



The Inlet

Newsletter for Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet

AUGUST

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.

pauainlet@gmail.com

www.gopi.org.nz

Inside this issue:

- Our AGM 2026 [3](#)
- The Harbour Accord presentation [3](#)
- Planting Day at Ivey Bay [4](#)
- Cockle Survey 2025 [5](#)
- A Call for Support [6](#)
- Feature Article [7](#)
- eDNA Testing of Ration Creek [9](#)
- Emergency Numbers [12](#)

FROM THE CHAIR

The Porirua Harbour Accord is progressing well. At our AGM in June, Ngatitoa Rangatira representatives Teone Sciascia, Robert McClean and Ashleigh Sagar gave us an interesting and encouraging presentation on developing Action Plans to implement the Accord. The article on page 3 covers this.

The Porirua Harbour Trust has since held a community meeting where Robert and Ashleigh were joined by Jimmy Young from Greater Wellington and staff from Porirua and Wellington City Councils. They announced that Tiaki Wai (the new water agency) has formally joined the Accord and they updated us regarding work on the Action Plan. This focuses on twenty action points designed to address priority pollution pressures on the harbour and its catchments. These actions cover four areas:



		Actions
TWENTY PRIORITY ACTIONS	Sediment Solutions	1. Coordinated rural land engagement programme 2. Forestry engagement programme
	Water Sensitive Catchment	3. Identify and repair private and public leaks 4. Water sensitive urban design 5. Planning, compliance and regulation 6. Wastewater strategic programme 7. Stormwater and transport asset management 8. Transport network habitat restoration
	Thriving Habitats	9. Titahi Bay Road coastal restoration 10. Shoreline habitat restoration 11. Ki Uta Ki tai Waterway restoration (incl. fish passage) 12. Integrated Biosecurity management programme 13. Wetland habitat restoration 14. Retain and regenerate high value sites
	Harbour Connections	15. Bringing it all together – Our Living streams 16. Community support 17. Kura connection 18. Pollution prevention 19. Marine education centre 20. Industry training
TO ADDRESS POLLUTION PRESSURES AND ACHIEVE OUTCOMES		

Pollution management initiatives will include:

- Moving from reactive fixes to a catchment-prioritised, multi-year programme;
- More active use of modelling and monitoring;
- Cultural and community involvement.

The Action Plan is a living document and will be developed and updated via council and agency plans and this will include:

From the Chair cont...

- Delivery alignment and coordination;
- Website and actions/outcomes dashboard;
- Action prioritisation via annual and long-term plans;
- For larger, more aspirational actions, commitments and funding will be sought and secured.

Connecting communities and related community support will be integrated across all action areas covering:

- Expanding and targeting 'Know your Pipes' programme;
- New pollution and shoreline Kaitiaki roles;
- New rural lifestyle property advice;
- Combined PCC/GW landowner incentives package;
- Combined Rūnanga, GW, PCC and WCC Harbour Accord Community Environment Fund;
- New forestry incentives trial for best practice; and
- Established educators' network (Rūnanga, PCC, WCC, GW).

It's pleasing to see the results of this collaborative work as it's been a long time since the previous Harbour Strategy was active. We now have both processes and cross-agency commitments that offer a real opportunity to help arrest the decline, and then work to improve the quality and resilience of the harbour ecosystem.

Mt Welcome Development Proposal

A property development proposal for Mt Welcome, just south of Pukerua Bay, has been entered under the Fast Track consent process. Over 15 years, 96 low-density lots are proposed in this area along with a possible commercial centre. The Mt Welcome development proposal is currently isolated from Pukerua Bay and would require a bespoke roundabout to connect it to SH59. Of some concern to the Guardians is development on its eastern side. This landscape comprises rolling-to-steep hill country with related risks of erosion and sediment run off into the fragile Kakaho catchment draining into the Inlet. We have lodged a submission to the Panel considering this proposal. A copy of our submission is available on our website. In summary, we consider:

- With low demand and other developments underway, there is no case for approving the Mt Welcome development at this time and especially in the proposed, relatively isolated and inappropriate, location;
- Erosion and sediment movement pose major risks on this rolling-to-steep hill country site, especially during construction;
- There are potential problems with stormwater management and disposal, including increases in stream erosion, groundwater infiltration and the creation of inappropriate wetland/stormwater treatment areas in stream channels;
- Wastewater disposal proposals seem superficial and inadequate given the acknowledged over-capacity limits posed by the downstream systems;
- Significant Natural Areas need protection and special protection measures are needed for the Pukerua South bush;
- Climate change-induced storms and heavy rainfall pose extra risks to the Mt Welcome site. An independent review should be conducted of all the design proposals and calculations in this high-risk area, plus ensuring compliance monitoring is capable of identifying and dealing quickly with emerging problems, especially during construction.

