

# Paddlers going with the flow

By Laurel Stowell

laurel.stowell@wanganuichronicle.co.nz

## Whanganui River popular with 8500 on water last year

The crowds setting forth to paddle a remote stretch of the Whanganui River just keep growing, Department of Conservation services manager George Taylor says.

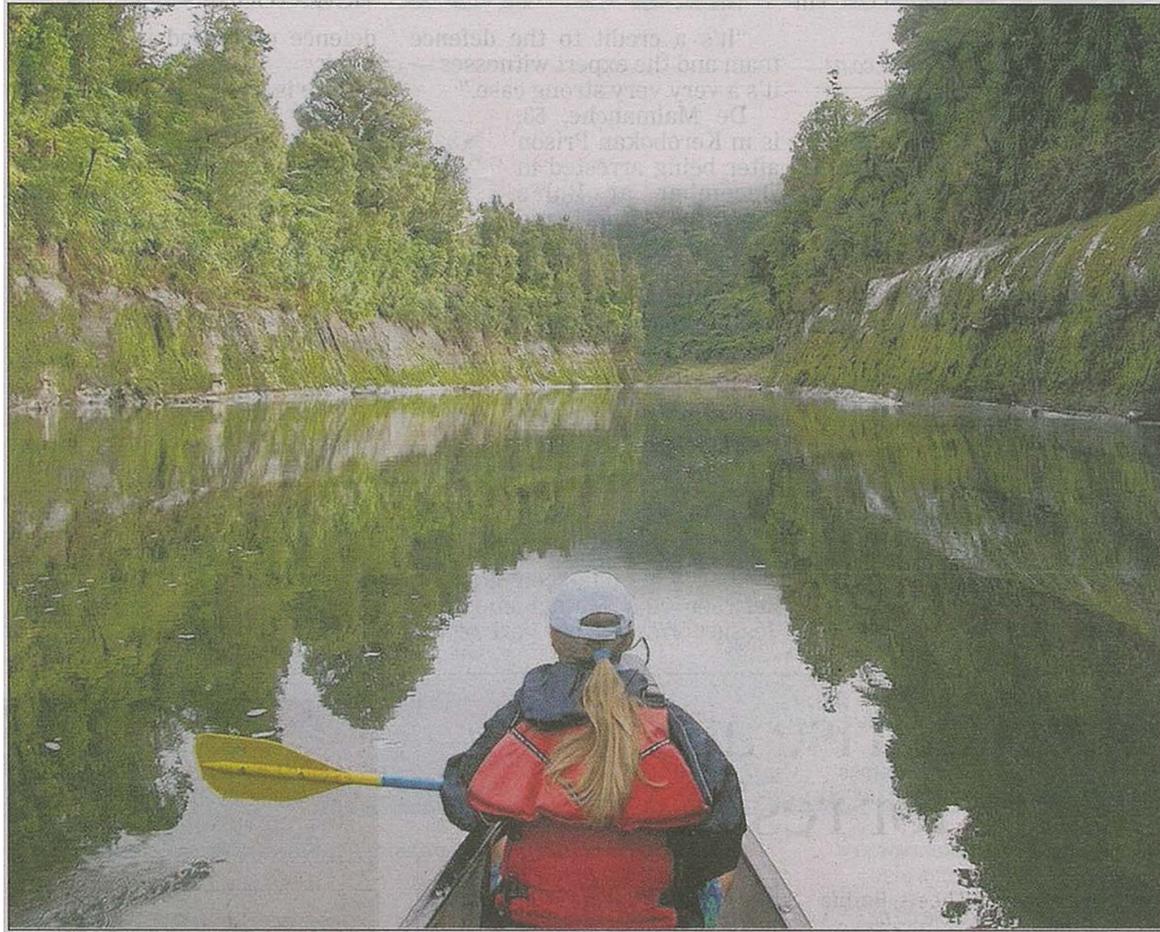
Numbers have doubled since he began work there in 2007 and the facilities are holding up, though toilets at John Coull Hut and Tieke Kainga have to be pumped out twice a season.

The Whanganui Journey now has an online booking system, and the number of people on the water can be counted.

Last summer season, which ended on April 30, nearly 8500 people made the trip — that was up 14 per cent on the previous season, which was up 15 per cent on the one before.

The booking system spaces people out, and Mr Taylor said canoeists still had the feeling of isolation. “Through our surveys, that’s what they enjoy the most, and, of course, they crave more cultural content.”

Cultural content comes from members of Te Whanau o Tieke, rostered to stay at Tieke Hut/Kainga during the summer. They sometimes hold powhiri to welcome arrivals. Improved interpretation panels also give



**POPULAR:** More and more people are paddling the Whanganui.

PHOTO/SUPPLIED 09062015WCSUPRIVER

cultural information.

Promotion by Air New Zealand could be a reason for the trip’s growing popularity. The airline sponsors all the “Great Walks” through articles in its *Kia Ora* magazine and videos shown on flights.

Another reason could be tourists being diverted to it,

while the nearby Tongariro Crossing was closed.

Numbers using the Mangapurua section of the Mountains to Sea/Nga Ara Tuhono cycleway are also increasing. They are harder to count, but were expected to be around 2500 last season. Most did that section as a day trip, Mr

Taylor said, and were picked up by jetboats at the Mangapurua Landing.

He has also noticed an increase in people walking the Te Araroa trail, which comes down the Retaruke Valley, over the Kaiwhakauka-Mangapurua Track to Pipiriki, Wanganui and then south along the coast.