

# Water for Waimea ESR Report - Community Values and Water Management Options

## Executive Summary

### **Purpose of the report**

This report represents the coming together of two different research agendas; ESR's (Institute of Environmental Scientific Research) research programme Sustainable Development – The Human Dimension funded by the Foundation for Science, Research and Technology (FRST), and the Waimea Water Augmentation Committee's (WWAC) Feasibility Study into Water Augmentation partially funded by the Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF).

A memorandum of understanding was established between ESR, WWAC and the Tasman District Council (TDC) in which it was agreed that ESR would contribute to the Feasibility Study (exploring water storage options in the upper Wairoa and/or Lee catchment areas) through exploring and documenting community activities and values of the Waimea rivers and aquifers, as well as water management options more generally.

For ESR, involvement would enable meeting their broader research objectives of (i) improving participation of multiple agencies, communities and Maori in decision-making on water allocation; and (ii) evaluating existing and different methods of participation.

### **Introduction and Background**

Recent studies on water availability on the Waimea Plains indicate that the area is acutely water short, with water resources over-allocated for a 1:10 year drought security. Consequent water restrictions impact on irrigation and production ability for growers on the plains. Water restrictions also impact directly on consumers – households and businesses. The economic impacts are also passed on to the region more generally, affecting employment, and opportunities for economic growth in the region. Drought events also impact on the ecology of the river environment, as well as reducing opportunities for recreational activities in and around the rivers. Low flows affect the coastal springs, highly valued by iwi and the community, and importantly, aquifer recharge is reduced with increased risk of saltwater intrusion into the aquifer system. The Feasibility Study aims to explore not only the feasibility of water storage options in the Upper Lee/Wairoa catchments, but also how these options can enhance water availability - quality and quantity - for consumptive, environmental, aesthetic and community values downstream.

The ESR research team used a variety of different methods for community engagement for eliciting and documenting diverse community activities and values relating to the river and aquifer system of the Waimea plains. These included a literature review, individual interviews, focus groups, a family survey, and two workshops.