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Meeting to discuss river management

Last week the Ruamahanga Whaitua Committee began a series of open community discussions focussed on hearing the widest range of views about land and water management for the Ruamahanga River catchment.

Held at the Carterton Events Centre, the discussion was opened by Mayor John Booth and attended by more than 50 members of the public.

Booth recalled childhood experiences of swimming, fishing and drinking water from the river and expressed hope his grandchildren would be able to enjoy Wairarapa's waterways in the same way.

"Developing water and land management rules that meet the needs and aspirations of the whole community can be a balancing act," said Peter Gawith, Ruamahanga Whaitua Committee chairman.

"Some individuals have a good deal of knowledge about how government policy changes will affect or protect their use or enjoyment of water and land. For others the concept of putting their view forward in this area is new, but no less important.

"We know that some farmers, fishermen, those who live on the riverbanks or floodplain, or those looking to restore or preserve ecological balance have established views about our waterways. Water and some sites have special significance to tangata whenua. We are hearing and thinking about the information that's already been shared with us directly or during discussions with

the Greater Wellington Regional Council."

The Ruamahanga Whaitua Committee will gather public opinion during 2015 and develop a plan for land and water management that is specific to the Ruamahanga River catchment. Alongside information gathered through community discus-

sions, presentations and reports, the committee will also look at information gathered by Greater Wellington Regional Council during discussions to develop the council's work programme for the next 10 years, the Long Term Plan and the document that outlines the policies and rules that govern this work, the Natural Resources Plan.

Information from discussions about climate change, floodplain management as well as information developed by the Wairarapa Water Use Project will also be considered.

"We want to hear more about what people who live, work and play in the Ruamahanga River catchment value about their land and water. We want to hear from people who might not have had chance to think about and discuss what water and land management might mean for them. Come along and hear what's being said at a community meeting or contact the committee directly to find out more or share your ideas," Gawith said.

The next Ruamahanga Whaitua Committee Values Discussion is planned for Tuesday, April 28, 6pm till 8pm at Pirinoa Hall.

For more information go to gw.govt.nz/ruamahanga-whaitua/.