



**To the Members of the Upper Waitaki
Zone Water Management Committee**

MEMBERSHIP

Claire Barlow
Mathew Bayliss
Simon Cameron
Bill Chisholm
Craig Dawson
Mandy Home
Shane Te Maiharoa

Mike Neilson
Barry Shepherd
Peter Skelton
Anne Steven
Wayne Tipa
John Wilkie

*Notice is given of the Meeting of the Upper Waitaki Water Zone Management
Committee to be held on Thursday 9 February 2012 at 3.00 pm*

VENUE: Peppers Bluewater Resort, Lake Tekapo

BUSINESS: As per Agenda attached

**GLEN INNES
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MACKENZIE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MICHAEL ROSS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WAITAKI DISTRICT COUNCIL
2 February 2012**

AGENDA 9 FEBRUARY 2012

1. Karakia, Welcome and Introductions
2. Apology
Mat Bayliss
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes
Confirm and adopt as the correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 January 2012
5. General Business
 - a) Matters Arising
 - b) Correspondence
 - c) Other
6. Summary of Commissioners' Rulings on the latest Consent Applications in the Upper Waitaki
7. Draft Zone Implementation Programme
7. Next Meeting

Time Table

3.00	Afternoon Tea
3.20 pm	Opening of Zone Committee Meeting, Karakia, Welcome and Introductions
3.30 pm	Minutes of Previous Meeting
3.35 pm	General Business: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Matters Arising- Correspondence- Other
3.40 pm	Summary of Commissioners' Rulings on the Latest Consent Applications in the Upper Waitaki – Anita Collie, Environment Canterbury
4.15 pm	Draft Zone Implementation Programme
5.30 pm	Tea
5.45 pm	Draft Zone Implementation Programme (continued)
8.00 pm	Next Meeting Date and Meeting Closure

**ENVIRONMENT CANTERBURY
MACKENZIE AND WAITAKI DISTRICT COUNCILS**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UPPER WAITAKI ZONE WATER
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, HELD IN THE MACKENZIE COUNTRY INN,
TWIZEL, ON THURSDAY 19 JANUARY 2012 AT 12.40 PM.**

PRESENT:

Barry Shepherd (Chairman)
Simon Cameron
Bill Chisholm
Mike Neilson
Anne Steven
Wayne Tipa
John Wilkie
Craig Dawson (Waitaki District Councillor)

IN ATTENDANCE

Meri Gibson (Facilitator)
Rob Gerard (Environment Canterbury)
Christine Robb (Environment Canterbury)
Peter Te Rangihiroa Ramsden (Tangata Whenua Facilitator for the Canterbury Water Management Strategy)
9 members of public

I KARAKIA AND WELCOME:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the introductions.

Peter Te Rangihiroa Ramsden shared a karakia to open the meeting.

II APOLOGIES:

Resolved that apologies be received from Peter Skelton, Mat Bayliss, Claire Barlow, Shane Te Maiharoa and Mandy Home.

Barry Shepherd/Craig Dawson

III DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

There were no further Declarations of Interest.

IV MINUTES:

Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2011 be confirmed and adopted as the correct record of the meeting.

Craig Dawson/ Anne Steven

V GENERAL BUSINESS:

1. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

1. **Groundwater Hydrology and Water Quality:**

The Facilitator advised that further information was being sought from Environment Canterbury officers in Christchurch and Timaru which would be emailed to the Committee members along with Canterbury Conservancy catchment reports. (A *Project Overview* of the latter reports was circulated and is attached to this record as *Appendix A*).

Christina Robb said the scientists were keen to offer a Groundwater Hydrology workshop and she undertook, before the end of January 2012, to arrange a suitable date with the Chairman.

Wayne Tipa noted the effects of recent earthquakes on groundwater in the Christchurch area and suggested they might also have affected groundwater in the Upper Waitaki Zone.

