

# Small Place, Big Vision!

**It's been a busy winter for the Whangawehi Catchment Management Group and their stream restoration project on the Mahia Peninsula.**

We can see why they were a proud finalist in the national Green Ribbon Awards again this year. In September the Minister for the Environment Hon Nick Smith visited to announce that the group is a successful recipient of the Community Environment Fund. He praised their collaborative approach which includes community, iwi, farming and forestry land owners, the school, councils and volunteers.

A recent community gathering at Tuahuru Marae celebrated the signing of the Group's Memorandum of Understanding by three more landowners who share the vision - Sir Michael Fay, owner of Pongaroa Station, Hannah and Richard Coop, owners of Okepuha Station, and Kathie and Mark Bowen.

This winter 53,000 more native trees were planted. Over one weekend on Pongaroa Station, volunteers planted 4,500 native trees. In return, they enjoyed a social dinner and overnight stay at the marae, which strengthened relationships between locals, bach owners and volunteers - some of whom had come from as far away as France!

Although the river is now almost completely fenced off from stock, native planting will continue. Water quality and fish monitoring programmes are in place until the end of the



A big community planting effort at Whangawehi drew people from as far as France.

year and already there's been a significant and encouraging increase in the populations of small native fish, such as inanga, which collectively make up 'white bait'.

Te Mahia School students are also helping to bring back the Little Blue Penguin. The bird used to breed in the Whangawehi estuary until the 1980s. The students have built and installed 13 nesting boxes along the stream. A netting fence protects the site from dogs and predator traps are in place.

The Group's next project is to build a shelter for volunteers and visitors along the Whangawehi stream at Taharoa Trust.

[whangawehi.com](http://whangawehi.com)