



water

• for the

waimea

basin

Waimea Water Augmentation Committee
Community Survey report

January 2010

.....
Report compiled by
Barbara Dunn,
January 2010
.....



WWAC Chairman Murray King - ph 544 8456

WWAC Project Manager Joseph Thomas - ph 543 8494

Executive Summary

In December 2009 the Waimea Water Augmentation Committee (WWAC) sent out a questionnaire titled Water for the Waimea Basin – have your say to 6368 addresses in the Waimea Basin, including Richmond.¹ This questionnaire sought feedback on the proposed Lee Dam. WWAC received a total of 624 survey forms, however four of these were blank and have been discounted, leaving 620 responses. This represented a 9.73 percent response rate. This response is well above the 3 percent minimum rate for postal surveys and public consultations.

The significant outcomes from the survey included:

- 94.6% support progressing the dam to the next stage
- 2.9% were opposed to the dam progressing (18 people)
- 85% felt they were very well informed or had enough information about the project
- 65% thought there were no outstanding environmental issues to be addressed, while 9% thought there were.

The survey was designed to enable respondents to raise issues without prompting so WWAC could identify areas of concern or interest within the community. Key outcomes of this were:

- 83 people (13.3%) said they saw progressing the project as urgent and encouraged WWAC to proceed without delay
- 63 people (10%) raised public access and recreational opportunities on the lake as being important to them. There were a range of responses in this category and they will be detailed further in this report
- 54 people (8.6%) raised questions about project costs and who will pay
- 35 people (5.6%) said they would like to see hydroelectricity generation
- 25 people (4%) raised questions about ownership and governance, all of whom wanted the dam to remain a community-owned asset.

It is important to bear in mind that these were independent ideas put forward and the response rate has no corresponding negative component, e.g. 13.3% saying progress the project urgently does not mean 86.7% did not want the project progressed with urgency.

There were a range of other ideas put forward by individuals or small numbers of people and many of these also warrant further WWAC attention and will be detailed in this report.

The final section of this report provides recommendations on the way forward to address the priorities and concerns raised.

¹ Addresses were checked so that people with multiple land holdings only received one copy of the survey form.

Background

The Waimea Water Augmentation Committee (WWAC) undertook a survey of residents in the Waimea plains, Richmond and Brightwater areas in December 2009 to gauge support for the Lee Dam project and to identify areas where further education or investigation may be required. The survey was a component of Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF) funding for the Phase 2 Feasibility Study into the dam.

WWAC had previously conducted a community survey in October 2006. That survey was part of the Phase 1 Feasibility Study into water augmentation for the Waimea Basin that began in 2004.

Objectives

- To conduct a questionnaire survey of all households in the Waimea catchment area, including Richmond
- To determine and record the level of support for the proposed dam
- To identify areas of interest within the community
- To identify areas of concern within the community
- To identify any issues that had not been addressed
- To identify areas where further education was required
- To determine the level of public knowledge about the project.

Methodology

The Waimea Water Augmentation Committee prepared the 2009 questionnaire following the same format as the 2006 survey. It was included with the November-December Water for the Waimea Basin newsletter and posted to 6368 households within the identified area. Including the survey with the newsletter facilitated the inclusion of a brief project overview, an update on the latest progress and issues yet to be resolved. The survey sought both qualitative and quantitative responses. There were a total of six questions, plus another three demographic questions as follows:

1. How well informed do you feel you are about progress in finding a solution to the acute water shortage on the Waimea Plains?

Very well informed

I have enough information

I would like more information

Please comment

2. Do you support WWAC progressing the Lee Dam to the next stage, which is developing a model for ownership, governance and funding?

Yes **No** **Don't know**

Please comment

3. Are there any environmental issues you feel have not been fully addressed?

Yes **No** **Don't know**

Please comment

4. Are there any social or economic issues you feel have not been fully addressed?

Yes **No** **Don't know**

5. Are there any aspects of this project you would like more information about?

Yes **No** **Don't know**

Please comment

6. There may be opportunities for public involvement in environmental enhancement work associated with this project. Would you be interested in being involved and if so, do you have a specific area of interest?

Yes **No** **Don't know**

Please comment

Would you please tell us a little about yourself?

Male **Female**

Age bracket: **0-30 years** **31-50 years** **51-70 years** **71+ years**

Which area do you live in?

Urban **Rural**

The survey was designed to generate responses that would give WWAC a clear picture of:

- The level of community support for the project
- The level of knowledge about the project
- The level of knowledge about water issues
- Areas of community concern
- Areas of community interest

This information has also been assessed to identify whether responses have come from urban or rural residents, their gender and age range, to see if differences in understanding of the issues or acceptance of the proposal were influenced by the respondents' personal circumstances.

