



## INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

**PROJECT TITLE: Whaingaroa Harbour Care**

**Tags; water quality, rural, training**

### **Overview:**

[Whaingaroa Harbour Care](#) (WHC) is a contributor to the Whaingaroa Catchment Management Programme, described as the first formal attempt in New Zealand to establish community based, integrated environmental management on a catchment scale. WHC focuses on activities to improve the harbour's water quality and ecology by fencing off and re-establishing native plants along margins of the harbour and streams, and encouraging farmers to fence and plant their riparian strips and retire and plant any erosion-prone slopes and gullies.

A key component of the programme's success has been the cooperation of farmers. This was achieved by approaching pre-eminent landowners and, once having convinced them, hoping that others will follow their example. Farmers that followed their lead were impressed by visiting the farms and being able to see for themselves first-hand the aesthetic and pragmatic benefits.

Through providing training opportunities for people via Work and Income and the Department of Corrections, WHC have exposed a number of people who are not typically associated with environmental endeavours. Over 70 such workers have participated in the programme, thereby learning environmentally friendly skills first hand such as plant propagation, seed collecting, native plant identification, weed and pest control, stormwater management, fencing, and construction of fish passes in culverts.

There are reports of the local community's awareness around harbour water quality improving also. One way in which WHC sought to achieve this was to start planting at the lower catchment for purposes of visibility, in order to stimulate public education.

The WWF report "[Not Just Trees in the Ground: The Social and Economic Benefits of Community-led Conservation Projects](#)" also found that WHC had considerable social and economic benefits, in addition to the environmental outcomes it achieved. Some of these social and economic benefits included: increased social capital, benefits for socially dysfunctional youth, a reduction in local crime through the involvement of the Corrections Department, increased viability of traditional Maori medication through protection of rongoa plants, reduced pest damage to commercial crops, generation of income generating employment opportunities for the community, and new business opportunities.

The WWF report sites WHC as a model for environmental teaching because of the way it has engaged the local community, schools, environmental groups and businesses and raised awareness around the impacts of sediment and storm water discharge on the environmental quality of the waterways and fish stocks. There has also been an increase in awareness of



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the effects of urban run-off on water quality both among local people as well as council staff. The local school is in the process of adapting its environmental course to use one of the local farms as a demonstration model. The school will donate the plants, the students will plant them, and in the process they will learn about the importance of wetlands and riparian planting.

### **Why is it relevant to PTS?**

A focus on improving water quality through riparian planting

A focus on community education of the impacts of sediment and storm water discharge on the environmental quality of the waterways and fish stocks, and the wider benefits of improved water quality

They took quite a holistic approach in terms of measuring the benefits – not just environmental but also social and economic

### **Ideas and tips for PTS:**

WHC has clearly demonstrated to farmers and businesses the economic benefits of changing their operations "I estimate I save \$2,000 on digger time each year. I'm also saving money now that I've stopped trying to drain the wetlands". This focus could also be applied to PTS by highlighting potential economic benefits to local businesses and the wider community. Demonstrate the wider business opportunities such as eco-tourism "I wouldn't say our business has resulted from the project but we wouldn't be here if the harbour had been in the state it used to be. I can't imagine that people would be interested in going on a kayak tour. I don't think I would have been interested in starting such a business here either"

### **Contact and further information**

<http://www.harbourcare.co.nz/>

Refer to "[Not just trees in the ground](#)", a report listed on the WWF website <http://www.wwf.org.nz>