

## Mueller Wetland - Taramakau

**Location:** Situated immediately inland from the coastal dune on the north side of the Taramakau River.

**Description:** An unnamed creek feeds into the wetland. Low lying hollows occur alongside parts of the creek, which enlarge the effective area of wetland. The creek provides very good habitat for fish, principally inanga, which makes up a large percentage of the whitebait catch in the springtime.

**Land tenure and use:** The wetland is situated within two areas of leasehold land. The area closest to the Taramakau River is administered by the Department of Conservation, the other is owned by the Mawhera Incorporation (see aerial photo). Both areas are used by the leaseholder Mr Mueller for grazing, except portions that have been fenced off in order to protect the creek and wetland from grazing. The creek bisects both areas of land, with grazing occurring on both sides.

**Background:** During early 2004 Mr Mueller took over the leases of both land areas. He contacted the Greymouth Area Office, DOC, about the possibility of obtaining assistance in order to carry out fencing of the wetland, because he wished to carry out ecological restoration work within it.

As a result the Department provided Mr Mueller with some of the materials required to construct an electric fence in order to exclude his cattle from the creek. This project has been completed. The Department has reduced Mr Mueller's licence fee in recognition of the area that has been retired from grazing from the DOC portion. The fence setback distance from the creek ranges from 3 m to about 100 m. A stock proof creek crossing has also been built.

Other work carried out:

- Planting several hundred lowland flax along the tidal portion, with the assistance of Army cadets – spring 2004.
- Poisoning of Crack willow – 2006
- Excavation of a small portion of the wetland in order to increase the area of water available as a fish habitat/spawning area

### Work to be done:

- Riparian plantings, including Arbor Day planting (June 07) of cabbage tree, kahikatea, *Carex secta* and *Coprosma repens* to complement existing flax plantings. These should help to replace exotic weeds that clog parts of the wetland and provide more cover for indigenous fish.
- Weed control – kill any remaining crack willow, as well as spraying gorse and blackberry.
- Obtain baseline data on water quality

### Recognition:

Mr Mueller's work is a very significant contribution to whitebait conservation and is a clear demonstration of how a single individual with minimal resources but a high level of commitment can make important conservation gains. It is hoped that his work will inspire other land holders to combine conservation with farming.

Written by Henk Stengs and edited by Rebecca Gibson, Greymouth Area office, DOC.