Our AGM 2026

We had a headache during the planning of this year's Annual General Meeting, set for 17 June — we couldn't find a venue with a vacancy for our group in any of the usual locations that we've used before. Finally, at the suggestion of a committee member, we were able to secure a room at the Mana Cruising Club which accommodated us for the allotted day and time. So, many thanks to them for a great outcome. We found the venue ideal and will look forward to holding future AGMs in the same location.

Our team arrived at 7:30, set up the head table, refreshments and seating for the visitors, and connected a laptop to the huge monitor to display the documents being presented at the meeting.

Then the members and guests began to arrive, and arrive they did in numbers — the biggest attendance we have seen in years. In the end there were 33 in total, of which 22 were GOPI members. The high number was, in part, due to the special guests we had invited: Robert McLean, Teone Sciascia and Ashleigh Sagar of Ngāti Toa Rangatira. Visitors also included Greater Wellington Councillors Claire Johnston and Phil Rhodes and GW staff Jimmy Young and Toby Barach together with Moira Lawler of Porirua City Council. Members of Friends of Taupō Swamp and Catchment as well as Pāuatahanui Wildlife Reserve and Rotary were also in attendance.

The formal part of the evening, including last year's Minutes, the Annual Report from Lindsay Gow and Financial Report from Marg Glover was covered quickly and all reports were accepted unanimously.

We had then planned the very pleasant task of presenting a certificate of Life Membership to Adam Rosner, who has, for the past three years, hosted our website and provided the technical support to run it. Unfortunately, he was not able to attend due to an unexpected last-minute commitment of his own and, consequently, the certificate was given to him in person later in the week. He nevertheless expressed immense gratitude for the honour bestowed upon him.

Finally, the election of a new committee for the coming year was conducted with all 2025-26 members returned to serve again. While we put out feelers for one or two additional volunteers to fill vacant positions, no one came forward so the committee for 2026-27 remains at ten.

We then invited our guests to speak to their presentation to about the Harbour Accord.

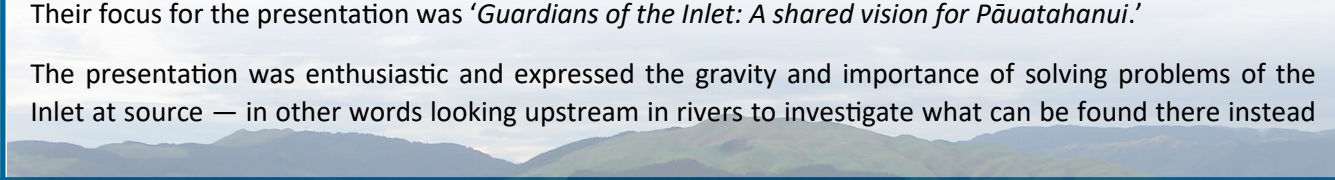
THE HARBOUR ACCORD - Presentation

We invited members of the Ngāti Toa Rangatira to our AGM this time, as special guest speakers, to talk about their support and vision for the Harbour Accord, signed into action on 6 February this year. They came to express their commitment to the new Accord, speaking about their role in leading multi-agency and community work on, and their expectations for, its development and application.

We were, therefore, honoured to have with us Robert McClean (Principal Advisor), Teone Sciascia (Resource Consent Advisor) and Ashleigh Sagar (Resource Management Advisor) all of Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Incorporated. Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira was established in 1990 and is the mandated iwi authority for Ngāti Toa Rangatira and the administrative body of iwi estates and assets.