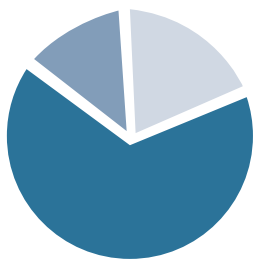


Committee on valley floor at dam site.

Of the 620 responses received:

1. How well informed do you feel you are about progress in finding a solution to the acute water shortage on the Waimea Plains?

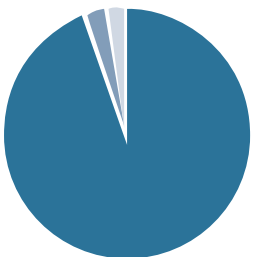
Very well informed	I have enough information	I would like more information
115	412	88



Very well informed
Have enough information
Would like more information

2. Do you support WWAC progressing the Lee Dam to the next stage, which is developing a model for ownership, governance and funding?

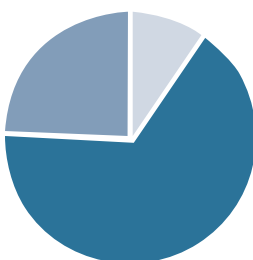
Yes	No	Don't know
587	18	15



Yes I support the dam
No I do not support the dam
Don't know

3. Are there any environmental issues you feel have not been fully addressed?

Yes	No	Don't know
56	404	144



Yes, there are environmental issues to address
No, the environmental issues have been addressed
Don't know

4. Are there any social or economic issues you feel have not been fully addressed?

Yes	No	Don't know
96	364	129

5. Are there any aspects of this project you would like more information about?

Yes	No	Don't know
141	382	48

6. There may be opportunities for public involvement in environmental enhancement work associated with this project. Would you be interested in being involved and if so, do you have a specific area of interest?

Yes	No	Don't know
84	428	72

Would you please tell us a little about yourself?

Male

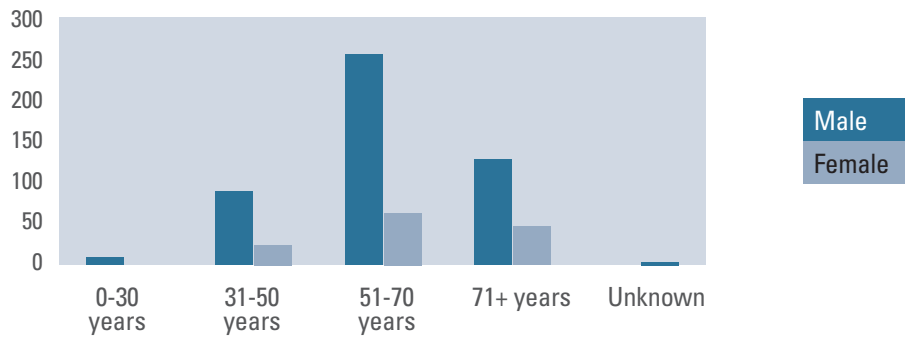
Age bracket:

0-30 years	31-50 years	51-70 years	71+ years	Unknown
5	91	254	130	1

Female

Age bracket:

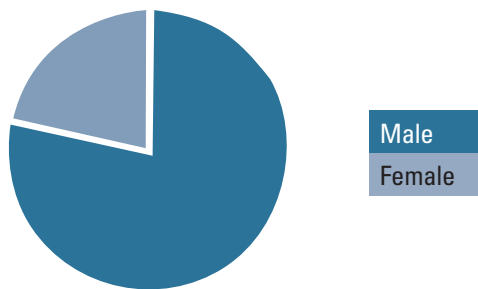
0-30 years	31-50 years	51-70 years	71+ years	Unknown
1	19	63	48	2



The biggest single group of respondents was males aged 51 – 70 years, followed by males aged 71+.

Gender

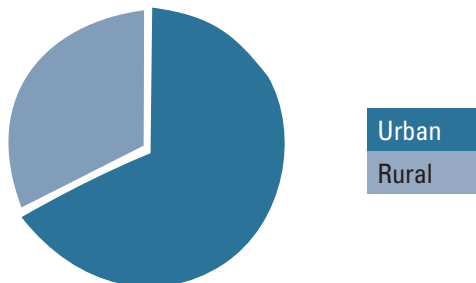
- 481 identified themselves as male (77.5%)
- 133 identified themselves as female (21.4%)



Some responses were received from couples and some did not answer the question.

Which area do you live in?

Urban	Rural
419 (67.5%)	200 (32.2%)



Of the 587 people (94.6%) who said they supported the dam:

- 82 independently indicated that they saw the project as urgent and that they wanted WWAC to progress the project without delay.
- The majority of these respondents indicated they were well-informed about the project. However there were some for whom this survey and newsletter was their first information about the project and they endorsed it on the basis of the information they received.
- 2 said they had not previously been aware of a water shortage and now support the project.
- 7 said they thought the dam should be bigger.

