

September welcomes the arrival of spring, a season marked by new beginnings. So it's fitting this month to feature a stream that is undergoing significant rejuvenation thanks to the efforts of Waikato's Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group.

The Mangakotukutuku [catchment](#) spans 2295 hectares of land south of Hamilton. The top of the catchment is characterised by dairy farms before the stream runs through residential parts of Hamilton city and on to meet the Waikato River.

Mangakotukutuku translates as "stream of the native tree fuchsia". Borrow pits and other archeological features show the rich Maori history of the Mangakotukutuku area which includes a number of pa sites. Many people lived around these pa and were involved in extensive farming activities. Freshwater springs (puna) in the gullies were used for ceremonial purposes and were also important sources of water for food preparation.

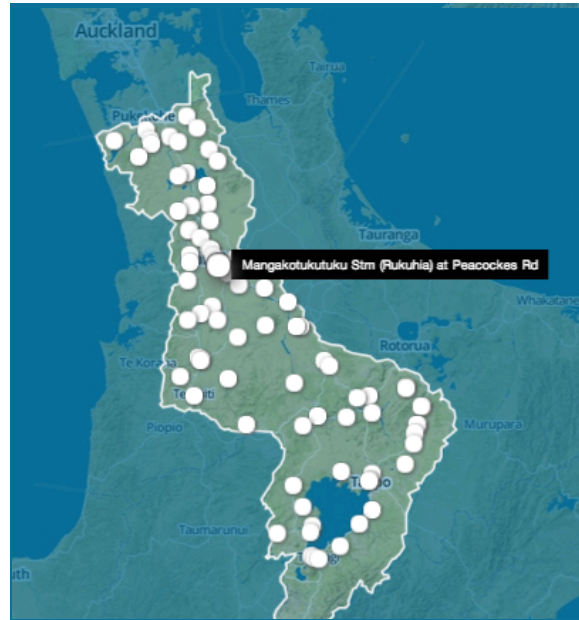
With relatively low levels of industrial activity, the Mangakotukutuku is less impacted by urban influences than other waterways flowing through Hamilton. However, the agricultural activity at the top of the catchment does impact water quality as can be seen in the results of the [Mangakotukutuku Stream's water quality monitoring](#).

Although the water quality in the catchment is affected by the surrounding land use, the Mangakotukutuku maintains high [biodiversity](#) values, rare in modified urban areas like Hamilton. Because of this, biodiversity in the Mangakotukutuku catchment is greatly valued. Some fish species found in the catchment are considered [nationally threatened](#) such as the [longfin eel](#) and [giant kokopu](#).

Call to action

Concerned about the deteriorating water quality and determined to protect the stream's [ecosystem](#), locals got together and established the Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group in 2006.

Not shy of getting their feet wet and hands dirty, the group's chair Grant Blackie said the action-oriented group is focussed on the stream's ecosystem.



Spotlight on the Mangakotukutuku

- Home to Longfin Eel, Giant Kokopu
- Names means 'stream of the native tree fuchsia'
- Rich Maori history including a number of pa sites
- Riverbank trees home to native bats

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“We want to see wider community awareness of and commitment to enhancing the ecological values of Mangakotukutuku Stream, and more action on the ground aimed at improving the health of the stream.

“Our vision is for a gully rich in [native](#) biodiversity and a healthy stream from the headwaters to the Waikato River.”

Eight years on and the group’s commitment to action speaks for itself. The efforts of the group has seen over 23 000 native plants take hold along the stream’s banks providing prized [habitat](#) for the stream’s native fish.

Recently, the group has been focussed on establishing habitat for eels and kokopu in a tributary running through Hamilton’s Stanford Park. They’ve also developed a [wetland](#) for the threatened black mudfish with the support of engineering consultants Tonkin and Taylor. This project was made possible by \$140 000 of funding from the [Waikato River Clean Up Trust](#) and \$5000 from the [Department of Conservation](#).

Collaboration key

Collaboration is a theme that runs through many of the Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group’s projects. They are currently working with Waikato Regional Council and local farmers to establish native [riparian](#) plantings along the [main stem](#) of the Upper Mangakotukutuku and [tributaries](#).

The project began in 2013 with 670m of stream fencing carried out by a local farmer. The farmer also carried out willow control and prepared the stream banks for riparian planting. The Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group and Waikato Regional Council then organised for a community planting day and a contractor to plant over 3500 native plants. This project will continue for a further five years and extend throughout the catchment.



Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group planting day at Sanford Park

Waikato Regional Council chairperson Paula Southgate said the Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group demonstrates the power of community partnerships.

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“Community partnerships are vital to our success and this is an excellent example of how a motivated community can make a meaningful difference,” said Cr Southgate.

“At the very heart of this project lies the willingness of different sectors of the community to work together to restore a waterway important to us all.”

Those involved are realistic about the time it will take to see measurable change in water quality.

“It’s going to take many years for riparian restoration to really take effect in regards to observable water quality changes and it’s too early to attribute any changes to the work of our group,” explained Mr Blackie.

However, the group has noticed some immediate benefits that may be related to their efforts.

“We’ve observed many more tui in the area, while we can’t definitively say this is due to our work, we assume increased habitat and food sources that our plantings are providing as well as controlling pests like rats are making a difference over time.”

Looking for more information?

You can read more about the Mangakotukutuku Stream and the community restoration efforts at the following links:

- www.streamcare.org.nz
- makearipple.co.nz/Action-groups/ripples/RestoreProtect-Indigenous-Biodiversity/
- makearipple.co.nz/Action-groups/ripples/Mangakotukutuku-Streamcare-Group/
- www.facebook.com/Mangakotukutukustreamcaregroup