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Waikato-Tainui Te Kauhanganui Inc.
and Environment Waikato



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Waikato-Tainui and EW share vision of a clean and healthy river

Waikato-Tainui and Environment Waikato came together around the council's policy-making table yesterday to start discussions about how to achieve the shared vision of a clean and healthy Waikato River.

Waikato-Tainui met with EW's policy committee to outline the objectives for achieving the vision set out in the Waikato River Deed of Settlement signed with the Crown in August 2008.

Discussions centred on the unique relationship Waikato-Tainui have with its ancestor having derived its name from the river and moved toward the management required to ensure the river is restored for future generations.

Te Arataura deputy chair Patience Te Ao said a clean and healthy Waikato River is a vision shared by many, and Waikato-Tainui are committed to working with organisations like EW to achieve that fundamental goal.

"The health and wellbeing of the Waikato River for future generations is paramount – this is all about the best interests of the river," she said.

"To achieve that, we are developing a new way of working together so that we can share in its management by having input in decisions and policy making, as well as being able to exercise a caretaker (kaitiaki) role."

Waikato-Tainui's eight objectives are:

- The restoration and protection of the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River.
- The restoration and protection of the relationship of Waikato-Tainui with the Waikato River, including economic, social, cultural and spiritual relationships.
- The integrated, holistic and coordinated approach to management of the natural, physical, cultural and historic resources of the Waikato River – this means the involvement of Waikato-Tainui in central and local government processes from engagement, through to consensus-based power sharing, decision-making, enforcement and monitoring.
- The adoption of a precautionary approach toward decisions that may result in significant adverse effects on the Waikato River, and in particular those effects that threaten serious or irreversible damage to the river.
- The recognition and avoidance of adverse, cumulative effects of activities undertaken both on the Waikato River and within its catchment.

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- Recognition that the Waikato River is degraded and should not be required to absorb further degradation as a result of human activities.
- The protection and enhancement of significant sites, fisheries, flora and fauna.
- The integration of Maaori knowledge and western science to protect and enhance the river, fisheries, flora and fauna.

Policy committee chair Paula Southgate said EW and the community shared Waikato-Tainui's vision for the river but challenges lay ahead in agreeing the speed of change and the funding required to make it happen.

"The mechanisms for co-management will break new ground for local government and we are looking forward to the change, but the devil is in the detail and we are still to work out the practical aspects of implementing new processes, joint management agreements, customary activities and numerous other details," she said.

"We've come a long way and we have a long way to go but I am confident Waikato-Tainui and EW will work together constructively to achieve the shared vision over time."

The Deed of Settlement sets up a Waikato River Authority made up of Crown and iwi-appointed members, including the other iwi with interests along the river - Maniapoto, Raukawa, Te Arawa and Tuuwharetoa. Local communities will be represented on the authority by two people, one nominated by Environment Waikato, the other by local councils.

The authority will administer a \$210m contestable fund - \$7m a year for 30 years – which will be available to iwi, local authorities, landowners and others for initiatives that contribute to cleaning up the river.

It will also monitor the direction-setting Vision and Strategy document, *Te Ture Whaimana*, which aims to restore and protect the Waikato River. The Vision and Strategy will form part of the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and be given effect through all councils' plans under the Resource Management Act.

The legislation is expected to come into force in June 2010.

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