

## GREEN LIGHT FOR KAITUNA

Bay of Plenty Regional Council has brought the Maketū community a step closer to having a healthy estuary by gaining resource consent approval for the Kaituna Re-diversion and Ōngātoro/Maketū Estuary Enhancement Project.

The project will return an average of 600,000 cubic metres of fresh water from the Kaituna River into Ōngātoro/Maketū Estuary on every tidal cycle, and create at least 20 hectares of new wetlands.

"This is a big milestone for both the Maketū community and the environment. It's been a long time coming," says Regional Council chairman Doug Leeder.

The Kaituna River was diverted away from the estuary for flood protection and land drainage in the 1950s and the estuary has been gradually degrading ever since, he says.

"Tangata whenua and the wider community have been asking for river flow to be returned since 1979. It's great that we've now found a way to make that happen."

The planned re-diversion will direct 20 percent of the river's flow back into the estuary while maintaining existing flood protection levels and channel navigability at Te Tumu cut.

Regional Council Kaituna Catchment manager Pim de Monchy says the Regional Council is grateful to iwi, landowners, environmental groups and the wider community for their support of the project so far. "It's a complex project involving more than 100,000 cubic metres of earthworks in a sensitive environment, both ecologically and culturally. We need to make sure we get it right," he says.

The Regional Council lodged its application for resource consent and associated land designations in July 2014. A panel of independent planning commissioners approved the application in July, following review of 46 public submissions at a hearing in May. The consent approval is subject to 40 pages of conditions designed to manage the potential environmental effects of the project.

Funding for the project has been budgeted for in the Bay of Plenty Regional Council 2015-25 Long Term Plan.

De Monchy says a cost analysis will be done on the consent conditions before starting detailed design and construction planning. If land acquisition processes go smoothly and there are no appeals, he expects construction to start by September 2016.

A copy of the full consent decision is available at [www.boprc.govt.nz/kaitunamaketurdiversion](http://www.boprc.govt.nz/kaitunamaketurdiversion).



Resource consent has been granted to restore the Maketū estuary by re-diverting fresh water from the Kaituna River into the estuary

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