

The Restorative Programme for Lowland Streams, summary of community input. November 2006

Firstly: Thank you on behalf of the Advisory Group and Environment Canterbury for coming along to one of the meetings held at Dunsandel on 2 October or at Leeston on 6 October. For those who weren't able to be there, this summary will give you an insight into the thinking on the Restorative Streams Programme amongst your community and may help you form your own view.

One of the dominant themes through all of these meetings was the importance of talking to people and of providing a forum for water-users (in the widest sense) to make a contribution to ensuring the best possible outcomes for the sustainable management of water. Your insight will be invaluable in helping create a common-sense and collaborative approach to what is essentially a review process.

There were four meetings held in Dunsandel and Leeston. Each meeting began with an introduction from the Advisory Group chair, Dr. Terry Heiler followed by a presentation from Environment Canterbury on the rationale behind the programme and what it is intended to achieve. However, the bulk of the meetings was given to break-out sessions that asked two key questions:

- 1. How can Environment Canterbury's Restorative Programme for Lowland Streams best be implemented?***
- 2. What other actions could contribute to the objectives of the programme?***

The many views expressed were captured by Environment Canterbury's break-out facilitators and have been summarised in the accompanying document as promised. In creating this summary, comments have been left in the original wording wherever possible although in some cases they may have been combined with opinions on the same theme. This has been done in order to make the record shorter and more readable whilst giving you some measure of what ideas were repeated most often and therefore how widely those views were held.

There were a great many questions asked at the four meetings and these, by agreement, were "parked" – to be answered later. The responses to those questions are also enclosed and will be posted on Environment Canterbury's website shortly.

At the fourth meeting of the Restorative Programme for Lowland Streams Advisory Group, held on 4 December, the group strongly recommended that further consultation with the community through public meetings should take place early in 2007, followed by cluster group meetings based on "communities of interest" to discuss more local issues. The timing and subject matter for any further meetings will be confirmed by Environment Canterbury in due course.

For further information: Dr Terry Heiler, 03 347 8365.

*In recognition of climate and abstraction-driven water shortages and the growing demand for freshwater in Canterbury, the **Restorative Programme for Lowland Streams** is an Environment Canterbury and community collaboration aimed at improving the environmental health of lowland streams and water-bodies.*

Environmental flows will be provided for through setting sustainable limits on commercial water-use according to the amount of water available. Benefits to water-users include an increased reliability of supply.

HOW BEST TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAMME

Opinions/statements on the programme	<p>No leadership over the problem – no overall big picture thinking (central govt involvement mentioned in association with some of these comments) X 7</p> <p>Need evidence that programme will have desired effects (water back in streams) X 6</p> <p>Unconvinced there is a need for the programme at all (don't yet accept that reduced lowland streamflows are due to abstraction) X 5</p> <p>Accepted that flows are lower than historically (e.g. Harts Creek) and that issue needs addressing X 4</p> <p>Certainty of supply important X 4</p> <p>Doubts about evidence presented (effects inconclusive or exaggerated) X 3</p> <p>Concerned consent reviews are not the best approach X 3</p> <p>One rule for everyone won't work, flexible approach required X 3</p> <p>Is the value of the streams worth restoring? Too late? Need proof. X 3</p> <p>Onus of proof for cumulative adverse environmental effects lies with ECan X 2</p> <p>Can't predict future seasons accurately (in relation to varying annual limit from year to year?) X 2</p> <p>Low flows are caused by water take further up catchment, they weren't low until recently X 2</p> <p>Advisory group and steering group need to use this feedback X 3</p> <p>Unfair emphasis on farmers when forestry activity has significant influence X 2</p> <p>Process is disappointing when landowners have cooperated in other processes – goodwill built in other processes need to be used X 1</p> <p>Programme will <u>decrease</u> reliability of supply X 1</p> <p>Consistency in consents important X 1</p> <p>Programme is all bad news X 1</p> <p>There are clear opportunities for consent-holders to work together X 1</p> <p>Restorative programme (is a) good way to go X 1</p> <p>Annual allocation of water resources is supported X 1</p>
Implementation	<p>Need to set targets for restoration of flows (how much and when) X 8</p> <p>Continue/encourage working with water user groups X 5</p> <p>Put consent holders into groups – geographically and according to similarities in the effects their abstraction causes X 4</p> <p>Process should be: Metering and analyse results, <u>then</u> implement appropriate process X 2</p> <p>Should be annual allocation – farmers allowed to manage accordingly X 2</p> <p>Identify those water takes that are hydraulically connected to streams and focus on those first X 2</p> <p>Look at international examples of how water is used/managed elsewhere X 2</p> <p>Should be an even seasonal allocation, i.e. percentage of annual allocation (ability to vary amount of water available year on year) X 1</p> <p>Treat all the consents the same, call them in together to be reviewed X 1</p> <p>Activate conditions on all reviewed consents at the same time X 1</p> <p>Seasonally varied allocation should be based on percentage of rainfall X 1</p> <p>Seasonal volume and rate set must be reasonable X 1</p> <p>Environmental flows need to be flexible to take account of dry years X 1</p> <p>Needs a model / sample across section of people to test implementation issues X 1</p> <p>Water annually allocated, seasonal average based on several years X 1</p> <p>Need compromise that allows for rise in standard of living while preserving the environment X 1</p>

