

Tsunami hunt in Wairoa lagoon

by Andrew Ashton

A COMBINED team of United States and New Zealand scientists are trying to find out if Ohuia lagoon, near Wairoa, was once swamped by a tsunami.

As part of a United States research programme, scientists from the University of Southern Mississippi and GNS Science have been surveying various field sites along the East Coast looking for evidence of past tsunami and earthquake events, included sites in Wairoa.

GNS Science paleoecologist Ursula Cochrane said the lagoons east of Wairoa were known to contain a good archive of old earthquakes and tsunamis, but the focus was on more recent events.

“Finding evidence of large tsunamis and earthquakes that have hit the area prehistorically can help us learn more about what might happen in the future.”

Dr Cochrane said the team initially carried out a visual assessment of sediment layers and, if those were considered worthwhile, a sediment core was taken using a long tubular steel sediment corer. A core taken at Ohuia Lagoon was already of interest to the scientists.

The lagoon is located at the

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end of Ohuia Road and to get a core sample, the corer is pushed as far into the ground as possible. When it cannot go any further, it is pulled to the surface and the content analysed.

Assistant professor Jessica Pilarczyk, from the University of Southern Mississippi, said that before scientists could say for sure whether or not the cores provided evidence of past tsunami events, the recovered sediment needed to be analysed.

“We’ll take these cores back to the lab and look at them under the microscope, and do things like high-resolution grain size analysis, palaeontological analysis and geochemical analysis.

“While this analysis takes quite a bit of time, it will help provide evidence of past earthquakes and tsunamis. This information can then be used to understand and better plan for

future events.”

The work is part of a four-year US National Science Foundation-funded research programme called the SHIRE (Seismogenesis at Hikurangi Integrated Research Experiment), which ties in with a five-year Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment research programme called the Hikurangi Subduction Earthquakes and Slip Behaviour.

Further field work will be carried out early next year. Details of the work and the scientists’ progress will be available through the East Coast LAB (Life at the Boundary) website — www.eastcoastlab.org.nz

East Coast LAB is a collaborative project that brings together scientists, emergency managers, experts and stakeholders across the East Coast to make it easy and exciting to learn more about the natural hazards that can affect life on the East Coast.

CORE TEST: Dr Jessica Pilarczyk from the University of Southern Mississippi collects core samples from a lagoon in Wairoa to test for evidence of past tsunami events.

Picture supplied



Golden weather for holiday weekend . . . and beyond

WITH a myriad of events planned across the region for the upcoming long weekend, event organisers will be happy to know the Met Service is forecasting wall-to-wall sunshine across the whole week.

Temperatures are forecast to remain above 24 degrees this week before hitting 30 degrees on Sunday, just in time for the First Light Kai Street Food Festival.

It will remain at 30-plus degrees from Tuesday for the remainder of the week. Winds will also die down from next week.

Special BBQ to thank St John volunteers

GISBORNE residents can enjoy a sausage, some entertainment and thank the district’s hard-working St John volunteers this Saturday, through Bunnings’ inaugural New Zealand Volunteer Fundraiser Barbecue.

As part of the national event, a fundraising sausage sizzle will take place at the Gisborne store on Saturday from 9am to 4pm.

Gisborne employees will be running the barbecue with support from local emergency services volunteers. Every cent raised will go directly to support St John Gisborne.

“We are so grateful to the team at Gisborne for supporting our work in the community,” St John central region fundraising and marketing manager Jeanette Horan said.

“Our St John volunteers work tirelessly to help us save lives and change lives, and they couldn’t do it without the generosity and energy of local supporters like Bunnings.”

“All funds raised for St John at the Volunteer Fundraiser Barbecue will go directly back into helping the local community, and we encourage everyone to show their support by visiting Bunnings and enjoying the sausage sizzle.”

Bunnings Warehouse Gisborne complex manager Kyle Wilson said the event — which would feature family activities, fun games and entertainment throughout the day — was a way for the community to show their appreciation for the great work done by local volunteer emergency services around the country.

“The team is really excited to get behind the barbecue to help raise vital funds for our local St John ambulance service.”