2. **Regional Land Use Water Quality Project Working Group:**

Bill Chisholm reported on the Working Group's meeting held prior to the last Regional Committee meeting where a range of issues relating to water quality had been discussed. He said there were two views about how land use and water quality should be managed – one was that 'best practice' would be sufficient to mitigate effects and provide for further wide scale development and intensive land use in the region; the other was to apply a more cautionary approach because 'best practice' could not adequately mitigate the effects of intensive farming. He said the issues would be further debated at a meeting to be held in Rakaia on 23 January 2012 which he would be attending. He said he understood the meeting would be open to all zone committee members and offered transport to the venue.

3. **Monitoring:**

The Facilitator advised that Carl Diamond of Environment Canterbury, Timaru, had information about salmon farm outputs which would be provided to the Committee members. She also referred to reports on dairying and the 'Intrinsic Values of the Upper Waitaki Catchment' which had been circulated.

Discussion on recent rulings, including Judge Jackson's interim decision on the Mackenzie District Council's Plan Change 13 and irrigation consent applications. Craig Dawson asked if the Zone Implementation Plan should be aligned to the decisions, while noting his concern that farm businesses needed to be able to remain viable as well as comply with environmental rules.

Anne Steven referred to the distinct planning and legal contexts of the decisions. She noted the strong messages contained in them and the need for the Zone Committee to be unafraid to tackle contentious issues.

Mike Neilson agreed with the principle that the Committee should align itself as far as possible with the thinking behind the decisions.

2. CORRESPONDENCE:

- a) The Facilitator circulated the Environment Canterbury Factsheet 'Stock Exclusion from Water Ways' which is attached to this record as *Appendix B*.
- b) The Chairman referred to Irrigation New Zealand's 'Good Management Practice' requirements which he said were expected to come into force about April/May 2012. He requested the document be circulated to Committee members. It is also attached to this record as *Appendix C*.
- c) Ms Steven recommended Committee members read the New Zealand Conservation Authority document 'Protecting New Zealand Rivers' which could be found on the internet.

VI DRAFT ZONE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME:

There was some discussion on the level of detail, particularly with regard to monitoring, which should be included in the Zone Implementation Programme. The Chairman reminded members that the role of the Committee was to provide guidelines to enable planning staff to recommend appropriate methodologies to achieve the required outcomes. He said that the Committee would have an opportunity to comment on the recommendations.

Ms Robb suggested that the Zone Implementation Programme could specify that an improved monitoring scheme be developed with Environment Canterbury over the next year.

It was agreed that the Zone Implementation Programme should include a recommendation that a proportion of monitoring costs should be publicly funded and that Environment Canterbury should be responsible for all carrying out all monitoring programmes. This would provide continuity and economies of scale. Environment Canterbury was also the only body which had the ability to spread charges across all users.

The Chairman suggested it would be a positive move for Environment Canterbury to re-establish an agency in Twizel, which he considered had been a forgotten area for too long.

The Facilitator circulated revised drafts of the Zone Implementation Programme. She noted that they dealt with tangata whenua aspects and included input from Ms Steven

and Mr Chisholm. Copies were also provided to members of the public with the caution that they were drafts only and not prepared for the public domain.

1. **Tangata Whenua Aspects**

John Wilkie circulated the *Whakatauki* recommended for inclusion on the front page of the Zone Implementation Programme. A copy of the *Whakatauki* is attached to this record as *Appendix D*.

Resolved that the *Whakatauki* be adopted for inclusion the Zone Implementation Programme with the first two lines amended to read:

Ko Aoraki te mauka *Aoraki is the mountain*
Ko Waitaki te awa *Waitaki is the river*

Craig Dawson/Mike Neilson

The Facilitator explained the amendments and tracked changes in the draft document which pertained to **Tangata Whenua Aspects**. Further modifications made by the Committee were also noted

Ms Robb provided comments from the planners on the draft recommendations.

Mr Wilkie proposed that the concept of collecting and storing rainwater from roofs be included in the Zone Implementation Programme.

