

Hauraki Summer Series

Saturday 30th April saw the kick off to the Final of four races of the Hauraki Summer Series. This race was held in Te Puru on the Thames Coast. Paddlers from all over the country came to support this weekends race with clubs from Hauraki, Auckland, Waikato, Tuakau and Wellington taking to Tikapa Moana for their last chance to collect points to vie for top spot.

Water and weather conditions were great with a slight swell giving the hardy paddlers an opportunity to enjoy a bit of downwind surf as well as providing an exciting challenge for novice and junior paddlers. Another successful well organised, fun event filled with manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, an awesome atmosphere to be part of.

The series has been hosted in 4 different Hauraki locations with all 4 of the newly established local Hauraki clubs collaborating and taking turns to host in their area. Paeroa based Club Hauraki Waka Ama kicked the series off with the first race in Ōngare near Katikati, Whitianga Community Waka Ama held the second race at Buffalo Beach in Whitianga, which was a wild and windy day, where paddlers had the challenge of facing large surf and swell, and all enjoyed getting some ocean experience. The third race was hosted by Whangamatā Whānau Hoe Waka at Beach Road Reserve in Whangamatā. It was a stunning day with calm seas, and competitors enjoyed the beautiful scenery paddling around the islands off Whangamatā. The fourth and final race was hosted by Te Āputa Tira Hoe at Te Puru. It was an amazingly fine day, but with a couple sneaky winds and swells, which the paddlers enjoyed as a challenge. "It's been a learning experience for all of us," says Te Āputa Tira Hoe Club Chairman Frank Thorne, "many of our Whānau within our areas are new to Waka and so getting to paddle, and learn the ins and outs of hosting an event has been valuable. We are grateful for all the friendships developed, new connections made and most of all the assistance that Paul Roozendaal has given us, and the challenges he laid before us to give it a go."

Feedback from participating clubs has been positive, with many excited about returning for the series next year and bringing more crews to experience the waters of The Hauraki Rohe. Sport Waikato Waka Ama Sports Force Development Officer Paul Roozendaal says "it's been a great way to promote Waka within the community and the potential for the series is huge. We had clubs from as far as Wellington right up to Tūtūkākā supporting the entire series."