Their focus for the presentation was *'Guardians of the Inlet: A shared vision for Pāuatahanui.'*

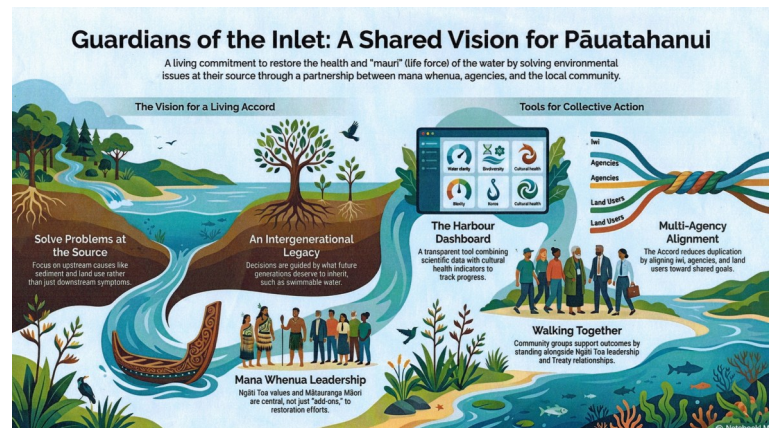
The presentation was enthusiastic and expressed the gravity and importance of solving problems of the Inlet at source — in other words looking upstream in rivers to investigate what can be found there instead



Harbour Accord Presentation cont...

of the estuaries where they shed their waters. The focus is to be on the entire catchment and includes land use, stormwater, wastewater, forestry, farming and activity in the stream channels.

They explained the importance of relationships where the Accord seeks to align stakeholders, reduce duplication, use science and oversee investment. This will guide decision making and set priorities for the future.



They emphasised that Ngāti Toa, as treaty partner to the Accord, needs to be involved early in any process and their values need to be embedded from the beginning.

To judge the effectiveness of the Accord, tangible measurement of progress will be assessed via a 'dashboard' which will include measures such as the ability to gather food from the Inlet, the density of seagrass meadows and the water quality.

The Accord has four workstreams (further illustrated in the chart on our cover page, From the Chair):

- Sediment Solutions
- Water Sensitive Catchment
- Thriving Habitats
- Harbour Connections

To begin this process the initial focus will be on two catchments – those of Onepoto Park and the Takapu stream. It will involve schools conducting restoration activities and the first draft of the Accord workplan was to be completed by 24 June and presented to the Chief Executive on 15 July.

PLANTING DAY AT IVEY BAY

Another day was spent at Ivey Bay on Sunday 11 July, planting a selection of young trees on the slope behind the kindergarten and kayak club grounds. It was the second time we had tackled this area. After the first event, 15 June last year, many of the saplings had failed. We think this was due in part to the steepness of the slope which didn't hold water well, and also because many of the plants we obtained at the time were small.

In addition, as is common practice, protective shields, designed to surround the young plants while they become established, were used as recommended but may have added to the failure by reducing the amount of light getting to the young leaves of such small plants.

On this second occasion, we obtained 240 good quality saplings of 10 different species with two-thirds of these bedded in on the day. During the return visit on Monday we succeeded in planting the remainder. This time, to give them the best chance, we watered in each one as we firmed the soil around them and used only a moisture barrier around the base to reduce the risk of drying out.

This slope is tricky to navigate and the volunteers found the going quite difficult at times. The result, however, looks good and we will continue to monitor the site regularly in the hope that many more will now survive until they can become established.

COCKLE SURVEY OF 2025

Our most recent survey of the intertidal cockle population of Pāuatahanui Inlet was conducted on 2 November 2025. It was our twelfth in this long-running citizen science series. A staggering 18,676 individual cockles were examined and measured in all but one of the 31 defined transects around the shores of the Inlet. This equated to 51.9 shellfish per quadrat, each quadrat measuring 0.1 sqm. The full set of measurements was compiled by our survey team and the raw data sent to Earth Sciences New Zealand (ESNZ), formerly NIWA. After several months of analysis, when ESNZ converted the survey data into a statistically significant estimate of the cockle population in the Inlet, we now have the results, reported in full from ESNZ. You can read this report [HERE](#).

