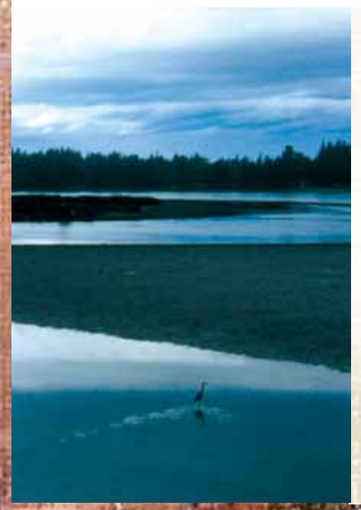
The Styx
Pūrākaunui
April 2006 Issue 11

Progress on the Styx Project

The 40 year vision for the Styx catchment commenced in 2000. Now 6 years later, it is appropriate to stand back and look at what has been accomplished in the intervening years. Much has been achieved and the aim of this newsletter is to report on some of the highlights relating to this exciting project.



Developing a Vision

The first Styx Newsletter, published in July 1999, reported on the initial steps taken towards developing a long term plan for the Styx catchment when over 4,000 people turned out on a sunny day to Spencer Park to attend the Styx Happening. That day many gained a new perspective of the area as they were able to view the river from helicopter, army truck or Clydesdale drawn wagon.

Following two years of extensive community consultation and participation via workshops, focus groups and meetings, by the turn of the century a series of 5 inter-related visions for the Styx had evolved. These visions are outlined in a book given the rather lengthy title of "Vision 2000 - 2040 The Styx Waterways, Wetlands and Surface Water, Community Planning for the Future", copies of which are still available at local libraries. The 5 visions met with approval by both Christchurch City Council and the community, were officially adopted, and the long process of implementation began.

As so much has happened in the Styx catchment since the year 2000 it is probably timely to remind ourselves of these 5 inter-related visions.

Vision 1 To achieve a viable Springfed River Ecosystem
Vision 2 To create a "Source to Sea Experience"
Vision 3 To develop a "Living Laboratory"
Vision 4 To establish "The Styx" as a place to be
Vision 5 To foster "Partnerships"

Vision 2

The fulfilment of Vision 2 of a source to sea experience would, when achieved, be a first for any urban river in New Zealand. This would enable people to experience and learn about the river system, through the development of a continuous walkway along its length. Wildlife Reserves do not always need to be sited in far away places, inaccessible to all but the most avid of trampers. Wild natural places within a city environment are equally important and valuable.

In recognition of this, over the past 5 years the Christchurch City Council has purchased several areas of land strategic to the fulfilment of a source to sea experience.

These purchases include a property in Lower Styx Road. In addition to providing an important link in the source to sea walkway it is anticipated that this property will become the headquarters for research and learning activities in the catchment. Developments are likely to include an outdoor classroom, a fully equipped wet laboratory, and the provisions of space for community activities such as the drying and weaving of flax harvested from nearby Janet Stewart Reserve.

Vision 4

The objective of Vision 4 is to establish "The Styx" as a place to be through maintaining and enhancing the special character and identity of the area.

As Kevin Lynch in his book entitled 'The Image of a City' writes, "A distinctive and legible environment has the potential to heighten a person's experienceand understanding of a place."

A design philosophy for the Styx catchment therefore has evolved from a growing understanding of its landscape character.

For example, the word "Styx" originates from the word "sticks", that were used to guide people across the swampy areas in the catchment. It also refers to the name of the river in Greek mythology that the souls of the dead had to cross when travelling from this world to the next. Today this association is being highlighted by a series of markers along the Styx River based on the theme "sticks".

This association is also being recognised in the design of new bridges throughout the catchment.

Visual clues provide an indication about location, activity and land use. In times past Maori used cabbage trees as landmarks to guide them across the Canterbury Plains. Along the Styx River they are now being used in formal grid patterns to highlight entrances to reserves that contain carparks.

There are also many clues throughout the Styx catchment to suggest that historically this has been a place of rich food harvesting. This association with the land is acknowledged in Radcliffe Road where the placement of a 'kete' highlights the food harvesting aspect of the area cleverly combining it with the "sticks" theme.

As a Sunday afternoon drive through the catchment will show there are now many other examples where the stories of the land are being told. This is not as a result of a happy accident but has occurred through the development and use of a carefully thought through and planned design approach.

Bridge and artwork, upper Styx River near Crofton Rd

It is not possible in this newsletter to highlight all the achievements and projects that have contributed over the past 5 years to the fulfilment of the Styx Vision. Further information however, including monitoring results, research papers and other relevant material can be viewed on the website, **www.thestyx.org.nz**

EDITORIAL CONTACT

The Greenspace Unit of the Christchurch City Council produces this Styx Newsletter as a service to the community.

The newsletter is distributed as widely as possible through libraries, Service Centres and other such outlets. If you would like to receive a personal copy and you live in Christchurch, it can be mailed directly to you. Back copies can also be viewed on the Styx website at www.thestyx.org.nz.

If you have any suggestions, comments, or enquiries regarding subjects mentioned in the newsletter, please contact:

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Kaputone Stream

Vision 3

Possibly the most significant achievement of the past 6 years has been the progress made in achieving Vision 3. This Vision, to develop a "Living Laboratory", is based on the concept that the total Styx catchment becomes a place of learning and research. This concept was first envisioned by one of NZ's leading botanists, Dr Leonard Cockayne (1855 - 1934) who lived and conducted experiments and research at his property Dilcoosha, in Highsted Road area.

