

Regional Water Committee

2017 Annual Report

The Regional Water Committee

The 2017 annual report outlines the work of the Regional Committee and highlights key achievements.

The report provides a snap-shot of some of the work the committee has been involved in as well as the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The purpose of the Regional Committee is to;

1. *Monitor the progress of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy across the region; and*
2. *Provide advice to Environment Canterbury on regional issues.*

The membership reflects these functions, and includes representatives of Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, Territorial Authorities representatives, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Ngāi Tahu Rūnanga, community members, and a representative from each zone.

There are also central government observers and an observer from the Canterbury District Health Board.

The committee published its Regional Implementation Programme in 2012. Its work is currently structured around the following priorities:

- *Infrastructure development*
- *Regional biodiversity*
- *Recreation and amenity values*
- *Liaison between zone committees.*

A work focus of Kaitiakitanga is woven through these areas.

Key Achievements 2017

A key focus for the Regional Committee this year has been to work with Environment Canterbury to produce the CWMS Targets Progress Report 2017 and report to the Canterbury Mayoral Forum on progress.

The CWMS sets challenging targets that are a mix of actions that need to be taken and outcomes (what the community wishes to see). The targets are a product of an extensive community process that took place over 10 years, culminating in the CWMS in 2010.

The targets set out a clear direction but in some cases, are not well specified and consequently can be challenging to measure.

The Regional Committee has also been working to accelerate progress on some of the target areas by working to provide further advice on;

- *Recreation and amenity target*
- *Braided river character target*
- *Effectiveness of fish screens*
- *Integration and efficiency of irrigation infrastructure*

In addition, the Regional Committee has overseen three Immediate Steps funded regional projects;

- *Weed control and restoration around the edges of Te Waihora (Lake Ellesmere) – Project value \$167,259, Regional Committee contribution \$74,903 (45%)*
- *Weed control and maintenance of previously funded projects around Wainono Lagoon – Project value \$89,393, Regional Committee contribution \$70,254 (79%)*
- *Weed and predator control to improve the survival of braided river species – Project value \$942,900, Regional Committee contribution \$319,100 (34%)*

Canterbury Water Management Strategy Vision:

“To enable present and future generations to gain the greatest social, economic, recreational and cultural benefits from our water resources within an environmentally sustainable framework.”



Weed Strike Force team proposed to take on willows

Two regional projects at Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere and Wainono Lagoon are underway to control willows and other weeds.

The control of crack willow has been progressing well in both projects with few new plants appearing. Grey willow, however, is proving more difficult to control with young grey willows germinating once older willows have been removed.

A survey of Te Waihora has found that the area with willows has double since 2007 but the density of coverage has been reduced. A new approach is required. The Department of Conservation and Environment Canterbury proposed a Joint Weed Strike Force that would be staffed by a dedicated team and pool the resources of both organisations.

The committee agreed that a new approach was required but expressed concern about the continued use of chemicals to control seedlings. The committee agreed to contribute \$110,000 per annum for Financial Years 2019-2021 to the new "Strike Force" and looks forward to further progress reports on the project as well as research on new methods to control Grey Willow.



Wainono Lagoon



Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere

Positive turn for black-fronted terns

2017 has seen a breakthrough for the future survival of the black-fronted tern habitat. Black-fronted terns are a specialist braided river bird and are considered nationally endangered.

Unfortunately, finding ways to improve their breeding success is difficult as there are a variety of predators (both land and aerial) and their habitat (ie. barren shingle banks and islands) are being over taken by woody weeds.

A five year multi-party project in the Clarence catchment, is now underway to improve the terns habitat by removing all weeds from selected shingle islands, mounding the islands to reduce the likelihood of flooding and deepening the river channels around the islands to make it more difficult for land based predators to get to the nests.

This year was the first breeding season and its good news. Breeding success has been five to 10 time higher than islands where there has been no management.



Black-fronted tern

Members of the Regional Committee joined the Christchurch West Melton Zone Committee on a field trip to Bells Creek to find out more about the quality of urban waterways.



CWMS Target - Environment Flows, Catchment Load Limits and Drinking Water

There was considerable debate within the committee when it reviewed progress on these targets. As the environmental flow and catchment load limit target is written “set flow and catchment load limits” it can be argued the target has been achieved but improved quality in rivers and groundwater has not yet been achieved.

