

Group plants 135,000 natives

Catchment has dug deep with 65,000 natives

native plants since the group was

laborative approach ty concerns over the he then-proposed nt system.

red desire to create to protect and l, physical, cultural ces of the catchment gawehi Awa to its ion flowing into the ure generations. r eight kilometres tired and is now ed area will

eventually be covenanted, cumulating a total of 42 hectares. Five hectares of this is bush block.

Planting days have been well supported and the project is now entering an active monitoring and maintenance phase including release spraying,

weed control and site maintenance. The pest control programme is also gaining momentum.

The implementation of a goat control strategy is working well and so far 5000 goats have been culled to the benefit of the native plants. The group is now managing 350 traps.

Last month consultants John Cheyne and Hans Rook visited Whangawehi to

assess the work and provide expertise and advice on how to better manage the protected ecosystems and increase their biodiversity. Guidance was given on water management in the wetlands in order to create more favourable habitats for wetland species. Water levels and diverse margins or ecotones are key to the success.

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Mahia man Arthur Bowen, cultural health coordinator carried out a lot of water testing and observed a lot of changes along the river.

"The most encouraging observation was a school of approximately 200

inanga in one pool," said Mr Bowen.

"Whitebait were observed in the Mangatupae Stream as well, which

shows the project is working.

"The river banks are also starting to grow cover which provides protection for the white bait and tuna and helps to lower water temperature. There is also abundant crops of water cress. Water clarity was extremely good with no algae growth observed yet," said Mr Bowen.

A whare to provide shelter for people who frequent the area along the awa is near completion and includes a collection of 12 rare specimen of flax.

The idea is to provide a high quality supply of different types of flaxes and develop with the community, weaving activities around the whare.

A positive spin off is Te Mahia School's Enviro School Programme where students have established 600 native plants and have laid out blue penguin nesting boxes.