The key result from this report is that the estimated total number of cockles in the intertidal zone has increased by just over 26% since the last survey in 2022. It now stands at around 519 million. This continues the generally steady rise in numbers since 1992. The other general trend was in the increasing proportion of juveniles (less than 10mm in size) in the samples – steadily increasing since 1992 to 21.4 % in 2025.

To summarise, the 2025 report shows that:

- The estimated mean population of cockles in the Inlet as of 2025 is 519 million. This figure is the highest recorded estimate since 1992, representing an increase of 102% over that first survey conducted by GOPI. Also, this estimate is a figure representing 84% of that obtained from the first and highest population survey undertaken by the New Zealand Oceanographic Institute in 1976.
- Most transects in 2025 had higher total counts of cockles than in previous surveys.
- The highest number of cockles recorded per 0.1 sqm quadrat in 2025 was 229, which was fewer than in 2019 and 2022 but more than in 2016.
- Mean cockle density over the intertidal survey area in 2025 was 51.9 per 0.1 sqm with a 99% Confidence Interval (CI) and this was higher than all previous GOPI surveys.
- The percentage of juvenile cockles sampled in the population has increased markedly from 1.0% of cockles sampled in 1992 to 21.4% in 2025. From 2004, the juvenile cockle population has increased between 16.0% and 21.6% of the cockles sampled. The high percentage of juveniles, and the increase in the population over this time, suggests regular recruitment and good survival of newly settled spat.

There is no information on the likely levels of the movement of juvenile cockles between intertidal and subtidal areas. The increase in terrestrial sediments in 2016, considered deleterious to cockles, does not appear to have had a long-term effect on the intertidal population. This trend is not consistent with the expected relatively high mortality rate in small cockles due to the high levels of mud and suspended sediment caused by the floods in 2016.

All the GOPI surveys have used the same design and methods, allowing site, transect, and tide-level comparisons between surveys. In all the analyses carried out by NIWA (as it used to be) since 1992, two methods have been used to estimate cockle population size. Both methods show upward trends and significant differences from 2007 to 2013. They also show a decrease between 2013 and 2016 and a marked increase between 2016 and 2025. The low Coefficients of Variation (CV) of 3-6% suggest statistically significant increases. The 2025 mean population size using Method 1 (519 million cockles, 99% CI 477 – 562 million) is 99.2% of the first (and highest) population estimate from the 1976 survey, and over twice that in 1992 (222 million cockles).

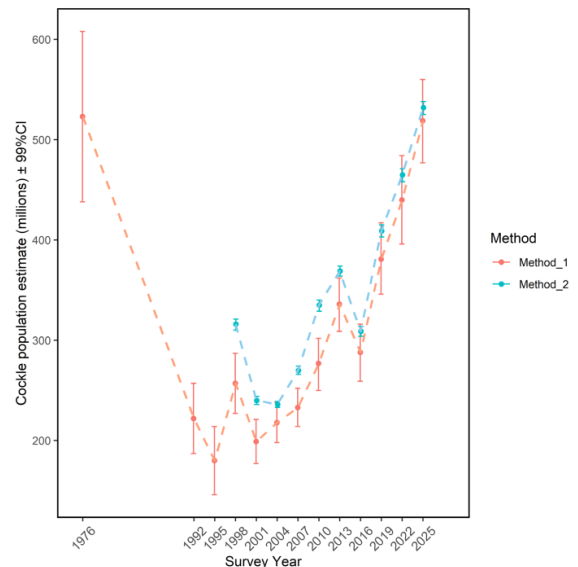
Cockle Survey of 2025 cont...

The accompanying chart is a graphical representation of the recorded estimates of the population of cockles in the intertidal zone of the Inlet. It is taken directly from the ESNZ report.

This chart has been published in the report from each survey, updated with the most recent estimate, since 1995 when the decline in population was still evident.

Since then, apart from two deviations from the general trend in 1998 and 2016, the estimated number of cockles in the Inlet has clearly risen, as measured by our three-yearly surveys.

While in earlier years the trend was not considered statistically significant, the most recent three surveys have confirmed that the population is steadily recovering and approaching the original estimate conducted by New Zealand Oceanographic Institute in 1976, part of a renowned scientific study of the Inlet in the years 1976 to 1980.