The Land and Water Regional Plan sets the regional limits and priority catchments that were over allocated in the past (eg. Selwyn-Waihora and Hinds) have been through sub-regional processes resulting in specific policies and more stringent rules.

A flurry of further activity is underway as farmers adopt new tools and systems (eg nutrient budgets, good management practices, farm environment plans and audits and consents to farm) to make the changes required. By November 2017 92% of farmers have taken the actions required to reduce their environmental impact. The adoption of these new tools by 900 farmers in the space of 18 months is nothing but extraordinary.

But we are not seeing a corresponding rapid improvement in the health of our waterways, groundwater and private drinking water supplies in some rural areas. Environmental systems are complex and take decades to adjust. Unfortunately, in many catchments we may well see a deterioration in the state of our water as nutrients are “in the post” from past land use decisions.

During discussions on these target areas the committee highlighted the disconnect between the target (ie. activity) and outcomes and the need for urgent action to find ways to bridge this gap.

The Committee noted the work of Canterbury District Health Board, Environment Canterbury, Ashburton District Council and irrigation companies in the Hinds catchment Managed Aquifer pilot project as one possible way to bridge the gap.



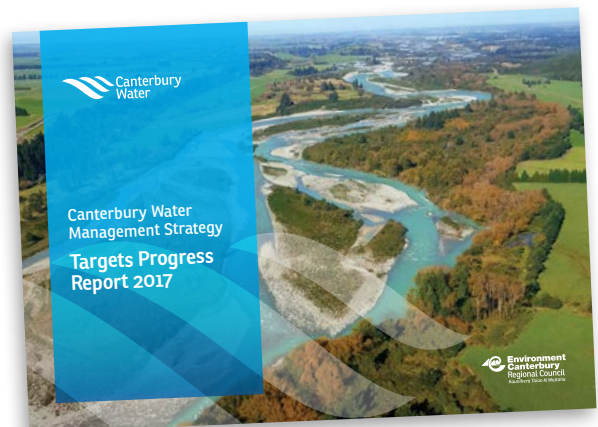
The MAR pilot project has resulted in improvements in groundwater levels and nitrate downstream of the project site.

Monitoring and Reporting on CWMS Targets

The Targets Progress Report 2017 is the third progress report on the CWMS and focused on the 2020 targets.

Chair, Dr Andy Pearce, Mayor Winton Dalley and Cr Claire McKay presented the report to the Mayoral Forum. Mayor Dalley described the history of the CWMS as not an easy one to tell as it is “...not a discrete concise story, it is an amalgam of many moving parts, climatic events, changing community expectations and environmental awareness, legislative changes, national policies and conflicting processes. Most importantly the CWMS embraced an experiment of a new process and a new way of decision making now widely referred to as the “collaborative” process”.

Dr Pearce presented the report and the Regional Committee’s conclusion that the report “was reasonable, balanced, fair and an accurate reflection on the targets progress”, however, he also highlighted the Regional Committee’s concern that there was a disconnect between some of the activity targets and the “real world” the community wished to see. The drinking water target was an area that required “urgent action”. Dr Pearce also noted that there were no targets between 2020 and 2040 and suggested that setting interim targets for 2025 and 2030 could help further focus the delivery of the CWMS.



CWMS Targets Biodiversity/Ecosystem Health and Braided Rivers

Over the past seven years zone committees across the region have contributed \$6.8million in Immediate Steps funding to 400 projects.

The projects will see more than 480,000 native seedlings planted and 420km of fencing to protect 17,000ha of riparian margins, wetlands, lagoon and native bush.

Information on each of these projects can now be found by clicking on the biodiversity page of Environment Canterbury’s State of Environment Reporting page at www.ecan.govt.nz/reporting.

The Regional Committee has contributed Immediate Steps funding to three multi-year, multi-party regional projects at Te Waihora and Wainono Lagoon and along braided rivers.

Challenges and opportunities

Infrastructure

When thinking of water infrastructure it is easy to jump to the conclusion it is all about dams, canals, energy generation and irrigation. But it is also about the three waters – drinking water, wastewater and stormwater (ie. \$54.7 billion worth of assets lying under our feet).

