



□ On tour, from left, are tour guide Arthur Bowen, Malcolm Smith from the Department of Conservation, Pat O'Brien, John Ross, Ali Delaney and her family.

Summer walking tour takes next step for Whangawehi

GUIDED walks through the Whangawehi Catchment Group's unique environment will be offered this summer.

The group will open its gates to locals and tourists offering a series of free guided walks.

Project co-ordinator for the group Nicolas Caviale-Delzescaux said they wanted to update the community and share the progress made so far, as well as investigate the potential for a future walking track similar to the Banks Peninsula walkway, which crosses over its own catchment, in the South Island.

The walking tour will commence at the headwaters of the Whangawehi river, which takes in expansive views of Mahia Peninsula, before heading down through the diverse vegetation of the forest.

It will continue through a series of farms and finish at the river mouth of the Whangawehi stream.

The walk is approximately 12 kilometres from start to finish, over private land which landowners have agreed to open for this occasion.

Throughout the walk the guide will talk in-depth about the restoration

project which has been ongoing over the past two years — including its latest blue penguin project — and give an interpretation of the cultural sites and historic heritage of the catchment.

Members of the group will also have a display stall at the upcoming summer Mahia markets, and will be holding a number of presentations at the Mokotahi Hall.

These activities will promote the work they are doing and are aimed at developing stronger links with and support from the community.

Mr Caviale-Delzescaux said at each event there would be discussions around a long-term goal of starting a walking/mountain biking track through the catchment, planned for inclusion in a wider network of national walking tracks and cultural experiences.

"If successful, these events could develop opportunities for low-impact, high-value tourism, potentially involving walking and mountain biking, overnight stays through the area, with links to places that foster cultural experiences."