

Trust makes grants to help boat ramp and conservation projects

SUPPORT for the Mahia community from the Eastern and Central Community Trust will help two significant projects, with general manager Jonathan Bell saying both benefit the small coastal community and add to environmental care.

The Mahia Boating and Fishing Club has received \$10,000 towards the cost of building a new boat ramp at Whangawehi and the Whangawehi Catchment Management Group received \$4000 for its school education programmes.

For boaties setting off from Mahia, repairs to the Whangawehi ramp were becoming urgent, said club treasurer Joe Hedley.

“The ramp was built more than 20 years ago and the concrete is breaking up, making it difficult for boats to launch safely,” he said.

It is the only boat ramp between Gisborne and Napier, providing an important launching facility for recreational boaties and rescue vessels.

Other boats launched directly off the beach around the other side of Mahia Peninsula, but there was no properly-formed ramp and rescue boats would need to travel around Portland Island to respond to any distress callouts.

Mr Hedley, who was a regular fundraiser in Mahia for community facilities, said the cost of concreting the Whangawehi ramp was approximately \$27,000 and, unless additional funding could be found, the work might have to be done in stages.

There was also a fundraising campaign under way to build retaining walls around the ramp to help protect the carpark and launch area from erosion, which was

pay for equipment and bus hire when Te Mahia School students head outdoors on field trips.

Whangawehi Catchment Management Group secretary Rae Te Nahu said the school children were learning the importance of protecting the quality of the water in streams that flow into the Whangawehi River on the way to the ocean.

“In this technological age, children don’t always get such a hands-on experience. Te Mahia children are blessed to have this opportunity,” she said.

Project co-ordinator Nick Caviale said involving the school’s 54 students gave them a better understanding of the management group’s work.

“The kids love being involved and there is a tremendous transfer of knowledge from the older people — it’s quite a buzz,” he said.

“We’re grateful for the community trust funding as it’s often difficult to find the money for such school programmes, but this one also reaches out into families and the knowledge learned will be a powerful tool in the long-term.”

The children learn how stream water is monitored and about water quality and ecology in a way that matched the school environmental curriculum.

The management group was formed in 2011 in response to water quality concerns and has been working to protect the environment since 2013. Some 200 native trees have been planted along the river bank in the past year. Another 16,000 trees have been planted on farmland upstream from the Whangawehi Bridge and the group planned another 30,000 this year.

The funding will help two very active community groups.