Science	<p>Not enough research re the system; water flows, how different parts of the zone interact, wells, recharge, underground water, sea level etc. Required before implementation. This information should be made available to farmers and the general public X 23</p> <p>Look at 'subzones' – complex system including local factors, so need complex monitoring X 16</p> <p>Science needs to independent, peer reviewed, non-adversarial, agreed X 11</p> <p>Need info on water allocation in relation to soil types, water retention properties of land should be considered in setting allocation limits. X 7</p> <p>Identify environmental values of man-made drains and effects of drain clearance work X 7</p> <p>Lack of faith in science behind setting of annual limits and varying year by year X 4</p> <p>Is there an understanding of hydraulics in upper catchment? X 3</p> <p>Use existing data/science to determine which wells are hydraulically connected X 3</p> <p>Set up other success measures that are non water volume-based, especially habitat, contaminants, water quality, ecological quality X 3</p> <p>Create map of underground water storage X 3</p> <p>Conduct research specific to each stream. Link to Stream Care Groups X 2</p> <p>Waterways need to be ranked – which are more important/have higher environmental/ecological values X 1</p> <p>More investigation of effects of activities on water quality X 1</p> <p>Sustainability survey of current land practices X 1</p>
Cost	<p>Those driving and benefiting from the programme should share cost of implementing it, ie ratepayers, environmental groups, Central Govt., ECan. X 17</p> <p>Financial implications of annual allocation will be huge (process costs and income loss), could cripple businesses X 5</p> <p>Economic work needs to be done – how much will it cost everyone. Social costs as well as commercial costs X 5</p> <p>Costs of metering vs use of electricity consumption, assess volume calculated by units used – perhaps as an interim solution X 4</p> <p>Incentives for efficiency–good practice rewarded. Saving water shouldn't mean cut in allocation X 4</p> <p>Need to firm up on the actual likely cost, scale of process and ongoing costs are biggest worry X 3</p> <p>Bureaucratic process lengthy; cost of resource consent high –both should be streamlined/reduced X 3</p> <p>Shouldn't have to pay (review costs?) if you can prove water take doesn't have environmental effect or work already done X 3</p> <p>Water has got a cost (RDR \$27/ha, Te Pirita \$400/ha), pumping costs, consent and compliance monitoring costs X 2</p> <p>Costs for Lake openings will increase with more water in streams, cost to ratepayers X 1</p> <p>Water users have invested big money X 1</p>
Timing/phasing of implementation	<p>Timing of taking benchmark for seasonally varied limit critical X 6</p> <p>Implement gradually as required information becomes available and as part of overall strategic plan X 5</p> <p>Time (needed?) to plan and budget for changes. X 2</p> <p>Concern that the process is happening too quickly X 2</p> <p>Community should decide when implementation should start – when level of knowledge has been reached – community to share knowledge with ECan X 1</p> <p>Wait for decision on consents being heard before progressing X 1</p>
Using local knowledge	<p>Get community buy-in through continued consultation with farmers on how to get water back into streams X 8</p> <p>ECan come and visit farmers at individual sites and record local knowledge and historical data X 7</p> <p>Engage with other interested parties in area (non-consent holders?) X 2</p>
Communication	<p>Consultative communication between farmers/landowners & ECan needs to continue X 5</p> <p>Increase public awareness – poor perception of how farmers use the land and why different management techniques are used X 4</p>

