

Mahia group wins award

Whangawehi Catchment Group has scooped the supreme winner of the Green Ribbon Awards.

The award was presented at a ceremony last night by the Minister for the Environment Dr Nick Smith and Minister for Conservation Maggie Barry.

The group has been passionate about making a difference to the Whangawehi catchment on the Mahia Peninsula since 2011.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council is just one organisation involved with the group, providing the support of a project manager.

Council chairman Rex Graham says: "I'm absolutely delighted for them and it could not go to a more deserving group. I am not surprised they have won this prestigious award, because this is such a great

community initiative that we would like to see happen in other areas.

"This success is due to an active community driving a project that the rest of us can get behind, and it is a model for the future."

The group has, through strategic planning and on-the-ground efforts, successfully improved water quality in the river by 15 per cent. They achieved a significant reduction in faecal contamination and the Whangawehi is the only river in Hawke's Bay improving at that level.

The Whangawehi Catchment Management Group includes local land-owners, local authorities, several marae, the Department of Conservation, a forestry company, the Mahia Maori Committee and Mahia School.

"They all work together to better manage land and water in the catchment.

Despite its relatively remote location on Mahia Peninsula, the group has harnessed the energy of hundreds of volunteers from across the region and the world who have helped with planting along the river and in the catchment over the past six years.

Environmental education involving local schools, residents and volunteers has been an important part of the group's focus.

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