Members of the Styx Living Laboratory Trust began informally working together early in 2001. Their self imposed and voluntary role is to further research and learning within the catchment. Now incorporated as a Charitable Trust their achievements to date include:

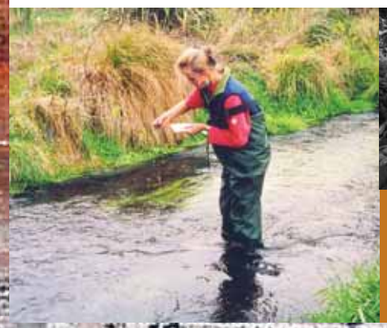
- The formation and development of volunteer Community Monitoring Programmes
- Providing equipment (eg microscope) for use by the community monitoring groups
- Developing and monitoring planting trials
- Developing a Research Programme under the direction of Dr Eric Scott
- Providing a Research Scholarship in conjunction with Lincoln University
- Instigated Annual Styx Living Laboratory Address with guest lecturer
- Fund raising for the provision of various structures (eg predator proof fence, viewing platform) throughout the catchment

Lesley Keast, Chair of the Trust says,
"We have achieved much, but we cannot rest.
The way ahead involves much planning, energy and commitment."

Vision 1

In order to achieve a viable springfed river system, which is the objective of Vision 1, knowledge of the catchment, both past and present, is essential. Historically the collection of baseline data has been spasmodic and selective. However, such data that does exist, when coupled with anecdotal information provided by local residents, is sufficient to enable some understanding of the historic condition of the river, its springs, and the ecology of the area.

The formation of the Styx Living Laboratory Charitable Trust in 2003 has lead to the regular and accurate collection and recording of information, such as invertebrates, water quality, and river status (flow). By comparing historic and current data it is possible to gain an understanding of the changes, both significant and subtle, that are taking place. Such information is invaluable when management decisions affecting the river and its ecosystem need to be made.



Volunteer Victor Brown, co-ordinates the community monitoring programmes. These include monitoring the water quality, water status (flow) and invertebrates. Delicate invertebrates cannot live in a polluted environment so the monitoring of invertebrates acts as an indicator to the health of the waterway.

Victor says he was drawn to the monitoring programmes because, *"Christchurch, like our climate, is constantly changing; and to ensure the beauty of our waterways and natural environment, we need to be vigilant. Once it is gone, there is no getting it back."*

Universities Utilise the Styx catchment as a learning resource

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

Although Maria Lange lives in the Avon catchment, her postgraduate studies at Lincoln University have resulted in her becoming well versed in environmental management issues relating to the Styx River. As part of her 2 year study towards a Master's Degree, one of the assignments Maria and her classmates were given was a hypothetical scenario to scope out the range of adverse effects on the environment should a previously disused bore be reactivated.

Maria's lecturer Leo Fietje, whose own work with Environment Canterbury provides him with an assortment of real life situations, explains that in setting papers he tries to select practical scenarios that his students are likely to face when they enter the workforce.

Maria's paper begins by explaining that "scoping is a process for identifying and assigning priority to the issues associated with a proposed action."

In the balance of her 24 page dissertation Maria goes on to examine what effects reactivating this bore would have on the water table, on nearby rivers and streams, and on other bores in the area.

Maria says she learnt two lessons from this exercise. Firstly, that no one technique provided a perfect description of all the likely environmental impacts that re-opening the bore would have; and secondly, the importance of designing an approach that utilises more than one scoping method.

When asked what he gets out of teaching this subject at Lincoln University, Leo Fietje responds, *"We have made a lot of mistakes in the past: as long as we learnt from them, that was the cost. Investing in these graduates means that they are upskilled.*

For me personally what I get out of it is the satisfaction of knowing that we will see better impact assessments done, which will lead to more informed decision making."

CANTERBURY UNIVERSITY

Third year geography students at Canterbury University also used the Styx catchment as the subject for one of their assignments during 2005.

The resulting report entitled "The Impact of Residential Development on Water Quality in Kaputone Stream" added another dimension to the already intense work (both research and remedial) being undertaken to address the loss of flow in this stream. Regular readers of the Styx Newsletter may remember that "The Case of the Disappearing Stream" was the lead story in the last Styx Newsletter issued in July 2005.

Clean up the Styx day

Vision 5

Vision 5 focuses on the need to foster "Partnerships" and notes that this will be achieved through raising the quality of relationships and moving forward together.

With a project the size and extent of the Styx it is obvious that no one person, or group, can work in isolation within the catchment. The need to work co-operatively has led to links being formed between many diverse organisations, companies and individuals.

Some of these links have been formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding under which various organisations have agreed to work together. Currently signatories to this Agreement are the Styx Living Laboratory Trust, Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury, Landcare Research, Lincoln University, the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research commonly known as NIWA. It is anticipated that over time other organisations will also become signatories to this agreement.

Many links exist however, without the need for formal agreements. Some of the organisations that have contributed in various ways to the realisation of the 40 year Styx Vision include The Gama Foundation, Shirley Papanui Community Board, Foodstuffs Community Trust, Aquatic Ecology Ltd, Golder & Associates, and Willowbank Wildlife Reserve.

Individuals that have become involved in this project over the past 6 years through community planting days, Clean up the Styx events and community consultation are too numerous to count as they now number in the thousands. How they came to be involved however, is of little importance. What is important is that each in their own way has contributed to a common goal, that is, **Kia whakapai te whenua mō mātou nei uri: The ultimate outcome is to leave a legacy for those that follow**

Those who signed the memorandum - Richard Johnson (Environment Canterbury), Dr. Clive Howard-Williams (NIWA), Dr. Charles Eason (Landcare Research), Gary Moore (on behalf of the Christchurch City Council), Dr. Roger Field (Lincoln University) and Lesley Keast (Chairperson of the Styx Living Laboratory Trust)