightening mix of scrap material from many sources has been used as infill.) It continues to be modified by ongoing utilisation of its surrounding land and is still being confronted by several new developments including the new Plimmerton Farm urban development and a proposed deforestation on adjacent hillsides.

Yet, despite this, Taupō Swamp Complex is classified by Greater Wellington as an Outstanding Natural Wetland because of significant biodiversity values and is given specific protections defined and overseen by Greater Wellington. The regional council actively supports the efforts of environmental organisations to protect and restore the swamp's natural ecosystems. The vision for the swamp is that it will be a '*healthy wetland ecosystem dominated by resilient and representative native vegetation communities that support a multitude of native wildlife*' (Key Native Ecosystem Operational Plan for Taupō Swamp Complex 2025-2030.)

The ecology of the swamp is complex and varied. Past surveys had identified seven different plant communities, ten fish species, 19 native birds and two species of gecko. The most prominent of the plant communities was (and still is) the flax tussock land which can be readily seen from the road and railway, but there were also a range of sedges, various ferns including bracken (rārahu), a number of shrubs, two prominent trees (the native kahikatea and introduced crack willow), a herb mixture of introduced weeds, and a grassland, also largely exotic in nature.

The swamp flax (harakeke) is most prominent in the northern section and it is an important community as it shades the stream, providing cover for native freshwater fish. These include endangered species like the longfin eel, several galaxids such as banded and giant kokopu, and the giant bully. Other fish species also present are classified as 'at risk'.



*Flax overhanging the Taupō Stream.*  
Photo: QEII National Trust.

The native bird species that make Taupō Swamp their home include some of the rarer New Zealand species such as the nationally vulnerable Australasian bittern, the rarely seen spotless crane and the nationally declining fernbird. Other recorded species include the pied oystercatcher, red-billed gull, and marsh crane.

It was in the seventies that the threats to the swamp were truly recognised. A 1977/78 survey of the swamp established that there were major weed species present, both within the swamp itself and on the higher ground either side of it. These included Blackberry, Gorse, Broom, Crack Willow, Pussy Willow and Japanese Honeysuckle. Darwin's barberry was also found there as well as beggars tick

*Glyceria maxima*, a species of rhizomatous perennial grass native to Europe and Western Siberia, grew in the wet areas such as riverbanks and ponds. It is highly competitive and invasive.

From early days of human occupation, the swamp has been subjected to a range of invaders associated with farming and introductions. Domestic livestock from neighbouring farmland had access to the mire from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and grazed it until 1986 when QE II National Trust purchased the northern area and partially fenced off the wetland, finally giving security from stock trespass.

Over time, natural changes to the aquatic environment will either aid or hinder different species. The ever-rising water table will help reduce the spread of broom, gorse and bracken but, by the same token, it can enable beggars tick to increase its cover in the southern area. Flax may grow through to replace this species but Japanese honeysuckle seems likely to continue its advance if unchecked.

### *Feature Article cont...*

Following the QEII purchase, therefore, it was realised that restoration had to be handled in a more organised manner and, from 2018 onward, this work has begun in earnest.

Two major landowners are involved with the implementation of environmental plans: the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust itself owns the major northern section of 30ha and gives protection from incursion by farming practices while Porirua City Council owns the area to the south, including Plimmerton Domain.

Greater Wellington sets the strategy for development with different environmental teams leading strategic planning, pest-plant and pest-animal control measures. However, the most significant work on restoration in recent times has come from community volunteer groups like *Friends of Taupō Swamp and Catchment* and *Pest Free Plimmerton*. These volunteer groups play key roles in the management of the swamp, working alongside PCC and QEII to restore and enhance the unique ecological values of the Taupō Stream catchment.

It is the work of these groups and what they see as the challenges that exist into the future that is the subject of the third part of this feature article.

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## WAI ORA: LIVING WATERS II

While the development of the new series of Living Waters, notified to our readers in December 2024, is still in its early stages and a release date is some way off, we have in the meantime examined the background to the original series and how the new series should be structured, its objectives and focus. A document has been compiled by our committee member Grenville Gaskell and this excellent overview can be viewed on our website at: [Wai Ora Living Waters II](#).

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## ON THE HORIZON

**T**he **2026 GOPI Annual General Meeting** has been scheduled for 17 June. Unless otherwise notified in advance, the meeting will start at the usual time of 7:30pm.

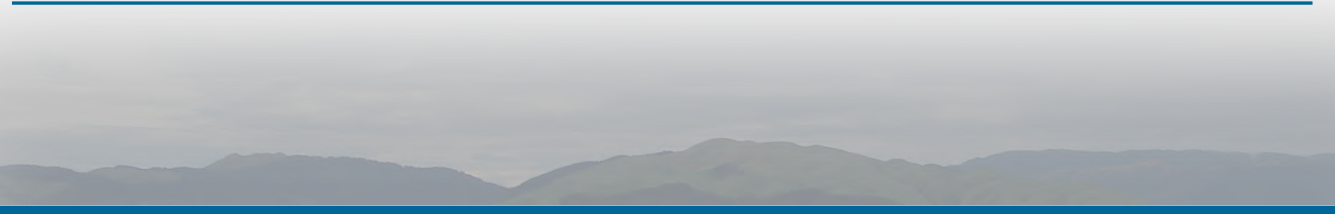
The venue for this will also be advised closer to the time, and as usual we will have a guest speaker to follow the formal section of the meeting.

We always welcome all our members to this event as it's a time to learn a bit more about our activities through the past year and what we are hoping to achieve in the next.

In addition it's a chance for all members to meet the committee, which nearly always has experienced some changes since the last AGM, and to have a meet-and-greet with other general GOPI members who come along to enjoy the event as much as we do presenting it.

See you there.

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## PLEASE SIGN UP A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR

**Have you seen our newsletter and would like to join the Guardians?**

**Do you know someone else who would like to join?**

**Y**ou can sign up a neighbour, friend, or another family member using our on-line Membership Form. Just explain to them that membership numbers really count in giving us a strong voice to advocate for the Inlet. Individual membership costs just \$12 annually.

Our on-line Membership Form is available on our website at <https://gopi.org.nz/join-us/>.

Alternatively you can request a membership form to be sent to you by emailing [pauainlet@gmail.com](mailto:pauainlet@gmail.com)

We will either email or post one out to you.

**NOTE:** We no longer include an application form in our newsletter.

### **EMERGENCY NUMBERS FOR PĀUATAHANUI INLET**

<b>Pollution:</b>	Greater Wellington – <b>0800 496 734</b> (24 hours) <i>(for discharges of contaminants to air, land, storm-water drains, streams, rivers or sea)</i>
<b>Boating infringements:</b>	Greater Wellington – <b>04 384 5708</b> (24 hours)
<b>Illegal fishing activity:</b>	Ministry for Primary Industries – <b>0800 476 224</b> (24 hours)
<b>Pāuatahanui Wildlife Reserve:</b>	Department of Conservation – <b>0800 362 468</b>

**PLEASE NOTE:**

Let us know what you have reported so we can keep an accurate record and follow up if necessary.  
**04 235 5052** (Chair, GOPI) or [pauainlet@gmail.com](mailto:pauainlet@gmail.com).