

Hawksbury Lagoon update

I daresay you have all noticed the dramatic change in recent water levels in the lagoon. From the raging torrent during the high rainfall event, to the very low water level in the days following. Major scouring of the outlet meant that the lagoon has continued to drain for a much longer period than usual. The lower than usual water level has exposed rock buttresses between the pine trees near Stewart street and the golf course side of the outlet. There was originally a bridge here that provided for local house cows to be led across for daily grazing, this is all that's left.

Leaving the culverts opened has also contributed to the dramatic change of water levels. As you will know the lagoon is in a poor state of health (as are most wetlands around the world) this is mainly a result of high nutrient levels (nitrogen and phosphorus), sedimentation, and low inflow rates. Fortunately the sediment study completed in 2012 showed minimal metal pollution to add to the problems.

In order to try and remedy some of these effects we have planted around the lagoon perimeter, plants take up a lot of the excess nutrient and can trap sediment. The catchment for the lagoon is beyond our brief as a volunteer group, however there is a lot more information now available as to the need to better manage pollutants and reduce their effects on waterways. Sedimentation is an ongoing problem, and increases at times of high rainfall, aquatic plants such as rushes/reeds and Raupo planted in the water can help slow down the water flow allowing sediment to settle, however we have only managed to get small areas successfully established so far. The average water depth of 0.5m also means that during summer, oxygen levels in the water drop as it warms up. This makes life difficult for fish or aquatic macrophytes, and the rapid growth of algae (from the presence of nutrients) more likely. Low inflow rates are difficult to alter, however by keeping the culverts open we have increased the movement of water through each of the areas, keeping it fresher, and with future climate change predictions we may see the outlet remain open more frequently and for longer periods, leading to a greater tidal effect. In the meantime, changes in water levels will continue to affect the lagoon in a number of ways, both positive and not so positive, such is the nature of estuaries.

My thanks to the men who spread limechip on the causeways, can I ask that horses not be ridden on the paths as they ruin the surface, leave droppings, and can be unnerving for people they might encounter. Please remember that dogs must be on a leash at all times. A small wooden wishing well was retrieved from the flooded lagoon, if it is yours it can be reclaimed from the Stewart Street seat near the entrance. Our next planting day will be on Sunday September 17th at the end of Scotia Street. Check out our website for more details. www.hawksburylagoon.org.nz

Shirley McKewen Chairperson