

Sod turned on \$16m river project

Wednesday, 13 June 2018 9:46 a.m.

More than 100 people, including representatives from six Te Arawa iwi gathered at Tukotahi Marae yesterday, beside the Kaituna River, to celebrate the start of construction works that will return freshwater flows from the river into Te Awa o Ngatoroirangi Maketū Estuary.

Ngāti Whakaue kaumatua Liam Tapsell started the celebration by thanking Bay of Plenty Regional Council Project Manager Pim de Monchy and his team for their collaboration with Te Arawa whanui and the local community in bringing the project to fruition.

“Let us celebrate and honour the spiritual essence of the Kaituna and the estuary Te Awa o Ngatoroirangi,” he said.

Regional Councillor and Te Maru o Kaituna River Authority member Arapeta Tahana acknowledged the work of Aroha Wilkinson, the Maketū Action Group, and the wider community in their work since the late 1970s to get the river re-diverted back into the estuary.

“I’m really pleased that as a community and as a nation we’re realising the impacts of some of the things we’ve done to the land and the waterways in the past. We’re now making a commitment to turning the tide and making a change for the better. Everyone who lives in this community has been really dedicated to this kaupapa (work) and I want to acknowledge and thank everyone that has played a part in getting the project this far.

We’re not going to be here forever but this land will be, this river will be, and this moana will be so it’s only right that we do the best we can as our generation to leave this whenua and this environment in a better condition for our children and our grandchildren,” Councillor Tahana said.

As the last surviving member of the original Maketū Action Group, Aroha Wilkinson finished the ceremony by turning the first sod while Ngāti Whakaue Minister Kahi Hanara gave a karakia. Mrs Wilkinson used a spade that belonged to her late husband Barrie Wilkinson and was supported by her sons Pete and Aubrey Wilkinson. Regional Council Chairman Doug Leeder presented Mrs Wilkinson with a kahikatea tree which will be planted in the first sod at nearby Whakaue Marae.

Bay of Plenty Regional Council is funding and co-ordinating the \$13m construction works which are due for completion by June 2020. \$3.6m has already been invested in the planning and land acquisition work completed to date.

People can subscribe to receive email updates or see further information about the project at www.boprc.govt.nz/kaitunamaketurediversion (<http://www.boprc.govt.nz/kaitunamaketurediversion>)



Partner Websites

Baybus (<http://www.baybus.co.nz/>)

Bay of Connections (<http://www.bayofconnections.com>)

Bay of Plenty Civil Defence (<http://www.bopcivildefence.govt.nz/>)

LAWA - Land Air Water Aotearoa (<https://www.lawa.org.nz/>)

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