

# “If we look after the water from the mountains to sea, it will look after us”

This year, more than 215 Hauraki/Coromandel region students, along with parents and teachers, completed the Experiencing Marine Reserves (EMR) programme. The schools involved were Harataunga, Coroglen, Moanataiari, Te Renega and Whangamata Area School.

The focus of the EMR programme is to provide quality education opportunities about, increase awareness of, and encourage action and support for marine conservation in New Zealand.

Whitianga-based Amber Boyd, the local EMR programme coordinator, provides guidance, direction, and coordination of classroom exercises and field trips to the Te Whanganui-A-Hei Marine Reserve. The concept of EMR is to engage schools and communities by providing the equipment and expertise for a hands-on learning experience in the ocean.

The EMR programme in the Hauraki/Coromandel region falls under the umbrella of The Friends of Te Whanganui-A-Hei Marine Reserve Trust, the regional programme provider for the Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust. The slogan of the Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust is, “If we look after the water from the mountains to sea, it will look after us. It is our life force.”

The Friends of Te Whanganui-A-Hei Marine Reserve Trust provides wetsuits, masks, snorkels and fins for all the children and adults participating in the EMR programme.

“The students always have amazing comments about the EMR programme and are thrilled seeing kina, snapper and eagle rays, but we think the best was a comment that came from a boy, Diego, who said, ‘It was good seeing the fish in their natural environment and not just on my plate,’” says Amber.

The Friends of Te-Whanganui-A-Hei Marine

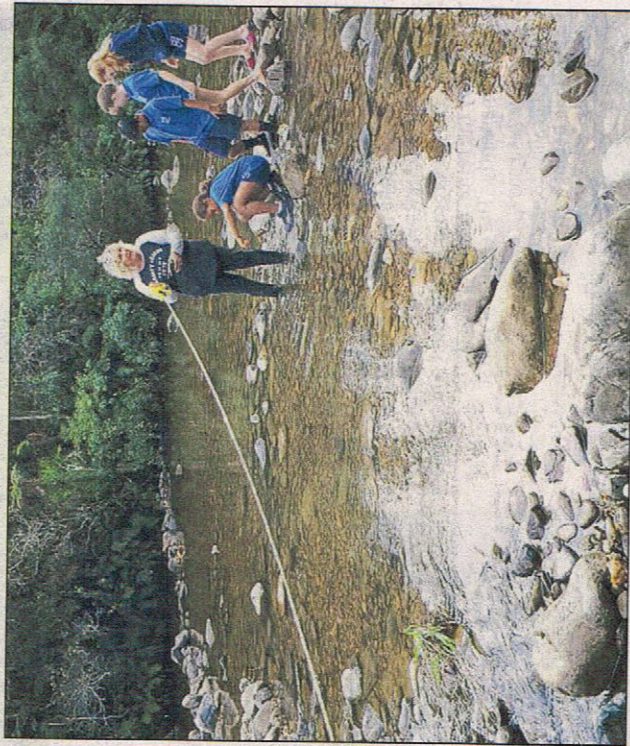


**Pub Charity funded this year 50 new wetsuits for use in the Experiencing Marine Reserves programme.**

Reserve Trust would like to thank Pub Charity for funding 50 new wetsuits and hoods this year. The Pub Charity partners in the Mercury Bay area are Frankies Sports Bar & Grill, The Coroglen Tavern and The Whitianga Hotel.

The trust is also excited to be offering for the first time in the Hauraki/Coromandel region the Mountain to Sea Trust’s tailored Whitebait Connection (WBC) programmes, which are also coordinated by Amber. The programmes focus on experiential learning about freshwater conservation and catchment restoration.

The WBC programmes utilise an inquiry framework of learning that enables students from early childhood to Year 8 to focus on



**MBAS students testing the water flow at Egan Park outside Whitianga as part of the Whitebait Connection programmes.**

a variety of freshwater topics best suited to their community. A biological and ecological approach is taken to look at all the life forms and their relationships in and around a stream. Living things like types of water bugs, species of freshwater fish and the abundance of plants in a particular catchment are investigated.

Like the EMR programme, students participating in the WBC programmes formulate an action plan that will enhance the freshwater environment in their community based on the knowledge they have gained during the programmes.

Mercury Bay Area School and Coromandel

Area School have already participated in the WBC programmes. There are a number of other schools in the Hauraki/Coromandel region scheduled to participate in the programmes in the next few months. The Friends of Te Whanganui-A-Hei Marine Reserve Trust would like to thank Waikato Regional Council’s Environmental Initiatives Fund for their three-year funding of the programmes. With this funding, the trust can offer the programmes at no cost to the participating schools.

For more information about the EMR and WBC programmes in the Hauraki/Coromandel region, please email Amber at [amber@emr.org.nz](mailto:amber@emr.org.nz).

