

Mahaanui Area – Whitebait Connection update – 23 August 2012

After a long absence, Cody Frewin returned to Mahaanui Area Office. Within hours the word had gotten out to local schools and the requests for her time started flooding in.

One school's request stood out from the others. Seven Oaks School might not have the largest school roll in Christchurch, but what it lacks in numbers it more than makes up for in passion. This is a school on the move. Literally.

In 2014 the school will take up its new residence on 10 acres of land in Halswell, and will provide an alternative education option for new entrants to Y13 students. As part of their philosophy the school wants to create an eco-friendly environment for its staff and students, and for native plants and animals. But they didn't know where to begin.

Enter Cody. The school asked her for help to see what they could do with the area. Cody's suggestion went wider than just planting some trees. She knew the site was bare farmland that had been grazed by cows. She knew the stream was likely to be polluted and hold minimal aquatic life. She knew that this would be an excellent opportunity for the school to be involved in enhancement of not just the look of the area, but actually provide an ecosystem more appropriate for freshwater life and create wider biodiversity.



Cody suggested the school embark on an ongoing research project, starting immediately. The Y7 students at the school each year would undertake freshwater monitoring with the hope that over time the biodiversity in the stream would improve significantly.

Step one: Class talk to students to get them thinking about what they should find in an ideal stream.

Step two: Trip to the stream to undertake freshwater monitoring. What did they find? Snails, worms and water-boatmen. That's it. They also found that the stream really ponded, had a deep layer of silty sediment, no riparian margin (unless you count the lone gorse bush) and it was full of litter – despite being in the middle of a paddock.



Step three: Field trip to DOC Motukarara nursery to meet with nursery staff there to discuss appropriate plants for their area. They learned about eco-sourced seed collection, how to sow seed, how to prick out, how to do successive planting and what types of plants would suit their stream.

Step four and beyond... The students are currently working on their restoration planting plan, they are writing up their findings so that the stream study can be added to over the years, they are cleaning out the green house at their school and growing on their own eco-sourced seeds so that they can provide some of the plants themselves... they are going to be very busy!

