

World Wetlands Day 2009

A Taranaki Daily News advertising feature



LOOK AFTER THEM: Lake Rotokare is among 77 Taranaki wetlands classed as regionally significant.

Photo: ROB TUCKER

Wetlands connect us all

UPSTREAM – Downstream: Wetlands connect us all — that's the theme for World Wetlands Day 2009.

The internationally observed event recognises that water is the critical element upon which all terrestrial life depends. It is wetlands – rivers, rivers, lakes, swamps and floodplains – that capture, store and transport water for all of us.

Wetlands are a critical part of the water cycle that keeps us supplied with water wherever we live, whether it be country or town. And whoever we are — farmer or factory owner, corporate or family — we still require water to survive.

When rain falls over the land, some will make its way through the water cycle by evaporating quickly into the atmosphere, some may filter through into ground water and some will remain as surface water making its way eventually to the ocean via streams, lakes and rivers.

Since we are a water-dependent species, looking after our wetlands – our water

connectors – is not an option for us but an imperative.

World Wetlands Day is an opportunity to highlight the connection between managing the health of wetland ecosystems and the health of humans and to celebrate the conservation of our freshwater and estuarine environments.

Various events will be happening across New Zealand in early February to celebrate World Wetlands Day.

World Wetlands Day is observed on February 2 every year. It marks the 1971 signing of the international Convention on Wetlands in Ramsar, Iran. World Wetlands Day has been celebrated since 1997 and provides an opportunity to draw attention to the need for wise management of the world's wetlands.

World Wetlands Day 2009 will be marked in Taranaki this Sunday, February 1, with a tour of wetland restoration work at the Murphy property, 792 Oeo Road, Auroa (dairy No 41544).

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Community focus in planting project

KEVIN and Marianne Murphy are ready to show the world six and a half thousand reasons why this year's World Wetlands Day theme is important.

The Murphys will host a World Wetlands Day open day on Sunday at their family dairy farm on Oeo Road, Auroa – where a 2.14 ha streamside/wetland gully area has been protected and enhanced with fencing and 6500 native plants.

Besides the many important environmental benefits, the couple see the project as an ideal way of giving something back to the land and community that have provided them a home and comfortable livelihood.

The community connection is a strong one.

The wetlands project was carried out with the help of extended family, pupils from Auroa School and members of the Pihama Young Farmers Club. The QEII National Trust, the South Taranaki District Council and the Taranaki Tree Trust provided funding assistance.

The planting was carried out in 2007, fulfilling a goal Kevin had set himself in 2000. "I'm a goal-driven person," he says. "I had a vision of planting what was an unattractive area near the farm homestead – using exclusively native plants to get it looking something like it must have been before the land was cleared."

Before the planting came the fencing – 1200m was needed and a good proportion was built with discarded concrete posts and strainers Kevin sourced from surrounding properties ("nobody wants them these days"). He dug them in himself.

In the planning and planting stage, the Murphys were greatly helped by Kevin's sister Denise, who grew up on the property, and her husband Neil Phillips, the regional representative of the QEII National Trust.

"It was also good to get the school and the Young Farmers along – getting that community involvement," says Kevin.

"In a sense it belongs to the community. I farmed here for 35 years but always had the sense of being a



GIVING SOMETHING BACK: Kevin Murphy, left, among some of the 6500 new native plants that protect and enhance a wetlands area on his family dairy farm at Auroa. Above, the Murphy wetlands are protected with a QEII National Trust covenant.

Photos: SUPPLIED

steward of the land."

The 6500 plants are made up of 33 native varieties ranging from flaxes to cabbage trees, toetoe to totara. More totara and rimu will be planted, along with rata. "Auroa used to be known as Ratanui, so obviously there must have been plenty of rata," says Kevin.

He does not feel the project has cost the farm any land. "It was unproductive and a hazard. We'd lose a cow a year down there. And eventually there will be value from the shelter provided by the trees."

The area has been placed under QEII covenant and Kevin and Marianne are pleased to be responsible for what they believe will be an everlasting legacy. "It will all still be there in 100, 200 years, even if people don't remember who I was."