The chart shows estimates of total cockle population size and 99% Confidence Intervals (CI) for all Pāuatahanui Inlet surveys, 1976 to 2025. The initial survey in 1976 used a different survey design. Surveys since 1992 (carried out by the Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet) have all used the same survey design and methods.

Estimates using a previous statistical method (Method 1) are shown in blue while later estimates, using weighting factors for transect length (Method 2), are shown in red. Trends in population size are shown as dashed lines. Data for surveys 1976, 1992, and 1995 are no longer available and therefore mean population size and 99% CIs using Method 2 cannot be calculated.

Finally, it is to be noted that our surveys only measure the population in the intertidal zone. Measurement of cockle numbers below low tide level, in the deeper parts of the Inlet, is not undertaken and therefore the conditions in the subtidal zone, and any impacts on the cockles there, cannot be evaluated.

A CALL FOR SUPPORT

We are looking for expressions of interest from anyone who would like to contribute towards the creation and maintenance of our website, Facebook social media page and the newsletter. All these publications are valued by everyone who reads them, explaining what we do and how our teams of volunteers contribute the time and energy that adds to our advocacy of Pāuatahanui Inlet.

If you or anyone you know would like to be part of this please get in touch via our email pauainlet@gmail.com.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Our previous two features have described Taupō Swamp, its origins, natural history and the impact on its ecology that humans and natural forces have had on the wetland in the past.

This third article covers the restoration activities aimed at restoring the swamp to a state much closer to the natural habitat that is thought to have existed prior to human arrivals.



Photo of Taupō Swamp wetland (Credit: Michael Waldron)

Taupō Swamp — Restoration

Protected wetlands like Taupō swamp are vital to our region when you realise that since humans arrived in New Zealand, 90% of wetlands nationally and, even worse, 97.7 % of wetlands in the Wellington region have been drained and ‘developed’, with a consequent huge loss of native biodiversity.

While this biodiversity is vitally important to the environment as a whole, Taupō Swamp also plays a crucial role in regulating water flows from the upper catchment south of Pukerua Bay, thus reducing the risks of local flooding. It also captures nutrients and sediments from the surrounding farmland while absorbing greenhouse gas emissions and, in the process, has built up a metres-deep base of peat throughout the wetland.

The Taupō Swamp Complex is designated a Key Native Ecosystem by Greater Wellington and the complex is recognised as a regionally significant wetland with the largest remaining harakeke swamp in the Wellington region. It is also one of the best remaining New Zealand examples of a topogenous lowland freshwater mire — one that has retained a largely indigenous vegetation cover. For these reasons it was recognised in the early 80s that something must be done to protect this valuable piece of land.

Taupō Swamp was the first major wetland to be protected in the Wellington region when in 1986, the northern 30 ha, known as the *Harakeke Swamp Wetlands*, was afforded full protection following its purchase by the QEII National Trust. Support for the purchase came from Greater Wellington, Porirua City Council, Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society and other environmental groups. The area was fenced off to bar entry to farm animals, largely eliminating the damage they could do.

Not all areas of the mire, however, were given the same protection as that provided by QEII, with other organisations having titles to the area. Porirua City Council, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi and Kiwirail, as well as a few private land owners, hold land on both sides of SH58. Not all are focused on the habitat they surround.

Taupō Swamp Restoration cont...

QEII National Trust's original aims and objectives were: *'to protect and maintain the swamp and surrounding land as a natural landscape feature; protect the hydrological system; protect and enhance the existing native vegetation; encourage appropriate public use and enjoyment; and ensure that the significance of the swamp to the local Maori community be given due consideration.'* In recent years, however, budget constraints mean that much of the restoration work is now undertaken by others.

Out of concern for the protection and enhancement of the Taupō Swamp at the Plimmerton end, a group of Porirua residents established the volunteer environmental organisation, [Friends of Taupō Swamp and Catchment](#) (FOTSC) in 2018. However, following a community hui involving all the landowners within and adjacent to the wetland system, it was soon clear that the wider catchment had to be at the heart of any restoration initiative. It was realised that water quality, seen at the bottom end, at Plimmerton Beach, was very much a product of what was happening upstream.