2. **Water Quality, Supply and Nutrient Management**

The Facilitator explained the amendments and tracked changes in the draft document following input from Mr Chisholm on **Water Quality, Supply and Nutrient Management**. Further modifications made by the Committee were noted.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.25 pm for afternoon tea and reconvened at 3.55 pm.

3 **Biodiversity and Braided Rivers**

The Facilitator explained the amendments and tracked changes in the draft document following input from Ms Steven on **Biodiversity and Braided Rivers**.

Craig Dawson re-joined the meeting at 4.00 pm and apologised for his lateness because of a migraine.

It was suggested that if the Committee was happy with the content of the preamble section prepared by Ms Steven, it could be word-smithed by staff and then checked by Ms Steven.

Mr Wilkie referred to disturbance of braided river and wetland habitats and noted that under Section 15 of the Resource Management Act 1992 the operation of vehicles in riverbeds was not permitted.

The Facilitator said she would include the revised **Braided River Function** and **Alpine Braided River Catchments** sections in the Zone Implementation

Programme in the interim and invited Committee members to provide comment on the sections.

It was agreed that the amended and re-ordered section on **Biodiversity** be distributed in its new format and sequence and sent to the Committee members for review.

Mr Chisholm stated his concern about the Department of Conservation's threat classification system which he considered was unscientific and biased. He advised that it not be referred to in the Zone Implementation Programme. The Chairman supported Mr Chisholm's comment.

4. Prosperous and Vibrant Communities

Mr Neilson undertook to review the *Economic Overview* section in conjunction with the main *Overview* and include some history of tourism in the Zone. Ms Robb suggested the planners liaise directly with Mr Neilson.

Mr Neilson suggested that the Murray River Study could be included as an appendix to the Zone Implementation Programme as it was an example of how decision making could be assisted by using economics.

The Facilitator said that the remaining section could be approved and signed off at the next meeting along with any other matters Committee members might wish to revisit.

It was agreed that reference be made in the Zone Implementation Programme to the Committee's recognition of the impact of its decisions on the neighbouring Lower Waitaki and Orari/Opihi/Pareora Zones.

The Facilitator circulated a copy of the New Zealand *Listener* editorial of 26 November 2011 on the subject of the need for guardianship –kaitiakitanga – of waterways. It is attached to this record as *Appendix E*.

VII NEXT MEETING:

It was agreed that the next Zone Committee meeting be held at 3.00 pm on Thursday 9 February 2012 at Lake Tekapo.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS THE
CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 5.30 PM**

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE: _____

Canterbury Conservancy catchment reports: Project overview

J. Benn
Technical Support
Department of Conservation
Canterbury Conservancy Office
Christchurch

31 October 2011

Introduction

This report explains the background, purposes and methods used in producing a series of reports that examine the instream intrinsic values of the major river catchments within Canterbury Conservancy (from the Clarence River in the north to the Waitaki River in the south). In all, 35 catchments are covered. The project was jointly commissioned by the Department of Conservation (DOC) Canterbury Conservancy office and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.

The project commenced in 2006, when D. Armstrong wrote draft reports for approximately half of the catchments concerned. Since 2009, J. Benn has written the remaining reports on a temporary contract basis, and has up-dated Armstrong's reports as required.

Purpose of the catchment reports

There are several reasons for producing the catchment reports. Firstly, there is increasing pressure on Canterbury's surface and ground water resources from various user/interest groups (e.g. conservation, industry, agriculture, town supply, recreation and cultural), which has ultimately led to the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (Canterbury Mayoral Forum 2010), and 10 individually managed water zones within the Canterbury Region. Therefore, baseline information needed to be gathered and collated for resource management and water planning purposes and to assist in sound decision-making regarding these matters. Although this has been partially done for some catchments, (e.g. Taylor and Champion 1996; Mosley 2001; Daly 2004) there has been no co-ordinated effort until now to do this for all of Canterbury's major catchments.

