



# Key challenges facing Environment Canterbury

**In putting together our long-term plan we have focused on sustainability challenges facing Canterbury. These key challenges – which are of strategic importance for Environment Canterbury – were identified in discussion with stakeholders and members of the community. The Canterbury Community Outcomes Report 2006-08 and the Regional Environment Report 2008 provide more information on these issues. That information, together with a consideration of the more difficult economic times facing the community, has been used to define ways to address challenges, determine programmes, and set budgets for the next 10 years.**

**>> Skip to the results of our public consultation by following the links shown.**

## Water

Water management is the key issue facing Environment Canterbury. As a result, this long-term plan provides a major focus on water programmes aimed at achieving the sustainable management of this resource.

Successful water resource management requires Environment Canterbury to work in partnership with communities, individuals, industry bodies, and local and central government. Doing this successfully is an ongoing focus for Environment Canterbury. The Canterbury Water Management Strategy is an important regional level partnership undertaken on behalf of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum. This work aims to provide the 'big picture' which will help integrate management of groundwater, surface water, water quality, water quantity and land use – taking into consideration the wider needs of the Canterbury community.

Environment Canterbury sets the environmental limits for water abstractions and water quality standards. While some of Canterbury's streams, rivers, lakes and groundwater are of high quality, many are not. These tend to be those under pressure from rural and urban land-use intensification. Increasing water use is also placing greater pressure on ground and surface water systems.

[>> Funding for water management cost recovery. See page 121.](#)



## Land

Canterbury is faced with rapid land use changes as a result of more intensive use of agricultural land, and growth of the greater Christchurch metropolitan area. Intensification of land use in both urban and rural Canterbury threatens the availability of productive land and has impacts on water quality.

Managing land use requires Environment Canterbury to work collaboratively with agencies and individuals, but backed up by statutory instruments. The Christchurch Urban Development Strategy is an example of a collaborative approach to these issues that will have long-term benefits for the region.

>> [Ashley/Rakahuri Regional Park, Lake Tekapo Regional Park](#). See page 73.

## Management of urban growth

We are a major partner in the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy, which takes a long-term view and provides an integrated approach to future housing, development of activity centres, areas of new employment and the impact of land use on transportation networks. Our partners are the Christchurch City Council, the Waimakariri and Selwyn District Councils, and the NZ Transport Agency.

Issues such as congestion and dependency on fossil fuels are being addressed through the Public Passenger Transport Strategy, while the Regional Land Transport Strategy considers traffic congestion, safety and the efficient movement of freight around the region.

## Public passenger transport

We must maintain the growth in public passenger patronage to ease traffic congestion, particularly in Christchurch, and reduce dependence on the unsustainable use of fossil fuels. To do this we must continue to invest in improvements to public passenger services, improving environmental performance and increased use of technology. Funding this increased investment must be equitable so that the costs and benefits are shared fairly among users, ratepayers and central government.

>> [Rating for public transport in Lyttelton and Diamond Harbour, and Selwyn District](#). See page 95.

## Air

We have been working with relevant parties to improve Christchurch's air quality for a number of years: the Clean Heat Project, which offers incentives for householders to install cleaner forms of heating and insulation, has been underway for five years. While gains have been made, significant challenges remain and work is ongoing in target air sheds. The Clean Heat Project alone will not enable us to meet the National Environmental Standard for air quality by 2013.

Other priorities over the next 10 years include improving wintertime air quality, monitoring contaminants from vehicle emissions, industry, outdoor burning and agrichemical spray drift to ensure concentrations are within health guidelines, and implementing the Air Plan (which is chapter three of the proposed Natural Resources Regional Plan). The Air Plan will soon become operative and includes new rules relating to banning the use of open fires and older wood burners in Christchurch during winter.

>> [Clean Heat Project eligibility in Christchurch](#). See page 27.

## Hazards

Accurate information about hazards is vital to make informed decisions about hazard risk reduction, readiness, response and recovery. Reducing flood risk is a key focus and our priorities over the coming years include maintaining flood and erosion control works, including the Waimakariri Flood Protection Project. We also need to manage the demand for gravel to ensure flood capacity is maintained without compromising the integrity of infrastructure.

>> [Waimakariri Flood Protection Project](#). See page 62.

## Climate change

Environment Canterbury acknowledges the potential impacts of climate change and specific portfolios have taken this into account in their planning. The projected impacts include drier winters, warmer summers and more frequent or larger storm events, resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of floods and droughts, and the cost of emergency management. Increased temperatures could also increase the region's susceptibility to new weeds and pests. Impacts such as these influence much of the work of Environment Canterbury, and our planning takes into account the need to provide a relevant local response to a global issue.