Since then these volunteers, led by the FOTSC committee, have been actively working on a restoration plan and their work now encapsulates the wider catchment of the Taupō Swamp Complex including the harakeke swamp.



Friends of
Taupo Swamp
& Catchment

FOTSC LOGO

The goals of FOTSC are described in its current Strategic and Operational Plan 2023-2028. Advocacy, pest plant and pest animal control, monitoring, planting, key partners, funding, and ongoing sustainability of the organisation are the key aims of the plan.

Funding was raised to organise volunteer days (set up to clear hectares of blackberry and other pest plants), the purchase of tools and a container as a work base and the planting of around 25,000 locally sourced native trees. Work was carried out with cooperation from Pest Free Porirua, PCC, GW, local businesses, engagement with local schools and support from Mana Whenua.

At each stage, volunteer support from Cratos, the local drone operator, has enabled the group to see and to deal with pest plants, to scope planting sites and to monitor growth.

In coordination with the Cratos drone surveys, and evidence of the past extensive tree cover from the peat base, a large selection of plants that are natural inhabitants of the Wellington region have been planted, chosen to re-establish a more varied native vegetation for the wetland. All are sourced from locally available seed sources and from the nurseries Te Rito Gardens and PCC Sievers Grove Nursery.

Eight years on and the work is still progressing. Now, in 2026, with 25,000 nursery trees in the ground, both around and north of the Plimmerton industrial site, FOTSC has started to plant canopy tree species and to progress towards infill planting. *Kohekohe*, *titoki*, *porokaiwhiri* (pigeonwood), *pukatea*, *puahou* (five-finger) and *tawa* are being added to the *maire tawake* (swamp maire) and *kahikatea* (white pine) already established. Every newly planted tree is marked, weeded and monitored. FOTSC applies for



Judy McKoy and the FOTSC Activity Centre
(Credit: Michael Waldron)

Taupō Swamp Restoration cont...

grants from various sources to cover these costs.

As the tree cover becomes more diverse, so does the bird life, and several groups of *mātātā* (fernbird) are now to be seen and heard in the wetlands. There has also been a sighting of a *matuku-hūrepo* (Australasian bittern) and FOTSC is now involved in a programme to monitor these elusive birds.

With pressures growing on the catchment, due to current and planned housing projects [see our cover page], FOTSC is now spending many more hours a week in an advocacy role for the unique biodiversity values of the Taupō Swamp system and its wider catchment. In the past eight years this has meant making a number of submissions each year as local, regional and national environmental standards are reviewed, and government-mandated urban development threatens delicate ecosystems.

There is still much more to do but concern for the future of the whole wetland system is now growing as significant threats begin to have important negative effects. Both internal and external influences are impinging on the success of any protection and restoration efforts that different groups attempt to perform.

The effects of climate change are being observed and reported by the FOTSC group and the consents set for Plimmerton farm development five years ago seem no longer fit for purpose — as witnessed by concerned locals in the recent April storm when waves of water travelled at speed across SH 59 and into Plimmerton Domain and businesses in Ulric Street.

These and other threats, how they will affect the wetland environment and what is feared for the future of Taupō Swamp, are described in the final chapter of this feature series in December.

eDNA TESTING OF RATION CREEK

Back in 2022, prior to the opening of the Transmission Gully Motorway on 30 March, an eDNA assessment was made of several streams that feed the Pāuatahanui Inlet, in particular the Horokiri stream and Ration Creek, important to the health and wildlife diversity of the harbour. This survey was organised by Diane Strugnell of the Pāuatahanui Residents Association (PRA) and used the sampling facilities provided by Wilderlab.

Around the same time, Wanda Tate, a key member of the Wildlife Reserve Management Committee, also surveyed Ration Creek, which passes through the Reserve.

The motorway has now been operating for over three years and it would be of interest to know if it has had any significant effect on the stream habitats.

In November 2025, with funding from Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) through their *Wai Tuwhera o te Taiao* programme, PRA were able to carry out further eDNA sampling at five sites on the Horokiri Stream and one on Ration Creek (also known as Little Waitangi in Greater Wellington's literature). Also this year (2026), Wanda Tate thought it was an appropriate time to repeat her survey of 2022 and, with cooperation from Dave Parker of the Wildlife Reserve, self-funded a sample analysis to compare results from her earlier test.