Secondly, the information gathered provides a snapshot of the current understanding of each catchment at the time of writing. These snapshots highlight current areas of expertise, or conversely, lack of knowledge in certain fields.

Thirdly, the information gathered, or lack of it, can be used as a guide in directing future research and resource needs.

Fourthly, the information will hopefully be used for general, educational, research, reference, and planning purposes.

It should be noted that some of the smaller catchments have been grouped together into a single catchment report, because of a lack of information for individual catchments, or for logistical reasons. For example, the small coastal catchments of the Amberley area were grouped together because of a lack of information. The Banks Peninsula catchments were grouped together for logistical reasons as there are over 30 small catchments on the peninsula, plus, there is a lack of information for most of them. As the catchment boundaries were based on the NIWA's catchment drainage boundaries, there are some gaps in the report coverage: That is, the entire Canterbury region is not completely covered by the catchment reports at this stage. This is particularly true along the coastal edge of the Canterbury Plains, as many artificial drains and local creeks drain the edge of the plains directly to the ocean, rather than forming tributary channels of larger catchments.

The Waitaki River catchment report (*in prep.*), is being compiled by the DOC Canterbury Conservancy, Technical Support team. This approach was adopted due to the vast amount of information available relating to that catchment. The information search for this report is being limited to reports produced since 1987, when DOC came into existence. Time and resources do not permit a full literature search or review.

The reports are draft/living documents⁴ and thus, are subject to frequent changes as new information becomes available and editorial updates are made. The reports have been written in the style of annotated bibliographies and are thus summaries of currently available literature—they do *not* review the accuracy or integrity of the source information.

Disclaimer on reports

An appropriate disclaimer is placed on all reports, highlighting their draft/living status. As the reports are summaries only, and not reviews, the Department takes no responsibility in the accuracy of the reports, nor findings and opinions expressed therein.

Acknowledgements

Many people helped in the production of the catchment reports. Funding for the project was provided mostly by the DOC Canterbury Conservancy office, and supplemented by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. Technical Support staff (Canterbury Conservancy) provided much information, advice, and proof read the reports. The Information Management Unit (IMU) staff (Canterbury Conservancy) produced the maps in the reports. Staff of ECan; Canterbury University and the DOC Knowledge Service Team (Wellington) supplied many reports and documents for the project.

Where to from here?

When the draft reports are complete, DOC staff and Ngāi Tahu will have full access to the information. Although the information is 'public', it is not envisaged to 'publically release' the information in a formal manner, at this stage. However, the information will be released to individuals or organisations who request it.

⁴ Although the Hurunui catchment report (Armstrong 2006) is complete and has been published, much information on the Hurunui River has been produced since 2006, and it is envisaged that this report will also be updated when appropriate.

Stock exclusion from waterways

This Factsheet explains rule WQL21 in the operative Canterbury Natural Resources Regional Plan



Fencing to provide a buffer between stock and a waterway helps to protect water quality. Plants in the riparian zone – whether grasses or natives – create a filter to help absorb nutrient runoff.

There are new rules excluding stock from natural waterways in Canterbury which are designed to safeguard and improve water quality.

The rules from June 2011

Livestock access to natural waterways is allowed only if there are no significant adverse effects, which include:

- Heavy pugging in rivers, lakes, or wetlands
- Visible discolouration of water
- An increase in bacteria levels
- Any obvious evidence of faecal matter in waterways.

Additional rules from June 2012

All intensively farmed livestock will be completely prohibited from entering natural waterways. This applies to:

- Farmed pigs
- Dairy cattle
- Any stock grazed on irrigated land (including sheep, deer, horses, goats, lama, alpacas)
- Any stock break-feeding or strip-grazed on winter crops (such as kale) in or adjacent to a natural waterbody (including wetlands).