World Wetlands Day is observed internationally on February 2 and is supported in New Zealand by a range of agencies including Fish and Game, the

Department of Conservation and regional councils. It is designed to focus attention on the value of wetlands, many of which have disappeared under relentless economic and social pressure for land.

Wetlands do many jobs. They store and purify water; provide flood water control, replenish groundwater; provide nurseries for freshwater and marine fish; store carbon; retain nutrients and sediments; support biological diversity; mitigate climate change; create recreation and tourism opportunities; provide water transport; and much more.

Wetlands are home to more bird, animal and plant species than any other type of habitat.

Sunday's open day runs from 10am at the Murphy farm and the venue will be signposted.

Visitors will be able to walk the perimeter of the planted area, and there will be presentations by representatives of the QEII National Trust, Taranaki Tree

Trust, Taranaki Fish and Game, and Taranaki Regional Council.

The Taranaki Regional Council can supply advice and information to any land owner interested in wetlands projects.

The use, development and protection of wetlands are covered by rules in the Council's Regional Freshwater Plan. Seventy-seven wetlands are in a specially protected "regionally significant" category, with around two-thirds of these having extra legal protection through voluntary covenants and the like.

"In land management terms, however all wetlands are important and we will work with land owners and other groups who want to protect and enhance them anywhere in the region," says the council's land services manager, Don Shearman.

"The old attitude that wetlands are waste land is changing as people understand the crucial role they play."

Wetlands & Water

Supporting Life - Sustaining Livelihoods

\$2 from every hunting licence purchased goes to the Game Bird Habitat Trust to help protect and enhance our wetland heritage

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Fish & Game

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Peringa Park Wetland

Peringa Park Wetland now taking shape. "Our proposed concept for this wetland is for a 'less engineered' look and we have attempted to use the natural topography to create a "natural" looking wetland landscape" says Manager Projects Team Jeff Bondy

Stormwater from Fitzroy will be directed into the wetland for cleaning before it reaches Lake Rotomanu. Wetlands are often described as "nature's kidney's" and are used to improve water quality by removing contaminants that would be detrimental to the water eco-system.

Up to 98% of contaminants can be removed from the water by the use of a wetland including organic matter, suspended solids, heavy metals such as zinc, lead, copper, nitrogen, phosphorous, nitrogen, pathogens, petrochemical hydrocarbons and industrial waste.

The wetland itself will be planted out in autumn. Extensive native riparian planting around the remainder of the site, along with walking/cycling links to from the closest streets are planned over the next few years to enhance the entire area and link it with the wider recreational facilities including the coastal walkway. Much of this work will be undertaken as community partnership programme similar to the recent very successful Herekawe project involving the community. "Already we have a local school express interest taking on an environmental stewardship role which is fantastic" says Mr Bondy. If your organisation is interested in becoming involved please contact Tina Christmas the Team Leader of Parks Programmes at the Council.

The wetland also has a very special feature... stunning views of a very unique ecosystem - a grand view of the wetland, the lake and the ocean... all separate but all interconnected. "To observe all three water ecosystems in such close proximity is really unique" says Mr Bondy

"Wetlands are natural filters, and Lake Rotomanu will benefit from having the stormwater sediments trapped in the wetland's soil and plants. The wetland will also encourage wildlife, such as native birds, to take up residence over the years, and we have frogs and fish that have moved in already" says Mr Bondy.

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TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

Celebrate World Wetlands Day

Sunday 1 February
10am

Kevin & Marianne Murphy's
Oeo Road, Auroa
Dairy number: 41544

Learn about these unique and valuable ecosystems with representatives of the Taranaki Regional Council, Fish and Game Taranaki, Taranaki Tree Trust, DOC and the QEII Trust.

Protect Taranaki's Wetlands

The Taranaki Regional Council is working with landowners and other organisations to secure the future of Taranaki's remaining wetlands.

Bring walking shoes

For further information on protecting or creating wetlands contact:

Taranaki Regional Council
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