

Te reo o te KUKI AIRANI

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Lagoon dredging planned



A drone's eye-view of algae in Muri lagoon last year. The Mei Te Vai Ki Te Vai project is investigating ways to improve water quality. 1072419

DREDGING could soon begin in Muri lagoon as part of the Mei Te Vai Ki Te Vai water sanitation project, but only at the mouth of the Vai Te Renga stream near Pacific Resort.

The Mei Te Vai Ki Te Vai scheme, which began last year, has been tasked with improving the water quality of the lagoons in Rarotonga and Aitutaki, which is becoming a cause for concern.

Much of the focus has been on Muri, where large quantities of nutrients flowing into the sea are believed to be responsible for the unwanted presence of seaweed and algae in recent years.

There have been calls for widespread dredging at the mouth of Ngatangia harbour and other parts of the lagoon to

improve water circulation. But scientists say they are unwilling to follow that course of action until they know exactly what impact it will have.

However, they believe removing the sediment from the area in front of Pacific Resort could have a beneficial impact and will help protect the beach in front of the Nukupure sports field.

"The water flows in the lagoon are being studied now by coastal specialists, and a model will be built over the next few months. The model will be used to run simulations for dredging in a range of areas to predict how the pattern of water flow will respond," a Mei Te Vai Ki Te Vai newsletter said.

"To ensure all environmental effects can be properly ac-

counted for, our environmental experts will not commit to large scale dredging until the field work and modelling is complete.

"However we have developed a near-shore dredging plan to remove sediment from the mouth of the Vai Te Renga stream near Pacific Resort.

"We think this will improve the along-shore movement of the lagoon water, while helping to replenish sand on the eroded beach area at Nukupure sports field."

In December the project lodged an Environmental Impact Assessment for the work with National Environment Service and a copy of the application is available on the NES website.

■ JH

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