Rocket Lab creating more jobs for Mahia

by Andrew Ashton

ROCKET Lab is fast becoming the largest employer in Mahia, with 15 direct employees based in the area — and at least one other business already expanding due to spin-off traffic from the aerospace company’s location on the peninsula.

Rocket Lab is now seeking three more applicants for Mahia-based positions at its Onenui-based Launch Complex 1 facility, ahead of upcoming test launches, and Rocket Lab vice-president of launch Shaun D’Mello said successful candidates would play important roles in New Zealand’s first orbital launch attempt.

The company needed a fitter and turner, a logistics co-ordinator and a launch range technician, and encouraged people from Mahia, Wairoa and Gisborne to apply.

“There is a growing need for both technical and administrative staff to support launch activities from Launch Complex 1.”

“The majority of our work is done at Launch Complex 1, so we’re out on the peninsula every day working in all weather conditions. We’re looking for passionate, dedicated people who can work hard to help us reach our goal of

making space accessible.”

Role descriptions and links to apply for open positions are available via Rocket Lab’s website (rocketlab.co.nz).

A spokeswoman said Rocket Lab had been thrilled with the reaction of the local community since the launch complex opened last year. Two public information sessions in Mahia two weeks ago each attracted about 100 people.

With the company’s employees coming and going from the site, as well as visitors, there had been extra business spin-offs for a local cafe.

“Cafe Mahia rebranded as Rocket Cafe a couple of weeks ago. The owner has new signage up and she has changed the menu, so that’s exciting — and she employed five new staff.”

A date for the company’s first test launch had still to be locked in but it would be in “upcoming months”.

“Everything’s going really well — it’s looking really good but we’re going to go when we’re ready, we’re not going to cut any corners.”

Residents in the area would be advised directly by email of an imminent launch.

Rocket Lab’s mission is to make space accessible by providing frequent, affordable launches to low Earth orbit.

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Rocket Lab was founded in 2006 by New Zealander Peter Beck and in 2009 launched Atea 1 — the first rocket to reach space from the Southern Hemisphere.

In 2016 Rocket Lab opened New Zealand’s first orbital launch site, Rocket Lab Launch Complex 1, on the Mahia Peninsula. From the site the company will launch Electron — a rocket designed to deliver small satellites to low Earth orbit. Rocket Lab’s customers use these satellites to provide services including internet from space, optimised crop monitoring, improved weather reporting, natural disaster prediction, up-to-date maritime data and search and rescue services.

Customers signed to fly on Electron rockets include NASA, Planet, Spire and Moon Express.

Inner-city festival this Sunday

MAORI, Filipino and Japanese cuisine, locally-produced beverages such as Harvest cider, Sunshine Brewery craft beers and Matawhero wine will feature at First Light Kai this Sunday.

And this is just the start, says Heart of Gisborne manager Lana Davy.

A 500 metre stretch of Peel Street will be transformed into a street food festival that includes a range of flavours, two stages for live acts and a Miss Gisborne competition.

“The event is based around highlighting the diversity of culture in this region,” says Ms Davy.

“The First Light Kai festival is to celebrate the amazing food and talent Gisborne has to offer.”

Peel Street will be closed from

Childers Road to Reads Quay. Food stalls and a licensed area will feature at the river end of the street while a classic cars display, the Miss Gisborne competition and a live band will be staged at the other end.

The White House and Uncle Val’s in Peel Street will have areas on the street for the festival. One of the two stages will be installed outside the White House while the other will stand in front of the public library.

Acts include One Point Five Men and Cook Island drumming and dance and others.

A craft market and kids’ zone will occupy Treble Court.

The festival is licensed but it will be a family-friendly event, says Ms Davy.

“We want to encourage a different

culture in the city around alcohol.”

Passengers on luxury cruise ship Silver Whisper will encounter the First Light Kai street food festival when the vessel docks at wharf seven that day.

Heart of Gisborne has wanted to create a festival like this for a long time, says event co-ordinator Ken Huberts.

“With the palm trees, cafes and lighting, it is a beautiful setting.”

“It is a European-style of al fresco dining,” says Ms Davy.

“It is your downtown lounge,” says Mr Huberts.

■ The First Light Kai street food festival runs from 12 midday, starting at the White House end of Peel Street. The afternoon layout will take place from 3.30-7.30pm. The craft market runs from 10am-7pm.