The contamination of drinking water supplies in Havelock North in 2016 and the failures of wastewater and stormwater infrastructure during weather events or during periods of peak demand have highlighted their vulnerability.

We expect local councils to prioritise investment in their water infrastructure in their new Long-Term Plans as well as look for new ways to make additional improvements.

This is an opportunity for the Regional Committee to think about how it can add value and accelerate progress toward the drinking water and surface water targets, in our towns and city.

Kaitiakitanga

There has been steady progress in normalising some of the Kaitiakitanga concepts (eg. Ki Uta Ki Tai) into the way zone committees conduct their business but progress has been slow to develop mahinga kai restoration and enhancement projects.

The appointment of a cultural land management adviser by Environment Canterbury to help farmers in the Selwyn Waihora zone improve mahinga kai as part of their land management is an exciting development. There is an opportunity for the Regional Committee to learn and share some of these experiences across the zones.

Recreation and Amenity

It is difficult to know what “a positive trend in the availability and/or quality of recreational opportunities in each zone (Recreation and Amenity 2020 target)” will look given the diversity of way people enjoy waterbodies.

The Regional Committee has been working to document various opportunities around the region such as jetboating, kayaking and swimming opportunities. The challenge for the committee is to now work with others to use this, and other information, to provide advice on a work programme to meet the 2020 and 2040 targets.

Availability of information

As our ability to generate and share data increases and new tools developed, more information is becoming publically available on websites such as Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (www.lawa.org.nz) and Environment Canterbury (www.ecan.govt.nz).

Trust is also growing enabling consent holders to form water user groups share data and work collectively to manage their takes to keep waterways above trigger levels that prompt restrictions. Such information will allow users, communities and regulators to better understand, visualise and manage our water resources and for the Regional Committee to tell this story.



Regional Committee Focus for 2018

Monitor Progress on;

- Actions underway to meet nutrient limits.
- Results from managed aquifer recharge and targeted and near stream augmentation pilot projects.
- Actions underway to improve three-waters infrastructure.

Provide Advice on;

- Actions to progress the amenity and recreation target area.
- Actions to protect and improve the ability of braided rivers to exert their natural character.

- Ensuring fish screens are working effectively.
- Bringing together data from multiple sources to tell the Rakaia story.
- Bridging the gap between actions and outcomes, recognising that in many cases there will be a time lag of years as biophysical systems adjust.
- Development of CWMS interim targets 2025 and 2030.

Celebrate, learn and share;

- Experiences from around the region

Regional Water Committee members

NGAI TAHU REPRESENTATIVES

Rebecca Clements, *Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu*
Nigel Harris, *Rūnanga - North Canterbury*
David Higgins, *Rūnanga - South Canterbury*
Riki Lewis, *Rūnanga - Mid Canterbury*

COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Sam Broughton, *Mid Canterbury District Councils*
Winton Dalley, *North Canterbury District Councils*
Peter McIlraith, *South Canterbury District Councils*
Sara Templeton, *Christchurch City Council*

ENVIRONMENT CANTEBURY REPRESENTATIVES

Rod Cullinane, *Environment Canterbury*
Claire McKay, *Environment Canterbury*

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Hugh Canard, Jane Demeter, Cole Groves,
Nicky Hyslop, Ross Millichamp,
Andy Pearce and Vicky Southworth.

ZONE REPRESENTATIVES

Ben Curry, *Zone representative Ashburton*
Michele Hawke,
Zone representative Hurunui-Waiapu
Sandra Hampstead-Tipene,
Zone representative Upper Waitaki
Ted Howard, *Zone representative Kaikōura*
Lance Kenyon, *Zone representative Christchurch-West Melton*
Thomas Kulpe,
Zone representative Banks Peninsula

Carolyn Latham,
Zone representative Waimakariri
Karaitiana Taiuru,
Zone representative Selwyn-Waihora
John Talbot, *Zone representative Orari-Temuka-Opihi-Pareora*
Sandra Hampstead-Tipene,
Zone representative Lower Waitaki-South Coastal Canterbury

GOVERNMENT OBSERVERS

Murray Doak, *Government observer*
Alistair Humphrey, *Government observer*
Nick Vincent, *Government observer*