

Lake Maratoto Restoration



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Lake Maratoto is a 16ha peat lake located 10 km south of Hamilton City. The lake drains into Mystery Creek before flowing into the Waikato River. 46 ha of lake and surrounding wetland vegetation have been legally protected by a QEII National Trust Open Space Covenant since 1983.

The Lake and adjacent wetlands have a LENZ ranking of Acutely Threatened and Underprotected. They lie on the eastern side of the Rukuhia 'Swamp', a 6000-ha raised bog that has been extensively drained and developed for agriculture. The lake is the deepest (about 8m according to 2008 Waikato Regional Council data) and least modified of the 17 Waipa District peat lakes and is the only Waipa peat lake with water that has a pH lower than 7. Protecting and enhancing the water quality of the lake is important for the health and wellbeing of the adjacent wetlands and the wider Waikato River catchment.

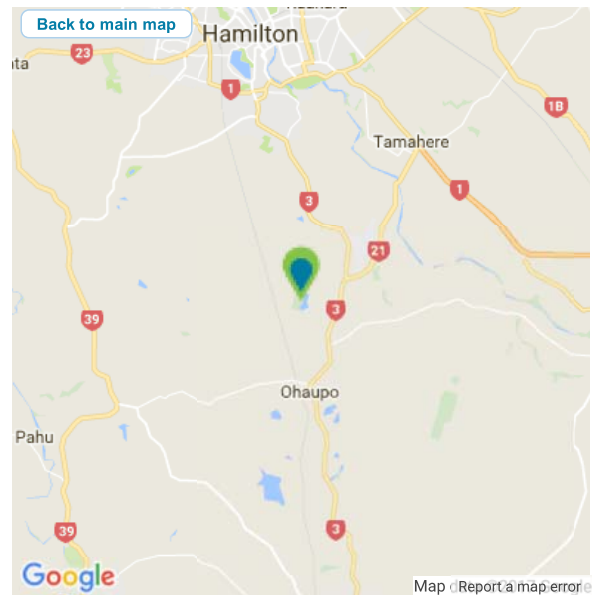
In contrast to other Waikato peat lakes, much of this immediate catchment is still covered in native peatland vegetation, scrub and shrubland. It has the largest area of associated wetland of any of the Waikato peat lakes. The vegetation on the Western boundary however, was destroyed by a fire in 1993. Since then the majority of the bared peat surface has been re-colonized by mānuka with the other dominant species now present being gorse and blackberry. As a result of ongoing drainage, the water table levels in Lake Maratoto have dropped markedly since 2001 and invasive exotic species are spreading further into the mānuka-dominated peatland.

This project seeks to protect, restore and enhance 2.1ha of the Western boundary by eradicating the invasive exotic species through spray and crushing work. A three year planting programme of eco-sourced natives will then ensure that this rare habitat is restored by adding a dense, tall vegetation cover shading exotic species, protecting the remnant from the prevailing westerly winds and reducing edge effects. The wetland filters sediments and nutrients from the lake, improving the water quality of the lake and thus the water quality of the Waikato River.

This project focuses on restoration of the Western boundary, upon the advice of a recent Landcare Research report, and builds on collaborative work undertaken since 2008 which had focused primarily on restoration of the Eastern boundary. At that time the Landowners fenced off the block and began undertaking pest control. Weed spraying, gorse crushing and the planting of many native species have been achieved with the support of many partners including the Waikato Regional Council, NZ Conservation Volunteers, the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust and Catchment Care.

This is a Waikato River Authority funded project (WRA 14-032).

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