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EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF NEW ZEALAND  
GRAVEL-BED RIVERS LIKE THE LOWER  
MANAWATU RIVER FOR OUTRDOOR AND  
RESOURCE-BASE RECREATION

A thesis  
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## ABSTRACT

Recreation is a significant feature of the New Zealand lifestyle. New Zealanders love to participate in outdoor recreation, particularly those activities that utilise a natural environment or resource from which they derive much enjoyment and satisfaction. In New Zealand for example, rivers and lakes are valued for their aesthetic or amenity, recreational and cultural values. However, government authorities are known to adhere to strict environmental laws and regulations implemented through various governmental institutions to protect and conserve the country's natural and physical resources. This has somehow limited recreational opportunities in utilising a resource base like the Lower Manawatu River in an urban setting like Palmerston North which is chosen to be the case study for this study.

To examine current practice in recreation planning, authorities from the Palmerston North City Council and Horizons.mw staff were interviewed. Current plans, policies and strategies were also examined to determine how leisure and recreation issues are considered, particularly those which utilise the Manawatu River. River users and recreationists were also interviewed concerning their perceptions about the river as a recreational resource, and the leisure and recreation activities carried out along the Manawatu River. While local authorities and river users agree on the importance of the Manawatu River as a recreational resource, they however differ in both ideas and perceptions on how it is to be managed, improved and developed to provide a diversity of recreational opportunities.

Two approaches were examined to explore the potential of the lower Manawatu River as a place for outdoor and resource-base recreation: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Landscape Ecology. The ROS method's three distinctive components, namely activity, setting and experience can provide resource managers and planners with valuable information for better recreation planning, while Landscape Ecology demonstrates its usefulness in improving and enhancing the Lower Manawatu River's aesthetic and amenity values, along with biological diversity. However, the local authorities' focus attention on the Manawatu River's physical limitations have prevented further developments along the river. Both PNCC and Horizons.mw have not used other methods and approaches to integrate leisure and recreation in their planning and policy-making.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRL Plan	abbreviation for Regional Plan for Beds of Rivers and Lakes and Associated Activities
CMS	Conservation Management Strategies
DoC	Department of Conservation
LAC	Limits of Acceptable Change
LG Act	Local Government Act 1974
PNCC	Palmerston North City Council
RMA 1991	Resource Management Act 1991
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
VIM	Visitor Impact Management