

## Resource consent application decision priority

The 'application decision priority queue' refers to the order in which resource consent applications will be determined. It determines the order in which resource consent applications have an opportunity to obtain consent to take, use, dam and divert water.

This becomes important if the allocation limits in Rule 2 or the annual allocation volumes specified in Rule 6 of the Waitaki Regional Plan are approaching or exceed the specified maximum. It also may influence the ability of resource consent holders to take water during times of low water availability.

Officers from Environment Canterbury and the Otago Regional Council are working to assess all the resource consent applications within the Waitaki Catchment and to identify the date that each application became publicly notifiable. The resource consent applications have been ordered according to those dates. This process will not distinguish between resource consent applications seeking to replace an existing consent and resource consent applications for new allocations.

If a resource consent application has not been deemed to be publicly notifiable at any stage, it will not be included in the priority list. Those applications that are publicly notifiable will be included in the priority list on the date that they are deemed to be publicly notifiable.

The Commissioners will make the final determination of the resource consent application decision priority and Environment Canterbury officers will assist in decision-making through providing information, including a written officers' report to the commissioners. This report will be made available on Environment Canterbury's website. Each consent applicant will also be advised in writing.



Photo courtesy of Bruce Parker

The Plan can be viewed on Environment Canterbury's website: [www.ecan.govt.nz/our+environment/water/](http://www.ecan.govt.nz/our+environment/water/)

Help us save on costs and reduce paper waste by registering to receive future Waitaki RAPs by email. We will then add you to an electronic mailing list for this purpose only.

Simply send an email from the email address you would like us to use to: customer services at [ecinfo@ecan.govt.nz](mailto:ecinfo@ecan.govt.nz) with the message "Please send me future electronic copies of Waitaki RAP to this email address". You can unsubscribe at any time through sending a message to the same ECan address.



# Waitaki RAP

Update on the Waitaki Catchment  
Water Allocation Regional Plan

April 2007

## Introduction

*Waitaki RAP is a newsletter published by Environment Canterbury. It aims to keep people in touch with issues relating to the Waitaki Catchment Water Allocation Regional Plan (the Plan). This edition provides answers to some commonly asked questions relevant to existing consent holders and new consent applicants.*



## Commissioners

Environment Canterbury recognises the great importance of decisions made regarding the allocation and use of water in the Waitaki Catchment, both to those who live there and on a national level. To reflect the high importance Environment Canterbury places on those decisions Peter Skelton, a retired Environment Court judge and Associate Professor at Lincoln University has been appointed to consider the resource consent applications in the Waitaki catchment. Additional commissioners with relevant technical skills will be appointed to assist Commissioner Skelton to hear and decide the resource consent applications.

Commissioner Skelton's first task has been to decide whether applications lodged by Meridian Energy Limited for the North Bank Tunnel Concept, and Meridian Energy Limited and the South Canterbury Irrigation Trust for the Hunter Downs Irrigation Scheme can proceed on a staged basis. Subject to some modifications, Commissioner Skelton has ruled that these applications can proceed on a staged basis. Consent applications to take and use water from the Waitaki catchment will be considered prior to applications associated with the construction of the proposed schemes.

## Water quality

The Waitaki Regional Plan directs the Commissioners to consider the environmental effects of the use of water when considering a resource consent application to take, use, dam or divert water. The following work has been, or is being, undertaken in the Waitaki catchment to gain an understanding of the effects of different water uses on water quality:

- o Preparation of a report commissioned by Meridian Energy Limited and titled 'Water Quality Impacts from Irrigation Development Upper Waitaki' released in December 2005 (known as the Meridian report).
- o A review of the Meridian report by Environment Canterbury and by the Upper Waitaki Water Quality Trust;
- o A repeat of the work undertaken in the Meridian report by Environment Canterbury within the Hakataramea catchment by Environment Canterbury (nearing completion);
- o Individual resource consent applicants being requested to provide further information to Environment Canterbury on the effects of their water use on water quality;
- o Development and implementation of a multi-year water quality investigation programme within the upper Waitaki catchment by the Upper Catchment Water Quality Trust (underway);
- o Co-ordination by Environment Canterbury of a 'collaborative science' forum in December 2006 to explore water quality impacts and responses in the upper Waitaki catchment.

While being a 'first cut' assessment, the Meridian-commissioned report indicates that irrigation in the upper Waitaki catchment as a whole can be expected to result in adverse water quality effects on rivers and the downstream lakes of Benmore, Aviemore and Waitaki.

The Commissioners will consider the effects of irrigation on water quality, the significance of these effects and the merits of any proposed mitigation when deciding the resource consent applications before them.

Environment Canterbury's website has a set of "Frequently Asked Questions" on the Waitaki Plan page at:

<http://www.ecan.govt.nz/Our+Environment/Water/Rivers/Waitaki+Water+allocation+Regional+Plan+operative.htm>.

For more information relating to consents in the Waitaki catchment, please contact customer services at Environment Canterbury on 03 371 4909. For more general information, call 0800 EC INFO. (0800 324636).



Waitaki River Power Generator at Bells Pond.

## Resource consent notification and non-notification decisions

Notification and non-notification decisions determine the manner in which a resource consent application will be processed. In particular, other parties may only lodge submissions and participate in the processing of resource consent applications that are notified (to the public or to specific individuals). A public hearing need only be held for resource consent applications that are notified and where submitters wish to speak to their submissions.

