

Waihora Ellesmere Trust

Golda Varona *



Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora is New Zealand's 5th largest lake and its largest coastal lagoon, home to 167 species of bird and 40 generations of human history. The Lake is an internationally recognized wetland, and is known for its biodiversity. Given the complexity of Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora and its tributary system, a co-operative process is seen as possibly one of the most efficient, effective and equitable of approaches to attending to issues and concerns involving the Lake.

Waihora Ellesmere Trust (WET) was formed in September 2003 after extensive public consultation. WET is a charitable trust, organised to educate people about the values of Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora and to promote better management practices to improve the health and biodiversity of the Lake and the wider catchment. In partnership with other local organizations, government agencies, and interested parties, the Trust enacts a Community Strategy for the future management of Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora and its tributaries (see <http://www.wet.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/WETCommunityStrategy.pdf>, or send an email to admin@wet.org.nz to request a hard copy of the Community Strategy).



WET is currently active on three fronts:

- Restoring the ecosystem in and around the Lake and improving water quality through involvement in local riparian

and wetland projects;

- Enhancing understanding and awareness of the value of the Lake through education programmes, newsletter publications, and field days;
- Promoting best management practices through public seminars and symposia, and by partnering with private landowners, community groups and government agencies.

At present, the Trust continues to implement its programme of restoration planting throughout the catchment and lake environs. Approximately 17,000 native plant species have been planted in 2009. Restoration planting for autumn 2010 is fully subscribed and will see the Trust meeting its target of around 40,000 plants before 30 June 2010. Priority catchments for restoration planting include the following: Hororata, L2/L1/Liffey, Waikekewai, Kaituna, Johnsons Road, Waianiwaniwa, Silverstream, and Leeston.



The Trust is also pro-actively involved in environmental education programmes in cooperation with several local schools and the local marae in Taumutu; in the National Library's programme of enabling on-line searches of past newspapers such as the "Ellesmere Guardian"; and in community events such as the annual Kidsfest, Restoration Field Days, and World Wetland Day.

Waihora Ellesmere Trust has more than 100 members and volunteers. The Trust continues to welcome individuals, families and groups who have an interest in the Lake, its tributaries, and any or all of WET's associated activities and projects. To join WET, download a membership form from <http://www.wet.org.nz/membership/> and send it to admin@wet.org.nz, or PO Box 198, Tai Tapu 7645, Canterbury. Membership is renewable annually and runs from 01 November of the previous year to 31 October of the following year.

** Golda Varona at the time of writing was the administrator for WET. She holds an MAppSc (leisure and urban studies) from Lincoln University.*

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