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Rotary Club of Whakatu members Brian McGurk, front, Julie Bryant, Sue Lawrence and Karen Stade, put their backs into the project. (Photo: Martin de Ruyter, Nelson Mail, Stuff).

GROOM Creek was once a natural wetland feeding into the Maitai River but had been channelled away from its natural course in the past. Nelson City Council and community volunteers have worked to restore the area over the past four years.

Members of the Rotary Club of Whakatu, NZ, were among those who lent a hand to plant over 1500 of 40 different species of wetland and riparian plants around the creek. Among the species are hollow reeds, which are particularly good at stripping nitrates from the water, as well as long-lived canopy trees, some of which are specific to the Maitai Valley. Volunteers from the Friends of the Maitai, Forestry and Bird, and Council staff also joined in the community-based effort.

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“You’ve got the Brook Waimarama Sanctuary, that will almost be a seeding area for birds, and when that gets too full, they can migrate up the river and beyond,” Friends of Maitai member Tom Kennedy said.

Plants also benefit the river’s aquatic life, helping to provide the optimum

temperature required for native fish species.

“A lot of people don’t realise how sensitive the fish are,” Tom said. “Some of the native fish can’t survive in temperatures above 20-25°C, that’s why you do the planting along rivers to keep them shaded. It creates a healthier ecosystem.”

All planting and restoration work is now complete, and the area officially open to the public; the Maitai region is a popular trail and picnic spot.

In addition to their work at Groom Creek, members of the Rotary Club of Whakatu work with Nelson City Council to clean out Saltwater Creek at least once a year. This urban creek winds through the city and out into the Maitai River. Previously, it had become clogged with human rubbish, impacting both it and the Maitai River. With regular cleaning, the creek’s health has been restored, evidenced by the return of birdlife and fish. ●



Members of the Rotary Club of Whakatu have been putting in the hard yards to help bring the Groom Creek wetlands back to life. (Photo: Martin de Ruyter, Nelson Mail, Stuff).