

# Whangawehi signing milestone

THE Whangawehi Catchment Management Group continues to go from strength to strength undertaking the third signing of a Memorandum of Understanding document.

The agreement is between the group, Hawke's Bay Regional Council, Wairoa District Council and Sir Michael Fay — nationally-recognised merchant banker, who owns Pongaroa Station on Mahia Peninsula.

Sir Michael said he loved the place, and "the fishing, too!" "It's an amazing great community and this sort of work is exciting because the land and the river are coming into good health again."

Sir Michael spoke at length about his commitment to environmental concerns and expressed his delight at being involved.

The signing, at Tuahururu Marae, was also open to other marae and landowners of the award-winning group who wanted to sign the document.

The ceremony followed a recent visit by Minister for Environment Nick Smith, upon which a financial boost of \$89,700 from the Community Environment Fund was granted for the restoration of the Whangawehi stream.

Opening the formalities, Wairoa District Council's engineering manager and Whangawehi group chair Jamie Cox said it was a tremendous milestone to get to the third signing, and the group valued the signatories that have come forward.

Mr Cox acknowledged tangata whenua and their

support year after year. A special mention was made to the group's founding member Kathleen Mato, who Mr Cox described as a "powerhouse".

He also acknowledged kua Pauline Tangiora and group secretary Raellen Te Nahu.

Mr Cox said while their initial goal was 200,000 plants they were also working on pest management and knocking down the goat population.

He said the group is developing momentum and has high hopes for the future, with aspirational long-term goals based on community values.

"We expect momentum to grow and grow. Based on community values, we hope a lot will come of it and enrich the economy and community of Mahia and wider areas of the Wairoa district."

"Whangawehi was a food bowl once and we hope to restore it to its former self."

Mr Cox paid tribute to group project co-ordinator Nick Caviale-Delzescaux who he said was a key reason for the success of the group.

Mr Caviale-Delzescaux thanked the committee and all involved, and addressing the crowd said "you are the real springs of this project".

"It's just the beginning — we have some good projects coming up and we want to bring people to the site to share."

Hawke's Bay Regional Council chairman Fenton Wilson said the work the group was doing had national significance and hinted that



□ The group who gathered for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding Document between Hawke's Bay Regional Council, Wairoa District Council and Michael Fay, landowner in the Whangawehi catchment. The other three pairs of landowners also signed the document after an official powhiri at Tuahuru Marae.

the strategies being used could be implemented throughout the country.

Local landowners and farmers Pat and Sue O'Brien, at Taharoa Station, whose property the Whangawehi river runs through, said the environmental work done on their property would not have been done without the group.

"The financial support

has been significant and the work wouldn't have been possible without the group's contribution."

Mr Cox praised the O'Briens, saying they had been great for the group.

Landowners and signatories Richard and Hannah Coop, and Mark and Katie Bowen addressed those gathered and expressed how pleased they

were to be part of the restorative project.

The community-inspired restoration programme along the Whangawehi River will ultimately see 200,000 trees planted along its riparian zone and the return of rich bird and fish life.

The group has planted 60,000 trees since signing its first Memorandum of Understanding in July 2011.



□ ABOVE LEFT: Mayor Craig Little, landowner Sir Michael Fay and Hawke's Bay regional council chairman Fenton Wilson.

□ ABOVE: Chairman of Rongomaiwahine Iwi Trust Pera Edwards, left, with kaumata of Tuahuru Marae Peter Nielsen and Tommy Hema.



□ LEFT: Signatories Richard and Hannah Coop, with Wikitoria Tena Te Nahu and project co-ordinator Nick Caviale-Delzescaux, who was honoured for his significant contribution to the project in an address by Wairoa District Council's Jamie Cox.