Equity	<p>Fairness – everyone needs to be treated the same – domestic and agriculture X 3 Monitor everyone’s wells X 2 Restrictions should affect whole catchment, ie whole Rakaia Selwyn catchment X 2 Managing new applicants – possible grant of A/B permits X 1 Everyone needs to share the burden (unclear whether impact of seasonally reduced allocation or cost was meant here?), not just the people close to the streams X 1</p>
Consents	<p>Flexibility of water use. Farming systems: consents shouldn’t be tied to land use X 5 Moratorium on new consents should be enforced X 4 Allow capacity for negotiation between consent holders and ECan X 2 Need allocations to be fair and based on need, based on past averages and trends or specific to zone type X 2 ECan to do a stocktake of resource consents – a “tidy-up”, ie what is consented, where they are, how much water is used and where meters currently are. What are current conditions on existing resource consents? X 2 Restrict activities permitted according to amount of water available X 1 Water not needed should be surrendered X 1 Question value of asking neighbours consent for wells – creates conflict X 1 Important to ensure neighbours know what consents are being applied for close to them X 1 ECan should start collecting data through (new?) installations X 1 How do we deal with people who find ways around the restrictions? X 1</p>
Metering	<p>Support metering of water takes X 11. Use electricity meters or delivery pressure to monitor take (lower costs than meters) X 5 Spot monitor takes more regularly–or encourage self monitoring (cheaper) X 4 Meter certain wells in certain areas where information picture is incomplete X 2 Some meters will be more reliable than others, are they accurate – what do we use? X 2 What will ECan do with water meter data – should only be used for purpose it was collected X 1 Flow meters need to be more user friendly to collect data X 1 Metering could be the thin end of the wedge and bring in costs (charging for water?) X 1 Some systems do not allow for flow meters X 1 Make metering voluntary but consents without meters should be reviewed and conditions added to those consents X 1</p>
Miscellaneous statements (not related to implementation)	<p>Are we just seeing the results of a natural process (low rainfall)? There have always been dry spells X 10 ECan’s over allocation has caused this problem, they should admit fault, accept responsibility and a proportion of the costs X 7 Need tradeable water rights X 6 Involving lawyers and consultants will increase costs, best to keep out of court X 3 Co-ordinate Ecan activities relating to water and improve internal communications within ECan to avoid info loss and duplication X 3 Seasonal limits are likely to kick-in when there is most demand for water X 2 Community has to decide how much water we need in streams and at what time X 2 Consider multi-use and management of resources/services, e.g. dams, fisheries, electricity and agricultural use, etc. X 2 Bigger picture should consider more than just water X 2 ECan is just shifting the goal posts ie shallow wells now no longer reliable, first instructions to go deeper now questioning whether that is right X 2 Will probably go to Environment Court X 2 Accept that progress leaves a “footprint” X 1 Recreationists don’t expect instant results but both flows and <u>ecology</u> need to be restored X 1 Deep wells in this area (Leeston) more reliable than in the upper part of the catchment, ie here we have had recharge X 1 WQN9 needs to be resolved before it is bought through in the programme X 1. Water trading – Council facilitating this by the way they structure consents X 1 Water-users have already invested big money X 1 Global warming/sustainability is a bigger issue. We need to be looking and planning further ahead X 1 ECan should have seen this problem years ago and tackled it then X 1 ECan needs to listen to consent-holders X 1 Gravel abstraction and management is linked to flows and instream values in the Selwyn X 1</p>

What else could be done?

Alternative suggestions that could put water in streams	<p>Use water race to distribute water into gravels that create artificial recharge or enhance recharge using shallow bores X 14</p> <p>Combine programme with water efficiency study and initiatives. ECan could assist with info X 10</p> <p>Bring water into the area, eg irrigation race into Selwyn from Rakaia X 5</p> <p>Soil moisture testing to be used in conjunction with metering for more efficient use X 3</p> <p>Restrict land use to more appropriate land use water use systems X 2</p> <p>Change timing/frequency of opening of Lake Ellesmere so that it sits at a higher level creating backflow into streams X 3</p> <p>Sediment may be reducing flows – not an excuse, could be dredge X 1d.</p> <p>Remove willows X 1</p> <p>Practical controls – rather than restrictions/regulation X 1</p> <p>Spend same money on Central Plains – cost benefit analysis of options X 1</p> <p>Place artificial barriers in streams to retain flows in times of drought X 1</p>
Storage	<p>Water storage is the solution, harnessing water when river flows high X 17</p> <p>Support Central Plains Water system, ECan should fast track it X 7</p> <p>Dam Rakaia River/major rivers for water storage/power X 2</p> <p>Raise levels in Lake Coleridge and put overflow down Selwyn X 1</p>
Adaptive management	<p>People need time ahead to change use of water, e.g. a minimum of 8 months X 4</p> <p>Consideration of species (grasses), stock, farming that require less water X 1</p> <p>Vital that information is specific and accurate if farming decisions are to be based on it X 1</p> <p>Types of land management on the plains have changed from types suited to landscape to profit-based enterprises such as dairying. X 1</p>
For consideration once more water is in streams	<p>Wider catchment issues: water quality in Lake Ellesmere X 3</p> <p>How to improve water quality X 1</p> <p>Implementation of fencing requirements on lowland streams – must be appropriate to land use and stock run X 1</p>

For further information on the work of the Advisory Group, contact Dr Terry Heiler, 03 347 8365.