



□ Pongaroa Station will eventually have 40-50,000 plants growing along the Whangawehi River as a result of the Whangawehi Catchment Management group long-term restoration project.

□ People of all ages attended the Whangawehi planting weekend with 5000 plants put in the ground as a result of their efforts.

Kotuku good sign for Whangawehi planting

ANOTHER stage in the gradual restoration of the Whangawehi River margins was ticked off in the weekend. It was a day of laughter and children playing, bringing the valley to life said one of the helpers, Sophie Dods.

"There we are planting new life into the environment and it's in the cycle of life and regeneration — so precious."

After seeing a kotuku on Saturday, she said they were doing the right thing.

"Yesterday was beautiful and the place was at peace." The Whangawehi Catchment Management group's restoration programme saw 1.5km of river bank planted in a variety of native plants at the weekend. Around 25 people participated with 5000 plants ranging from kowhai, grasses, akeake, hebes, flaxes, manuka and totara planted in the prepared area.

Contractors were continuing the planting towards the Whangawehi River bridge this week with another 40,000 plants on both sides of the river going in.

Pongaroa Station manager Shane Mildenhall said so far the plantings further up the river on the Pat O'Brien property had achieved a 90 percent survival rate.

Mr Mildenhall has culled around 350 goats over three years and trapped and monitored pests in preparation for the winter planting. Long-term he hopes they can make the whole peninsula pest free.

Regional and local councils have helped with the funding along with the Department of Conservation and the New Zealand Lotteries Commission, with one side of the river fencing financed by Pongaroa Station owner Sir Michael Fay.

The Pongaroa Station manager said group member Nick

Caviale's work liaising and completing funding applications for the group, finding quotes from different companies and liaising with farm owners, brought it all together.

"There's a lot of preparation work going into this kind of day with Tahuru Marae providing accommodation and Pongaroa supplying meat for the weekend."

Te Mahia School had also planted around 500 plants in the bridge area, he said.

After the planting had finished local kaumatua Pera Edwards gave a history of the management group and the memorandum of understanding signed at Tahuru Marae with the local and regional councils.

Organisers of the planting day said they had made phenomenal progress and welcomed more help for next winter's planting.