Public access / recreation

The second largest number of individual comments (63) were received about public access and a wide range of comments were made including:

- develop the rowing facility
- make the lake a tourist attraction
- enhance fishing on the lake
- enhance foot access to DOC estate
- recreational opportunities would add value to the project and make it an asset for all
- if public money is being used public access must be guaranteed
- develop mountain bike/ foot tracks into DOC land
- 2 people said they did not want public access to the lake because of increased traffic in the Lee Valley.

Financial information – who will pay

- 53 people independently raised questions about the cost, who will pay, or said they wanted more financial information.
- A further 22 people independently said they were concerned about the potential increase to rates, particularly for urban Richmond residents.
- There was a perception that only rural people will benefit, and clear support for 'user pays'
- 1 person said they thought commercial investment in the project should be explored
- 5 people said they thought the Government should contribute financially

Hydroelectricity generation

- 35 people said they wanted hydro electricity generation incorporated into the design

Ownership and governance

- 16 people stated the project must remain in public ownership
- 3 also said it should be not-for-profit
- 4 people saw Nelson City Council's involvement as negative, with various comments against amalgamation

WWAC

- 9 people independently said they thought the WWAC committee was doing a great job
- 1 person commended the committee for being inclusive of DOC, iwi and Fish and Game representatives

Respondents who said No they did not support progressing the dam

There were a total of 18 people who said they did not support the dam progressing.

Rural	Urban	Not stated
1	13	4

- 2 people in this group said water should be piped from Nelson Lakes
- 3 gave no reason for their position
- 4 were concerned about cost / rates burden / who will pay
- 2 were concerned the Lee River would be degraded (like the Maitai)
- 1 raised concerns about property values and insurance premiums in the flood path

Respondents who said they Did Not Know whether they supported progressing the dam

15 people (2.4%) said they did not know if they supported the dam progressing:

- 3 said they probably would support the dam but would like more information
- 5 said they had enough information but still didn't know whether they supported the project or not
- 8 required more information before making a decision

General comments / questions raised

- There is widespread belief that urban people will receive no benefit from this water augmentation project. “Richmond ratepayers subsidising large water users.”
- Why has water been over-allocated and how did that happen?
- Would like to access Tonkin and Taylor geotechnical report
- What other alternatives have been explored; why was the Lee chosen?
- Safety of dam / earthquake risk
- Revegetation around dam site desirable
- Effect of dam on downstream recreation
- Cost - benefit analysis required
- Is water potable?
- Effect on Waimea East Irrigation users – will they pay twice?
- Quality of the water in the dam
- Availability of water for rural fire fighting
- Comparisons with Maitai – size, water quality issues, downstream issues, sedimentation
- How will water be allocated?
- Population growth, urban sprawl should be better managed
- Water conservation initiatives should be encouraged – collecting rain water etc
- Will there be saltwater intrusion into delta as a result of the dam and changed river flows?



Project manager Joseph Thomas checks flow meter upstream.

Conclusion

Despite not knowing how much this project is going to cost, or how the cost will be borne, this survey shows a very clear mandate for WWAC to progress the Lee Dam and develop a model for ownership and governance.

A significant number of respondents to this survey (274 people or 44.1%) simply ticked the boxes showing they were: well informed, supported the dam and had no environmental, social or economic concerns, without commenting further.

The results show a high level of confidence in the work undertaken by WWAC and a high level of understanding of the issues being addressed.

Recommendations

The responses have identified that the issue of public access and recreational opportunities on and around the lake will require careful management and communication.

Concrete financial information is required for people to make an informed judgment on this project. There is some concern about the cost to ratepayers and water users and managing those costs going forward is a major challenge for WWAC. The responses suggest a large majority of people understand the need to act now for the future and for them managing the cost fairly is likely to be more important than the actual dollar figure. A cost/benefit analysis would be useful.

There is a perception that urban people will not benefit from this water augmentation project which indicates the wider economic and environmental benefits need to be communicated, along with the direct benefit to urban water users.

People still think that piping water from Lake Rotoiti is an option and that the Lee is the only area that has been given serious consideration for placement of a dam. The responses in general have reiterated the need to keep repeating information from earlier in the investigation and the need for communicating more regularly with the wider (Richmond) group.

Several respondents have indicated they would like information in specific areas, or to be involved with this project in some way. It would have been useful to capture their contact details in the survey. To that end it would be useful to give people who attend the public meetings the option to sign up for the regular WWAC updates if they are not in the area already receiving them.