In addition any cattle, farmed deer or pigs will be prohibited from entering waterways defined in the relevant schedule or planning map, which are:

- Within 1km of a river bathing site
- Within 1km upstream from a community drinking water supply
- At a salmon or inanga (whitebait) spawning site
- In a permanently flowing reach of specified low land rivers.



Fencing, even if only temporary, is the simplest way to restrict stock access to natural waterways.



Riparian planting absorbs nutrient runoff helping to protect water quality



Bridges and culverts keep stock out of natural waterways.

Recommendations for stock management

We recommend everyone who manages stock should take the time to understand these rules and put measures in place to ensure stock are kept out of natural waterways.

In places where stock are causing significant adverse effects urgent action is needed to reduce or avoid these effects.

Methods to reduce stock access to natural waterways include:

- New permanent fences
- The use of temporary fences
- New bridges or culverts for stock to cross waterways.
- Avoid planting winter feed crops in paddocks with natural waterways.

Additional recommendations from June 2012

Dairy and pig farmers should be planning to exclude stock from natural waterways by June 2012.

New management tools may be required, including:

- Restricted stock access drinking points in natural waterways
- A reticulated stock water system

Regulatory consequences

Failure to comply with the new rules for stock access to natural waterways is likely to result in enforcement action, such as an abatement or infringement notice, or could even result in prosecution.

Where to get information or advice

If you would like to talk to someone about the new rules or get some on-farm advice call Customer Services on 0800 324-636.

More information on the new rules is available on our website:

www.ecan.govt.nz/nrrp

Financial support for fencing may be available for extended riparian areas with high biodiversity value and in conjunction with a native planting programme. Call Customer Services and ask to speak to a Biodiversity Officer or visit: www.ecan.govt.nz/biodiversity for more information.

What is a natural waterway?

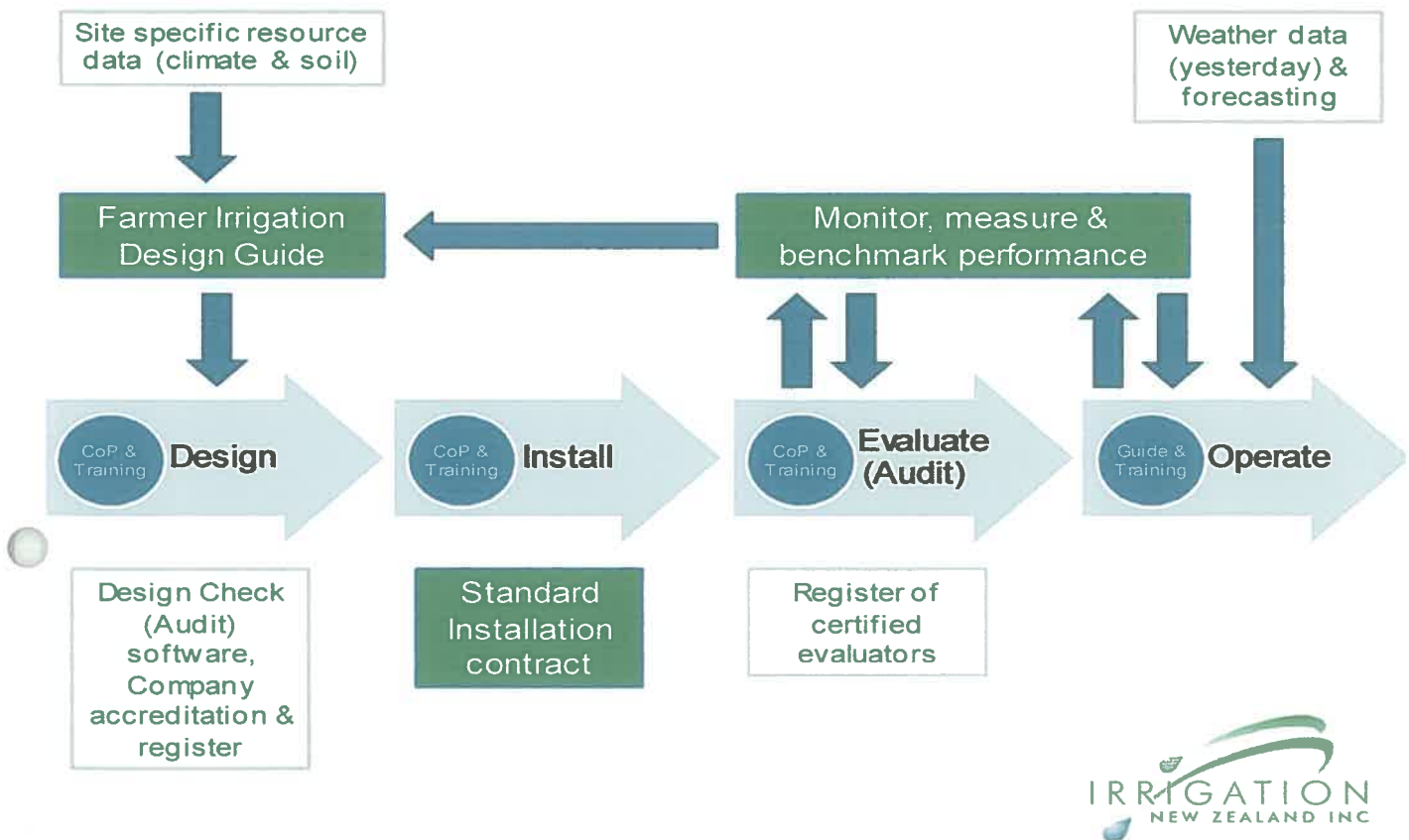
River or stream: a continually or intermittently flowing body of fresh water. This includes a stream and modified watercourse. It does not include any artificial watercourse (such as an irrigation canal, a water supply race, a hydroelectric canal, or a farm drain).