The presumption in the Resource Management Act is that a resource consent application will be publicly notified unless a decision-maker is satisfied that the adverse effects of the activity on the environment will be minor. Even if the adverse effects on the environment are assessed as likely to be minor, special circumstances may mean it is appropriate to publicly notify a resource consent application.

Decisions on whether or not to publicly notify many of the resource consent applications before Environment Canterbury will be made by Commissioner Skelton in late March or early April after receiving written advice from Environment Canterbury officers. Applicants will be advised in writing as soon as possible after those decisions have been made.

For those applications that are publicly notified, notices will be placed in the Christchurch Press, the Timaru Herald and the Otago Daily Times. A smaller notice will be placed in the Oamaru Mail, referring interested parties to the full notice in the other papers mentioned above. In addition, people living in the catchment and other affected parties will receive information through the mail. For those publicly notified applications, applicants and submitters will have the opportunity to present their views through a formal hearing process.

Information on, and a summary, of notified resource consent applications will be able to be found on Environment Canterbury's website at <http://www.ecan.govt.nz/Resource+Consents/publicNotifications.htm>. You can also make an on-line submission from the same page. The summary will be held for public reference in hard-copy form at venues to be specified in the public notices. Alternatively, you can call our customer services (0800 324 636) and ask where you can view a copy.

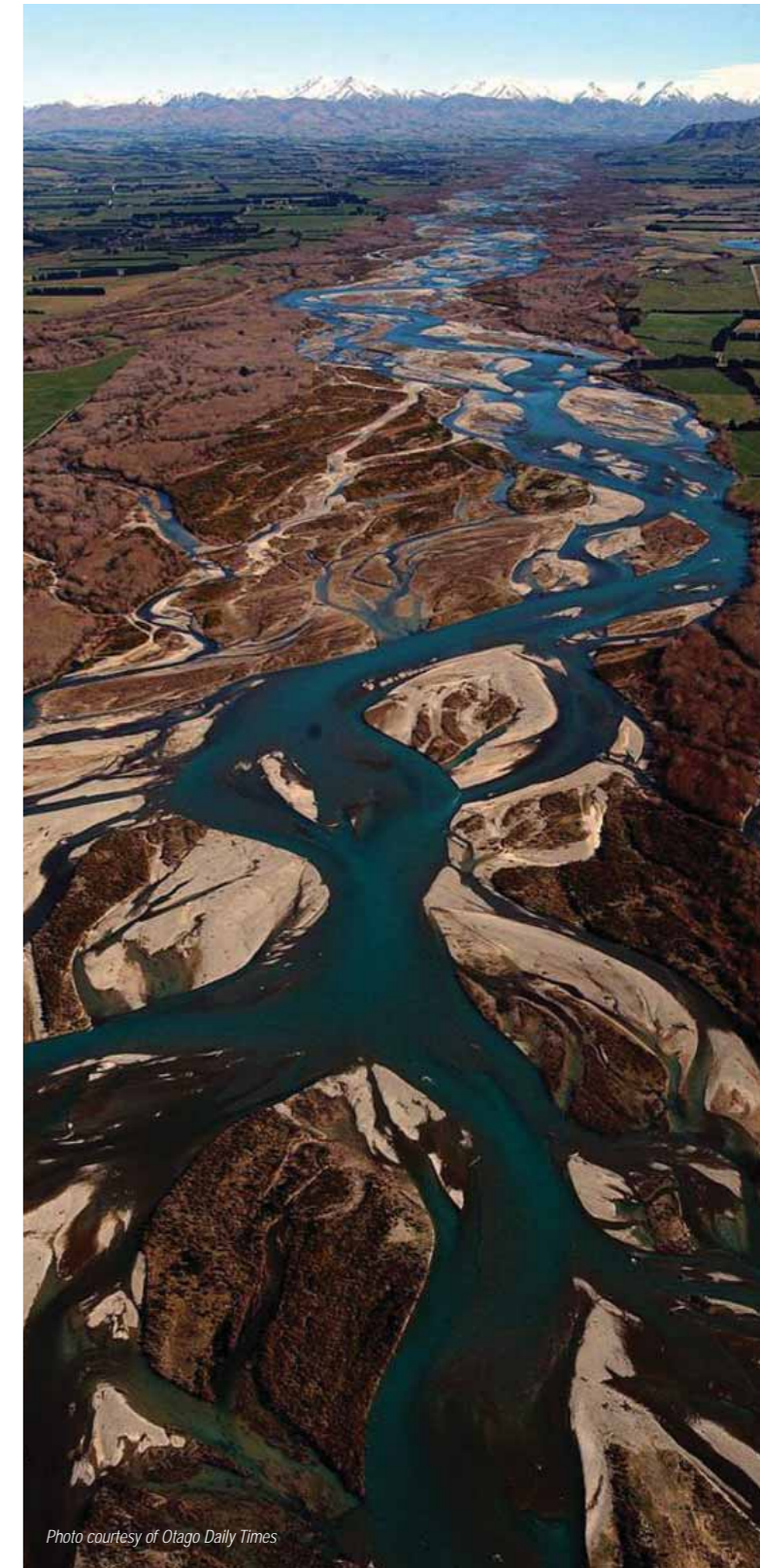


Photo courtesy of Otago Daily Times

## Waitaki RAP