



WETLAND RESTORATION

A HANDBOOK FOR NEW ZEALAND
FRESHWATER SYSTEMS

EDITED BY:
MONICA PETERS AND
BEVERLEY CLARKSON

WETLAND LOSS COUNTRYWIDE OVER THE LAST 150 YEARS IS CALCULATED AT A STAGGERING 90%. MOST OF OUR MAJOR CITIES ARE BUILT ON WETLANDS – ESTUARIES HAVE BEEN RECLAIMED AND INLAND AREAS HEAVILY DRAINED TO SUPPORT A GROWING, LAND-HUNGRY POPULATION.

WETLAND LOSS CONTINUES TODAY. HOWEVER, FORWARD-THINKING INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITY GROUPS, SCHOOLS, AGENCY LAND MANAGERS, NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS AND ECOLOGISTS, ARE RESTORING WETLANDS FROM NORTHLAND TO SOUTHLAND. THE OBJECTIVES VARY WIDELY BETWEEN PROJECTS BUT THE OVERALL GOAL IS CLEAR: TO RETURN DEGRADED WETLANDS BACK TO WHAT THEY ONCE WERE – HEALTHY, LIVING ECOSYSTEMS. WETLAND RESTORATION: A HANDBOOK FOR NEW ZEALAND FRESHWATER SYSTEMS IS DESIGNED TO HELP ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

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Cover image: Lake Cameron restoration project, Waikato. Photo: Monica Peters, NZ Landcare Trust

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FOREWORD

RUUD KLEINPASTE AND TONY ROXBURGH

With a mere 10% of our original wetlands left, New Zealand is an unenviable world leader in wetland loss. We know that changing attitudes and land-use practices developed over several generations can be challenging, particularly if there is no clear path to the outcome desired or examples to follow. Further, change inevitably requires new skills, knowledge, and time to learn and apply that knowledge. Thankfully our attitudes have begun to change and we now understand that wetlands, those small springs, soaks, swamps, and the margins of rivers and streams and lakes, are nature's tools for maintaining water tables, filtering and recycling waste, pollutants, nutrients and sediment washed from the land. In spite of this, the majority of wetland remnants are highly degraded and the unique biota dependent on these ecosystems is under threat.

Wetland Restoration: A Handbook for New Zealand Freshwater Systems brings together expertise from specialists and groups actively engaged in restoring wetlands throughout the country. The Handbook builds on regionally based restoration guides and provides a detailed, comprehensive ecosystem approach towards understanding, protecting and enhancing our remaining wetlands. It is targeted at those who plan to, and those who already are making a difference to improving wetlands, and is written in a way that can easily be understood and, importantly, acted on.

The results, showcased using a diverse range of case studies, speak for themselves. The numbers of individual landowners, interest and conservation groups now restoring wetlands to capitalise on their natural attributes and applying more sustainable land-use practices are increasing. Now that we understand what we have lost, and what we can gain, perhaps New Zealand can become a world leader in wetland restoration. What is being achieved speaks well not only for the future of wetlands but also for the whole country as international pressures associated with climate change, reducing green house gases and conserving indigenous biodiversity drive change towards environmental improvement.



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