Lake: a body of fresh water which is entirely or nearly surrounded by land.

Wetland: includes permanently or intermittently wet areas, shallow water, and land-water boundaries that support a natural ecosystem of plants and animals adapted to wet conditions.

For more information: please visit our website for more detail on these rules: <http://ecan.govt.nz/nrrp>

Irrigation 'Good Management Practice' (GMP)



Requirements to demonstrate GMP with regard to 'Water Use Efficiency' under an ASM programme.

(1) Designs comply with INZ Code of Practice (CoP) & Standards – Design Company has 'Irrigation Design Accreditation' and all new irrigation has a 'Design Audit' against the Design CoP and Standards. The 'Design Audit' will be through web based software which produces a 'certificate of compliance' - this avoids a costly individual assessment process. The CoP & Standards are currently under review – this will include revisiting the standards to ensure they are 'rigorous'.

(2) Installations commissioned by an accredited evaluator. This requires contracts in place that contain the design specifications and commissioning procedures. Evaluator accreditation = adheres to evaluation CoP and has successfully completed the NZQA training – National Certificate in Irrigation Evaluation.

(3) On-going evaluation of system performance undertaken. Annual self evaluation (documented) with a five year independent full audit by an accredited evaluator.

(4) Annual benchmarking to demonstrate actual performance. In Canterbury this also forms part of the CWMS targets reporting. Percentage beneficial use is the relevant measure.

GMP 'Water Use Efficiency' Resource Development

Note: Yellow indicates INZ is in the process of finding resources to undertake the activity

Design

- Farmer Irrigation Design Guide – Completed 2010 (update due Jun 2012).
- Design Code of Practice & Standards – Completed 2006 & 5 yearly review due. MoU with Irrigation Australia Ltd (Aug 2011) produce Trans-Tasman CoP & Standards. Timeframes - Jan 2012 agree on gaps/updates, Apr 2012 draft gaps/updates, Jun 2012 finalise gaps/updates, Sep 2012 technical/readability rewrite.
- Design Training (NZQA level 5-6 delivered by NZWETA – full & accelerated pathways) – Over 30 graduates currently working through qualification, next intake April 2012.
- 'Design Check' software (design audit) – Completed Sep 2011 (web interface available from Dec 2011).
- Design Accreditation programme & register – Delivery Jun 2012.

