

# WAIRARAPA: TU TANGATA WHENUA

**That the Lake Wairarapa wetlands and its surrounds are clean, healthy, shining and alive.**

Lake Wairarapa is the largest lake and surrounding wetland area in the lower North Island. It is located beside the Remutakas on the south eastern side of the Wairarapa valley plain. From its northern most tip, just south of Featherston, the shallow lake extends southwest towards Lake Onoke and the coast. It is around eighteen kilometres long and six kilometres wide.

A taonga, Wairarapa Moana has been of great customary and spiritual importance as a place for gathering tuna (eels), waterfowl, raupo and flax for centuries. The seasonal blocking of the Lake Onoke outlet by the sandbar made it even more abundant as large numbers of fish congregated in its waters as a result.

The area has been recognised as a diverse, internationally significant habitat for native flora and fauna. It is a breeding, feeding and nesting ground for numerous bird species. It also supports rare and endangered native fish, including the longfin eel, as well as a number of threatened and regionally rare plants.

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# WAIRARAPA MOANA: A WEALTH OF STORIES

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**Beneath the glistening surface of Wairarapa Moana is a rich and turbulent history that continues to influence the region and its people today.**

It is the story of a revered taonga, an abundant natural food source for tangata whenua throughout the generations who have resided there.

It is the story of the fight for control of the lake that saw centuries of traditions and culture pitched against settler farmers' quest for pasture. It is the story of the gifting of the Moana by tangata whenua to the Crown in 1896, and how the conditions of that gift were not honoured, to the detriment of the lake and its wildlife.

It is the story of a priceless, internationally significant, habitat for rare and endangered flora and fauna, that has been threatened and continues to be threatened by farming, drainage and other practices on its shores.

It is the story of the 2010 Waitangi Tribunal Report which acknowledges the injustices suffered in the past.

It is the story of iwi, farmers and other stakeholders working together as kaitiaki (guardians) of the lake, to offer new hope for this priceless taonga and the people of the region.