Both these surveys were done with the motorway in mind and effects it may have had on the plant and animal life associated with these streams. Their two reports follow.

Ration Creek and Horokiri Environmental Test 2025

by Diane Strugnell

The Horokiri Stream is one of the four main streams entering the Pāuatahanui Inlet, one arm of Te Awarua-

eDNA sampling cont...

o-Porirua. The Horokiri Stream is a relatively 'short run' stream with the longest tributary only approximately 12 kilometres from the headwaters to the intertidal zone. It is totally within a rural catchment area of approximately 3,200 hectares. All the properties for this catchment have their access on Paekākāriki Hill Road. A smaller number of properties on Paekākāriki Hill Road form the catchment of the even shorter Little Waitangi Stream, known locally as Ration Creek. The longest tributary for Ration Creek is only approximately 5.2 kilometres to the intertidal zone, with a catchment area of approximately 526

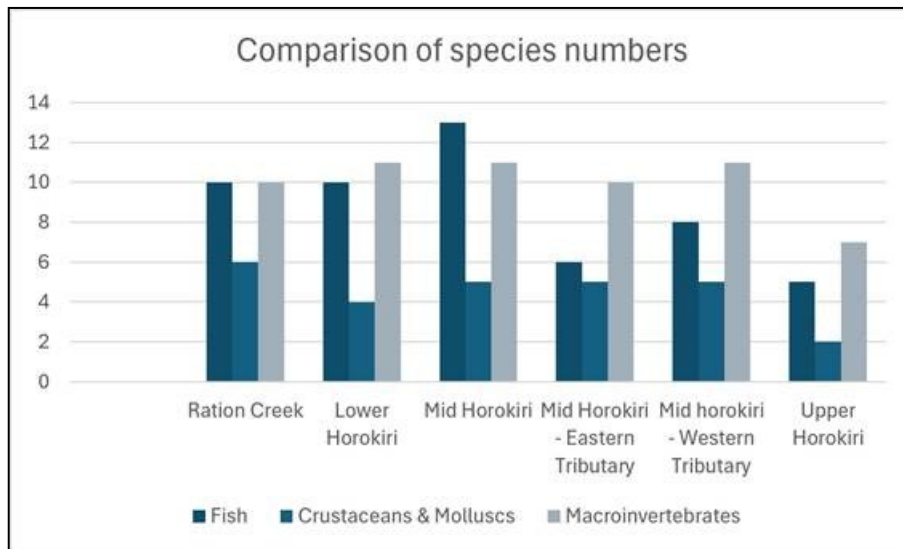


Chart showing an overview of the total species grouped into the three main categories. It compares the numbers for each of the six samples taken from Horokiri Stream and Ration Creek. (Source: Wilderlab)

hectares. As well as contributing to the same 'road community' both streams enter the Pāuatahanui Inlet less than 1 kilometre apart and both their catchments are bisected by the Transmission Gully motorway which opened in March 2022.

The Pāuatahanui Inlet is the only large estuarine wetland left in the lower half of the North Island. It is at risk, mainly from human activities in both the Inlet and its catchment. There are currently increasing pressures on the catchment through more land use intensification with Porirua City's District Plan now allowing subdivision into even smaller lifestyle blocks of 2 ha rather than the previous 5 ha. There are also changes within the catchment due to increased forestry activities in the Rural Zone as well as the impacts from the Transmission Gully motorway.

We know that these streams contribute sediment into the Inlet leading to an annual average sedimentation rate currently of 4.7mm (*Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Implementation Programme, Greater Wellington Regional Council*). Reducing the amount of sediment is a key objective for initiatives being taken by landowners with support from both regional and local councils.

Without a greater understanding of what is (or is not) living within the stream it is difficult to begin to plan the most effective initiatives to improve the stream health. So our first question was 'Does the habitat provide for our native fish and other freshwater species?' With such short run streams it should be possible to more easily identify negative impacts as well as to measure the effect of activities aimed at making positive changes in the freshwater environment. Just looking at a stream and/or taking measures such as temperature, pH, even E.coli, is not sufficient to indicate what is domiciled there.