Installation

- Installation Code of Practice & standards – Draft Jun 2011 – Final Jan 2012. MoU with Irrigation Australia Ltd (Aug 2011) produce Trans-Tasman CoP & Standards. Timeframes TBC.
- Installation Training Qualifications – Delivery Jun 2012. Courses & resources – Delivery Jun 2013.
- Installation Standard Contact (streamlined version of NZS 3910 & Irrigation Australia Document) – Delivery Apr 2012.

Evaluation / Audit

- Evaluation Code of Practice & Standards (irrigation system performance audit) – Completed 2006 & 5 yearly review now due. MoU with Irrigation Australia (Aug 2011) to produce Trans-Tasman CoP & Standards. Little change required – relationship with University of Southern Queensland to combine evaluation software.
- Evaluator Training (NZQA level 4 delivered by Agribusiness Training). Over 80 students completed training and 20 have now successfully completed qualification.
- On-farm 'quick' irrigation system evaluation tools – Completed Jun 2010.
- Evaluator (certified) register – Completed Jun 2010.

Operation

- Operator Training (operator & manager level NZQA qualifications, assessments and resources in association with AglITO, HortITO, SportsturfITO and primary sectors) – Delivery Jun 2012.

Other

- Water Measurement 'Blue Tick' accreditation programme (installation, verification, data hosting, open channel installation & verification) – Completed May 2011 & on-going – 100+ registered companies. Working with RC's CESIG as to how integrated with regulatory compliance.
- Hill Country guide to GMP Irrigation (Design & Operation) Jun 2013.
- Farm Dairy Effluent Design Accreditation programme – Register available from Feb 2012. Governance group includes DairyNZ, MPTA & RC's & IrrigationNZ.
- Resource Data Provision (soil, climate & weather) remains a major challenge – making data readily and easily available. www.everythingirrigation.co.nz to be launched Dec 2011 for Rakaia-Selwyn (10% NZ irrigated area) as a model for this. Urgently need resources to role this out across NZ's major irrigation areas if we are to provide irrigators the background knowledge to achieve 'Good Management Practice'.
- Water-use efficiency benchmarking project (output to include simple benchmarking DIY tool - production/mm, energy(kwh)/mm and % beneficial use – part of www.everythingirrigation.co.nz) – Jun 2012. Use as an indicator/measure of performance direction of travel.

2.0 He korero

*Ko Uretane te mauka
Ko Waihao te awa
e rere ana ki te roto
te Kai Hinaki a Rakihouia
Ko ngā waitapu
Ko Ngati Hateatea te hapu*

*Tenei te tangi
O nga whakatupuranga
O Ngai Tahu whanui*

*Kia koutou nga iwi
O nga marae maha
Kia ora tatou e tau nei*

*Ko o matou whakaaro ki te whenua
Nga roto, nga awa, te moana
Hei here i a tatou*

*O nga tuputupunga
O te aka o tu whenua
Hei whakato whakatipu
I nga mahinga kai a te iwi*

*Ko o matou tumanako
Te tatau o te matauranga
O nga whakaaro
Hei here ai a iwi
a mana
ka whakapuakina
Hei ora ai o nga mea katoa
I roto te Putaiao*

Uretane
*Uretane is the mountain
Waihao is the river
That flows to the sacred waters
of te Kai Hinaki a Rakihouia
All the sacred streams of
Ngati Hateatea the people*

*This is the call
Of the rising generations
Of the Ngai Tahu people*

*To you the people
Of the many marae
Greetings to you all*

*Our thoughts are to the land
To the lakes, the rivers and the sea
That bind us together*

*To preserve the wellbeing
Of the vines of tu whenua (land and water)
That give rise to
The people's food gathering places*

*Our hopes are that
The doors of knowledge
And the doors of thought
That have held our people
And our authority captive
Will be opened
For the well being of all things
Within the environment.*

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER

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Shine a light

Our waterways need the guardianship – kaitiakitanga – of those who know and love them.

