

June Newsletter

A New Chapter For Rivercare

Our Chairperson Chris Ballantyne is stepping down but will stay on as a Trustee board member, continuing his mission to restore the mauri of Te Wai o Pareira. Chris has served tirelessly in his role as Chair, and Rivercare Group owes its existence to his vision and courage.

As a longtime resident of Te Atatū Peninsula, living in the presence of the awa, Chris could not fathom why we were treating her like a dump and a sewer. In late 2018 after one particularly bad overflow Chris decided, along with kayaker Russell Cavanagh, that it was time to take action, and the seed for Rivercare Group Te Wai o Pareira was sown.

During his time as Chair, Chris has led Rivercare Group from an idea into a thriving organisation. Rivercare has achieved so much under his leadership, including our restoration project at Tawa Esplanade, many stream and river cleanups, an incredible education programme connecting tamariki to place and teaching them to love the awa, a pest control corridor and of course his tireless advocacy for Te Wai o Pareira with both Watercare for sewage overflows and Healthy Waters for the stormwater project, including many reports and submissions with the aim of tackling the systemic issues that plague Te Wai o Pareira.

Thank you Chris for all you have done, we literally would not be here without you!

We are happy to announce that stepping into the role of Chairperson is Caitlyn Prince, who brings expertise from her experience in many other organisations. She is dedicated to fostering collaboration and understanding among Aotearoa's diverse communities. Caitlyn has been an invaluable member of our Board this past year and we look forward to the direction that she will steer us in as our new Chair.

Pump Station Failure

On Saturday the 8th of June there was a serious overflow at Pump Station 44 (just by the motorway bridge over the awa). It was caused by a pump station failure in Avondale that pumps the sewage on to Mangere. Thanks to the local kayak club, who notified us and raised the issue with Watercare.

This caused black flags at both the Te Wai o Pareira SafeSwim locations and also at Harbourview.

Unlike the wet weather overflows we are used to, this was a dry weather event, meaning that the discharge was undiluted sewage, carrying a higher pathogen load. The pump station failure caused all the sewage to be diverted to the Concourse storage tank until it filled up. When that happened there was a massive long lasting spill into Te Wai o Pareira as the sewage from Kumeu to Massey and Te Atatū Peninsula had nowhere else to go. The failure of this pump station resulted in 25% of all wastewater connections to the Mangere Wastewater Treatment Plant to discharge into the Upper Waitemata Harbour. This is a much greater discharge than the Parnell sinkhole event in September last year, although the fix was achieved much faster.

The Avondale pump station is the 4th biggest in Auckland and it is quite old. It is due to be decommissioned when the Central Interceptor link is connected, but that won't be until early next year. This latest failure demonstrates the fragility of the network and the need for the Northern Interceptor Phase 1 which will take some of the load off. We are extremely disappointed that the Northern Interceptor Phase 1 has been delayed from its original date of 2020 until early 2025 at this point. A 5 year delay on critical infrastructure is unacceptable.

Pixie Stream Clean up

On the 9th of June we joined Earth Action Trust for a clean up of Pixie Stream in Te Atatū Peninsula. Nearly 400kgs total rubbish was removed; 84kg landfill waste, 53kg of recyclables and 250kg of illegal dumping, including a whole bath tub! Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who got stuck in.

Thank you to Earth Action Trust for another successful event, Te Atatū Roosters for the kai and your support, Royce Sports Promo for the incredible photos, Edmonton Scouting Group for getting your waders on and getting right into the stream! And Second Nature Gardens Limited for providing a truck to cart away all the rubbish.

Matariki Planting Day

Rivercare celebrated Matariki by planting trees on our restoration project at Tawa Esplanade; what a great way to mark the new year. We want to say thank you to the nearly 50 volunteers who gave up precious weekend hours to help us, we really couldn't do this project without you. Special mention to the Student Volunteer Army from the University of Auckland who arrived early to help with set up and were so helpful all day.

And a big thank you to our sponsors for this event: Eco Matters- Love your Neighbourhood and the Henderson Massey Local Board whose support provided the kai, Second Nature Landscaping for providing tools, trucks and expertise, Kaipātiki Nursery for the plants and Central Landscapes Supplies who generously donated more than \$400 worth of compost to help the new plants get established. A project like this really does take a whole community to be successful and we are so grateful for those who are partnering with us.

You can read more about our project at Tawa Esplanade using the link below

[Read More](#)

The Peninsula Stormwater Upgrades

Rivercare Group continues to seek changes to the proposed upgrades to the stormwater system on the Peninsula. Although the upgrades are sorely needed we have been disappointed with the lack of environmental, cultural and social consideration given to the plan.

We have now had multiple meetings and email exchanges with Healthy Waters (Auckland Council) and although we have made some headway, such as the reversal on the plan to cover over the section of stream at the Matipo Reserve (carpark of the Te Atatū Women's Bowling Club). We are still seeking the following:

- A commitment that the mana of local iwi and hapu is upheld during this process
- An acknowledgement that, without flow mitigation, that the proposed upgrade will likely have negative impacts on our sensitive marine receiving environments
- A long-term commitment to improving the quality of stormwater discharges generated by this project, and that all impacts are monitored
- To understand the portion of the project budget committed to stormwater quality improvement beyond gross litter control, i.e. how do they intend to remove heavy metals and other toxins from the water entering the waterways.

The evidence is irrefutable that the mauri of Te Wai o Pareira, the Waitemata Harbour and the Hauraki Gulf are compromised. Knowing this, it is irresponsible to knowingly continue behaviours that further negatively impact our waterways.

Protest against the Fast-Track Applications Bill

On Saturday the 8th of June members of Rivercare Group attended the protest in Auckland City against the Fast-Track legislation that the government is hoping to pass into law. The protest was well attended by a peaceful but passionate crowd of approximately 20,000.

This law would mean that certain projects would be able to skip the normal checks and balances and would give three ministers - Chris Bishop, Shane Jones and Simeon Brown - the power to make the final decisions on projects, even if it goes against the advice of expert panels.

We feel that this is irresponsible and does not offer adequate environmental protection. We hope that the government is listening to the voice of the public and of knowledgeable environmental agencies who are expressing concern that this bill could do irrevocable damage to nature.

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