This is where the eDNA sampling can be a very effective tool as it helps build the picture and narrative, in a

eDNA sampling cont...

very visual way, of what is living in the stream. Being able to see some of the negative aspects e.g. the presence of possums, rats or the absence of certain species that should be present, can be a motivation to action whilst seeing some of the positive aspects e.g. the presence of certain species or the lack of others can be a rewarding experience.

If you would like to know more about what we found in our samples, including not just species of freshwater fish, crustaceans, molluscs and macroinvertebrates, but also the mammals, birds, and plants that are contributing their eDNA, here are the links to each sample.

Lower	Horokiri	Stream	https://bit.ly/4dWD3Ku
Mid	Horokiri	Stream	https://bit.ly/4uYgafN
Mid	Horokiri	Eastern Tributary	https://bit.ly/4uVzOJ7
Mid	Horokiri	Western Tributary	https://bit.ly/3QaBfV1
Upper	Horokiri	Stream	https://bit.ly/3Qstbz1
Ration Creek			https://bit.ly/3RUv4F4

We are now working with GW's Catchment team around hosting an evening workshop* for residents to further explore what has been found in the streams and what can be done to enhance the streams' biodiversity and freshwater health. We are also considering an 'awa after dark' event (later in the year when the weather is warmer) as an opportunity to do some night spotlighting to actually see some of the different species as most are invisible during the day except of course for the longfin eels (tuna).

*Diane Strugnell
(Coordinator)*

* Date and time pending.

Ration Creek Environmental Test 2026

by Wanda Tate

Now that Transmission Gully motorway has been in use for three years, I was interested in seeing whether run-off from the road has had any impact on the ecology and water quality of Ration Creek, so in March, I and Dave Parker of the Wildlife Reserve, repeated the Wilderlab Water Quality Test done in January 2023.

Using the Wilderlab TIC1 score card, Ration Creek had rated 'Excellent', just a few points short of 'Pristine'; a very gratifying result from the Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve Committee's point of view.

We have now received the results of the 2026 testing and although there are obvious differences from 2023 tests, Ration Creek still rates 'Excellent'. At first reading there seem to be three main areas of difference between the two test dates.

- a) The 2026 sample contained more DNA originating in the marine environment, e.g. gurnard, two types of mullet, mud crabs and a much larger snapper count. This was likely to be related to the weather conditions at the test time – frequent periods of strong westerly winds accompanied by a spring tide, driving a tidal surge further upstream.
- b) Many of the species' DNA in the 2026 samples originated much further from the test site than those in 2023. E.g. mammals, including possums, sheep, cattle, rats and rabbits, none of which appeared in 2023. Landowners grazing sheep and cattle tend to be located well up-stream from the test site or are in adjacent catchments.
- c) There were far fewer exotic plant species present. This difference can be accounted for in two

eDNA sampling cont...

ways. In between 2023 and 2026 the riparian strip along the stream, formerly a grazed area (rank pasture species) has been completely replaced with native shrubs and small trees that over-arch the stream. And there was a completely different weather pattern at each site prior to the collection of the water sample. In January 2023, there was a low stream flow resulting from a lack of rainfall in December producing little run-off. In March 2026 the rainfall occurred in sudden short downpours producing fast-flowing surface run-off and a total rainfall at least three times the average.

*Wanda Tate
(Pāuatahanui Wildlife Reserve)*

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?

You 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.

The 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

We will either email or post one out to you.

NOTE: From August 2025 we do not include an application form in our newsletter.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS FOR PĀUATAHANUI INLET

Pollution: Greater Wellington Regional Council – **0800 496 734 (24 hours)**
(for discharges of contaminants to air, land, storm-water drains, streams, rivers or sea)

Boating infringements: Greater Wellington Regional Council – **384 5708 (24 hours)**

Illegal fishing activity: Ministry for Primary Industries – **0800 476 224 (24 hours)**

Pāuatahanui Wildlife Reserve: Department of Conservation – **0800 362 468**

NOTE: Let us know what you have reported so we can keep an accurate record and follow up if necessary.

235 5052 (Chair, GOPI) or pauainlet@gmail.com.