

**BEFORE INDEPENDANT HEARING COMMISSIONERS  
APPOINTED BY THE CANTERBURY REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**UNDER:** the Resource Management Act 1991

**IN THE MATTER OF:** Proposed Plan Change 7 to the  
Canterbury Land and Water Regional  
Plan – Section 14: Orari-Temuka-  
Opihi-Pareora

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**UPDATE OF EVIDENCE OF CHAD & CHARLOTTE STEETSKAMP ON BEHALF  
OF:**

**ASHWICK FLAT DAIRY FARMS LIMITED (SUBMITTER No. 283)  
CASCADE IRRIGATION RACE LIMITED (SUBMITTER No. 159)**

Dated: 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

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1. The Cascade Irrigation Scheme (“Scheme”) is owned and operated by a collaborative group of local owner-operator farmers in the Fairlie Basin. We not only seek to irrigate our farms, but to do so in such a way that protects and preserves the environment for future generations, and encourage the thriving Fairlie community.
2. The users work collaboratively with technologically advanced real time monitoring and self-imposed restrictions to avoid putting the South Opuha River at risk.
3. Only **6km** of the 30km South Opuha River is affected by our scheme, between the intake and Lake Opuha. As noted by Fish & Game and Environment Canterbury, the river is already in a “Good to Excellent condition with a highly diverse range of fish species” in the Hayward et al ECan Memo dated 13 July 2017.



Image: 6km of River from Cascade Intake to Lake Opuha.

4. Furthermore we refer to the caucusing and Evidence provided by Greg Ryder on behalf of the FAWP and Opuha Water Limited to whom we are affiliated. The evidence and studies provided by Greg Ryder contains up to date and current information from the 2019-2020 irrigation season. Our interpretation of Dr Ryder’s studies is that during this time the river health was not impacted by low flows, and an increase in minimum flows would not improve the health of the river. We therefore question the need for any increases in minimum flow beyond Step 1 in the plan.
5. We have actively engaged in consultation taking part in the FAWP of which all interested parties were invited including farmers, Opuha Water Limited, expert

consultants, Fish and Game (Mark Webb), Timaru District Council (Judy Blakemore) and OTOP Zone Committee representatives (note that Iwi groups declined the invitation to attend).

6. We also felt extremely let down by the process in the ZIPA and especially its recommendations in Section 42a for a second step of increased minimum flows, when this was not part of the community-lead solution for the South Opuha arrived at by the FAWP and there was no evidence/explanation to support it. Through caucusing it is evident that the second step phase actually shows merely incremental improvements in ecology – but shows huge economic and social costs to the community that are far reaching.
7. Please refer to the information obtained from studies by Grant Porter:  
  
Our own farms farm (Grandview/Strathdale) show reductions in gross farm income of \$277k-\$332k across the stepped approach (which has been rebuked by report 42) – *equates to approximately 4-6 staff member salaries, the total 2030 implications of the group to \$1.5m ANNUALLY. This is effectively the amounts that will be removed from the Fairlie economy and impact community population to increasingly detrimental results.*
8. At a governmental level, and in response to New Zealand's current challenging economic environment, much has been said about the need for our primary sectors to support the recovery of New Zealand's damaged economy and the increasing problem of unemployment.
9. We would like to be able to support such ventures; however such a vast reduction in farm incomes will severely inhibit our ability to provide on farm employment and support the millions of dollars spent by the current government on such initiatives.
10. Fairlie is a small community, which has been buoyed by the success of the farming operations under irrigation. Any change to minimum flows and cuts to allocation would have drastic ramifications for the wider community.
11. There will be flow on effects from any change to the existing minimum flow regime for the South Opuha River for local businesses – severely reducing the economical productivity of the Fairlie and South Canterbury district as well as those further afield. For every dollar earned on these farms, a large proportion

goes back to the wider (regional) community/economy. This is further addressed by Caroline Saunders in her report for the FAWP evidence.

12. Ourselves and the Users are concerned that the financial pressure resulting from reduced production, reduced capital land values, and the management of debt servicing, could have significant implications for the mental health and wellbeing of ourselves and our families – not to underestimate the mental health impacts of the owners and employees of local businesses that would see huge reductions in trade from reduced farming activity.
13. **To See the Officer’s recommendations to bring forward the PC7 2025 minimum flows to “current” (i.e. when PC7 becomes operative) and 2030 minimum flows to 2025, this is a major “kick in the teeth” for us and our water users’ group. Bringing forward the far-reaching economic consequences as aforementioned.**
14. **We (Charlotte & Chad and the members of the water users group)** are committed to the mutual benefit of the South Opuha River and the current irrigation system. Any changes to minimum flows needs to be driven by an informed decision making process, with proven benefits to the 6km of affected river. **This cannot be over-emphasised and is fundamental to this process.** Any changes should only be made if there are quantifiable significant enhancements to river health, based on concrete factual and identifiable data (refer expert evidence from Grant Porter, Greg Ryder, Keri Johnston, and Caroline Saunders).
15. It is crucial to realise that this is a unique situation, and needs to be considered as such by the Hearings Panel when assessing and making its decision.
16. Please see next page for Photos and videos attached to email.





Chad coaching our local children's rugby team







Our children and their friends enjoying swimming and boating on Lake Opuha





Some of the children who live on our farms!



Our staff and their partners.



Our staff and their children fishing in the South Opuha River and Lake Opuha





South Opuha River and Bridge





The intake for Cascade Irrigation Limited on the South Opuha River



Fish love this spot, as you can see!

Please also see videos attached to this email.