Whangarei man Millan Ruka has done his region a great service by the simple act of paddling up his local rivers and filming what he sees. The images he has captured – of cows grazing on unfenced riverbanks, and streams fouled by the run-off from overstocked farms – may do more to prompt action on freshwater management than the mountains of scientific data showing that intensive pastoral farming is suffocating our rivers.

With his canoe and GPS camera, 61-year-old Ruka has been able to get to rural waterways in the Northland region that are inaccessible to most. When the Northland Regional Council proved unable or unwilling to police the farmers causing what he called “blatant pollution”, he decided to start uploading his images onto the internet. If the council’s rules were impotent, he reasoned, perhaps public opprobrium would be effective.

And there seems no doubt the rules are inadequate. The Northland Regional Council says there is nothing in its soil and water plan that enables it to force farmers to fence their streams to keep stock out, and it hasn’t got the time or resources to patrol its waterways in the manner that Ruka has been doing.

Many other councils are similarly toothless. According to a survey by the Greens, five out of 16 regional or unitary councils have no rules preventing stock access to streams and rivers, and another nine (including Northland) have rules explicitly allowing stock access to riverbanks provided various conditions are met.

The Northland Regional Council has responded to Ruka’s challenge by writing to farmers to remind them of the Clean Streams Accord. But this is a voluntary agreement and it doesn’t cover all streams. Although an increasing percentage of farmers are reported to be fencing stock out of waterways, some 15% are still failing to do so.

And in any case, the accord sets a soft target. Only those streams that are “deeper than a Red Band Gumboot”, “wider than a stride” and permanently flowing are covered by it. That means even if farmers have judiciously fenced their more significant waterways, sediment and nutrients can still migrate from small tributary creeks that are unprotected from the



Bruce Wills is leading farmers out of the environmental dark ages.

cloven hoofs and excrement of livestock.

The impact of pastoral farming on lakes and rivers is complex, and the issue of cows stomping around on banks and defecating into the water is only part of the problem. The more difficult challenge is the uncontrolled leaching of nutrients from excrement deposited directly onto intensively farmed paddocks and into ground and surface water. This won’t be solved until regulators and the farming industry confront the fact that stocking levels – particularly on dairy farms – have been pushed far beyond the ability of many waterways to cope with the nutrient levels flushing off nearby farmland.

But fencing off streams to exclude stock is the low-hanging fruit of freshwater management. Even Federated Farmers agrees farmers who allow their stock to wander into streams should be punished.

The organisation’s recently elected president, Bruce Wills – whose efforts to lead his organisation out of the environmental dark ages are welcome – thinks those who are “breaking the rules ... should feel the full force of the regulations”.

The problem, as Ruka’s efforts have highlighted, is that in many cases “ratbag” farmers are not breaking the rules, because the rules are either non-existent or ineffectual. The regulatory gap is obvious, and whichever political party takes office after November 26 ought to take a leaf from the Greens’ manifesto and introduce mandatory fencing of stock from waterways.

In the meantime, Ruka’s efforts to shine a light on the turbid back eddies of Northland’s rivers is to be loudly applauded. Our waterways need the protection of better rules, but they also need the guardianship – kaitiakitanga – of those who know and love them.

The importance of our environment to New Zealand’s global reputation and prosperity is underscored by a recent Business Council for Sustainable Development poll showing 86% of our exporters are convinced our 100% Pure image opens doors internationally and gives New Zealand a marketing edge. The poll also shows, however, that only 2% of us believe the country lives up to its 100% Pure image.

Ruka’s decision to take up his paddle and camera will, hopefully, be an inspiration to all those other New Zealanders who feel the abuse of our lakes and rivers has gone on long enough. ■