

Media Statement Date: 13 January 2021

Iwi set to monitor activity on the upper reaches of Whanganui River this summer to ensure the safety of river users.

Upper Whanganui River iwi, Ngāti Haua is concerned about the increased risk of accidents as canoe and jet boats share the same space on the river this summer.

Ngāti Haua Iwi Trust Chairperson Graham Bell said there has been at least one complaint raised with Maritime New Zealand by canoeists over incidents involving jet boats, and further complaints are expected.

“At the start of last summer, a Department of Conservation jetboat hit a canoeist, causing serious injury. The iwi is determined to do as much as possible to avoid similar incidents occurring again,” he said.

Ngāti Haua Iwi Trust and Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui are collaborating on a plan to promote respect for the Awa and moreover, respect for people through communication and proactive monitoring by the iwi of behaviours on the river.

Mr Bell said the monitoring plan is focused on operators using the reaches of the River from Taumarunui south, and will involve as a first step, a meeting called by the iwi with operators.

“As the iwi at place, we are showing leadership through a proactive plan to build relationships with operators in our rohe. We expect all operators to respect the rules in place to ensure the safety of all people.”

Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui Chairperson Sheena Maru said safety has always been a priority for the iwi and operators need to be working even more closely to ensure Covid-19 mitigation measures are being met.

“We want people to holiday closer to home this summer to reduce the potential for Covid transmission through our communities. Hopefully, more locals will utilise the outstanding natural assets of the Whanganui River,” she said.

“We are pleased to be partnering with Ngāti Haua in a plan to promote Covid safety as well as navigational safety in the upper reaches.”

The meeting with operators will be held online and called within the next fortnight to assess volumes and incidents, promote understanding of navigation rules as well as Covid risk guidelines, and to promote ongoing communication.

The plan will also see a small team of Ngāti Haua monitors moving around the upper reaches, constituting an ongoing visible presence for the iwi as they build relationships with operators

Graham Bell said their mana over these reaches means the iwi has a duty to actively care for the safety of people using the river within their rohe.

Through this plan, Ngāti Haua and Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui hope to partner with other hapū and iwi as the summer progresses.

Ends.

Enquiries may be directed to office@ngatangatatiaki.co.nz

Ngati Haua Iwi Trust was established in 2001 to coordinate and manage iwi affairs and to progress settlement of Ngati Haua Treaty of Waitangi claims.

Nga Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui is the post settlement entity of Whanganui Iwi responsible for implementation with hapū and iwi of Te Pa Auroa, the Te Awa Tupua framework for the Whanganui River legislated in 2017.