

Report on the Testing the Waters: West Coast Lagoons Workshop

Purpose

The purpose of the workshop was to provide a forum for sharing information about the lagoons, and to get feedback on how interested parties want to help shape plans for cleaning them up.

Presentations

Four speakers provided presentations on a range of lagoon related topics. A brief summary of those presentations follows:

- Results from water quality investigations (Kirsten Meijer, Auckland Council water quality advisor) – investigations over the summers of 2012/13 and 2013/14 showed that there were a variety of sources of faecal contamination in the lagoons and human contamination was found in each of the lagoons at least once.
- Reviewing performance of council-owned wastewater systems (Dave Kirk, Morphum Environmental) – there is room for improvement in how the systems perform, but council is committed to improving the management of the systems. An upgrade underway at Les Waygood Park in North Piha may help lagoon water quality there. System reviews are continuing and recommendations for improvement are being made to council.
- Love our Lagoons campaign (Dan Ducker, EcoMatters Environmental Trust) – EcoMatters have been door knocking, running events and offering free septic system inspections on behalf of the council since early this year. Dan told us what they've been hearing, particularly that people are engaged and keen to see the lagoons cleaned up. www.ecomatters.org.nz/projects/loveourlagoons
- Subsidies and incentives (Saffron Toms, Waitakere Ranges Local Board and Phil Brown, Auckland Council Land and Water Advisory team manager) – the local board are offering a \$2500 subsidy to anyone who lives in the lagoon catchments and upgrades their system from an old system to one that meets the rules. Auckland Council has also simplified the consent process and reduced the cost of consents in the same areas. Search for '[septic tanks](#)' on the Auckland Council website for details.

Workshop

A facilitated interactive workshop was held following the presentations.

Firstly, participants were asked to rank their ideas on the barriers to working closely with council on this issue.

Next, the workshop participants wrote down what they thought was the number one barrier that council would need to overcome to have good engagement with the community over this issue. Each idea was then rated by other participants and the ideas were ranked in importance to those that were at the workshop.

The ideas that were ranked as most important were:

- Community engagement - how do we involve the community in:
 - Decision making
 - Taking actions
 - Monitoring of water quality
 - Participatory planning
- Fragmented community - no common acknowledged goals
- The need to have diverse input (including Tangata Whenua), not necessarily representation. No blame. No denial.
- Keeping the real long term goals in view to inspire and maintain involvement from everyone (that is a shared goal)
- Council & local boards need to improve their methods of local engagement with groups. Due to the number of council departments involved, local groups find it difficult to achieve easy and effective activities and outcomes.

This shows that council needs to involve the community in decision making and to develop a common vision for the lagoons. Council also needs to improve how it engages at a local scale and to provide better 'joined-up' engagement with the community (the lagoons project involves ten different departments developing a joint work programme, so council has established a 'whole of council approach'). Some great ideas came out of the following sessions that will help address these barriers.

A full list of the ideas and their ranking is attached.

Workshop questions

Those at the workshop split into three groups, roughly into areas of interest (Karekare, Piha and Bethells), to discuss:

- Q1. What engagement have you previously been involved in within your community?
- Q2. What are the opportunities for engagement within this community?
- Q3. How can council staff and the community best work together to improve the lagoons?
- Q4. How can different communities of interest best work together to improve the lagoons?

Group discussions came up with good ideas, but no single clear picture of what future engagement should look like. Discussions were wide-ranging, so some of the following points may not fit perfectly with the questions above.

Q1. There has been a wide variety of engagement with council over the years, from formal processes for the Auckland Plan through to protests about council decisions. There had been mixed experiences both with the council and within communities.

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Q2. A lot of different opportunities were suggested:

- Use social media and local websites more (and the notice board at Bethells)
- Develop a shared ownership of the problems and solutions
- Tell the story of the lagoons and waterways
- Build on the Love Our Lagoons campaign
- Continue to use face to face contact
- Provide education about septic systems and how people can manage them
- Work with local plumbers etc to promote good system management
- Leverage off existing groups
- Provide incentives
- Focus on values rather than the problem
- Use art, run exhibitions
- Develop inspirational leadership
- Have different goals for different communities

Q3 and Q4. Some ideas already covered above, but others were discussed too:

- Don't create a new group to deal with lagoons, use existing networks
- Establish a new Waitakere Lagoons group, perhaps with local lagoon advisory groups too
- Re-establish water agenda groups to deal with the lagoons (Local Board could help resource them)
- Set up a water quality testing group
- Could expand the Piha Residents and Ratepayers water quality group
- Create an Ark in the Park equivalent e.g. Lagoon Guardians
- Use the Bethells Civil Defence and Emergency Management group
- Need a transparent process to get people into any groups
- Need an integrated approach to communications, perhaps using a community broker e.g. the local parks ranger could be the 'one-stop shop'
- Council should support information distribution
- Continue to use EcoMatters as an intermediary between council and community
- Don't target individuals, develop community pressure on transgressors
- Need to emphasise the cost of doing nothing
- Council needs to make sure to acknowledge individuals' contributions
- Celebrate successes
- Develop a map of where good things are happening
- Develop shared purpose
- Map informal networks
- Integrate lagoons actions with existing activities

Follow-up issues

A 'For Follow-up' board and a range of comments and questions were left. Council will investigate these issues and send responses separately.

Barriers to working closely with council identified by participants.

Rating (out of 35)	Issue: Participants perceived barrier or challenge to engagement.
33	Community engagement - How do we involve the community in: - decision making - taking actions - monitoring of water quality - participatory planning
32	Fragmented community - No common acknowledged goals
30	Diverse input (inc. Tangata Whenua). Not necessarily representation. No blame. No denial.
29	Keeping the real long term goals in view to inspire and maintain involvement from everyone. (That is a shared goal)
28	1. Council & local boards need to improve their methods of local engagement with groups 2. Difficulties with co-operation between council departments mean frustrations for local groups achieving easy and effective activities and outcomes.
26	1. Open the lagoons over summer 2. improve septics of riparian and other properties impacting on the lagoon
23	Funding of system upgrades to achieve target outcomes (reduced contamination loads). May need to be more wide spread, might find high interest in accessing grants to upgrade.
22	Needing more information about the status of my lagoons - so maybe more outreach to community hubs such as New Lynn, Kelston etc.
22	No.1 Issue - Action! We know what to do and how to do it now we need urgency to fix pollution at source (septic tanks) and flush lagoons with tidal action - Do it!!!
21	Lack of consideration for people's priorities and ability (\$, knowledge & time) to change.
20	Sustainability of effort in council with budget cuts, restructuring, 3 year political cycle.
20	Divisive community issues concerning use of streams, waterways and the water resource.
17	Identify all water-courses and streamlets which feed into major streams and thence to the lagoons. Set up a regular testing regime for each one so that the problem areas can be identified. Set up funding for same through council and private contributions.
18	Differing views/approaches between groups and individuals that are hard to resolve. Maybe philosophical, personal, historical.
19	Appropriate and integrated communication (style, content and approaches) - grow local capacity - needs to change behaviour - integrate with other comms
16	Human activity apart from septic tanks that effect lagoons - Building tracks. Bloggers streams.
13	A river does not flow in square
7	I am infinite you can not rate me out of 1-7