Upper Waitaki - Work Programme Progress update 30 June 2018

Upper Waitaki Work Programme Summary:
Over the 2017 – 2018 year there has been significant activity across a number of focus areas. Land Management Advisors from the zone team have undertaken numerous visits with farmers and landowners to discuss and progress farming at Good Management Practice and the local requirements in Farm Environment Plans. Significant resources were put into supporting biodiversity projects, working alongside organisations such as the Department of Conservation and Fish & Game and with landowners and the community. Projects such as the improvement of Willow Burn Stream have progressed, with more fencing to exclude stock, more native planting and the removal of crack willows.

Additional opportunities for communicating with the public, such as informative signage, will continue into the 2017 – 2018 year, alongside projects such as the SHIFT programme, which will help farmers to identify risks to sediment loss. We continued to provide scientific monitoring and insight into the water quality of the lakes, particularly in high use recreational areas.

Outcome	Status	Progress update
Good management practice (GMP) All land is managed at Good Management Practice (GMP) and collectives encouraged and supported	On Schedule	• Land Management Advisors undertook visits with farmers throughout the zone to discuss and progress the activity required to support farming at GMP. • A research project on hill country development (SHiFT programme) is underway to assist farmers to identify risks to sediment loss and make more informed decisions resulting in better site selection and management of risk to soil loss. This will be through the development of a decision tool supported by farmer guides
Biodiversity There is increased protection and enhancement of the zones biodiversity	On Schedule	• Significant funding ($38,519) was approved and provided to help landowners and communities undertake biodiversity projects. This includes: multiple agencies on invasive species such as wilding pines, didymo and lake weed, as well as landowners and community groups working to improve biodiversity. • A full report on Immediate Steps Funding monies allocated to date was undertaken, and this has led to a process of Zone Committee members following up on projects to assess how they have progressed and whether there is a need for further support. As a result of this we are assured that a population of Bignose galaxias that was initially protected a couple of years ago is still going strong. Also, this led to further planting of carex carried out on the Omarama stream • A joint project, allocated funding by the water zone committee, has been set up to help stop the spread of invasive cotoneaster in the Waitaki Lakes area. Environment Canterbury, the Ohau Conservation Trust, the Department of Conservation and landowners have all been working together to control cotoneaster both in domestic gardens and in farmland. f people have cotoneaster on their property, they are being encouraged to destroy and remove it. Information flyers and posters have been distributed to town-based audiences and the project team members are working directly with key landowners to help with destroying the weed. • Lake Poaka, is getting some help to reduce invasive trees that are clogging its shoreline and surrounding wetlands. A new joint project to reduce alder trees around the lake is now underway by the Department of Conservation (DOC), Central South Island Fish & Game and Environment Canterbury (with funding allocated by the zone committee). The project will also benefit a number of plant and bird species whose habitats are threatened by the invasive trees. Opening up the wetlands would make it a more attractive habitat for kaki to feed and nest in.
Water Quality Water Quality is improved in priority waterbodies requiring remedial action	On Schedule	• The Trophic Level Index (TLI) is used to give an overall picture of the health of a lake. It is calculated once a year, combining the monitoring data of four parameters (total nitrogen, total phosphorus, water clarity and chlorophyll-a). Lake Alexandrina and Lake Pukaki changed trophic bands based on these results. Similar changes have been seen in the past. Lake Benmore has been relatively stable over the last few years. Two lake sites in the zone that have previously been considered unsuitable for swimming (Loch Laird and Lake Alexandrina) improved their grade and are now suitable but graded fair. Further up-to-date information on the current state of water quality in the lakes and rivers in the zone can be found at www.lawa.org.nz. • Unfortunately, some lakes and waterways in the zone have been affected by invasive species such as didymo (Didymosphenia geminata), lake snow (Lindavia intermedia) and lake weed (Lagarosiphon major) and Environment Canterbury staff have been working with other agencies to monitor and investigate these occurrences.

Outcome	Status	Progress update
		• A biosecurity advocacy officer, supported by both the Ministry for Primary Industries and Environment Canterbury, was out and about over the Christmas – New Year period to remind recreationalists to "check, clean and dry" boats and equipment when moving from one waterway to the next. • The Willow Burn Stream project, which has been allocated $171,000 of funding from the Immediate Steps programme, aims to improve water quality and protect the biodiversity values within the catchment. Water monitoring shows that parts of the stream have high phosphate and nitrate levels, as well as sediment and E. coli. Many of the landowners involved in the project have now fenced all or some of their waterways to exclude stock. Work has also been carried out to remove crack willow infestations and improve the nohoanga food gathering site. Native carex planting is also being used to suppress weed growth. Work will continue next year to complete fencing of high-risk areas, particularly in the most high-value biodiversity areas, such as native wetlands. The stream is a tributary of the Ahuriri River and a priority waterway for the water zone committee.
Community Ownership Widespread ownership of catchment health by the community	On Schedule	• Visitor numbers to the zone are rising rapidly, putting a strain on current wastewater infrastructure (toilets and treatment facilities). Litter and the risk of the introduction and spread of invasive freshwater species is also increasing. The increase in revenue coming into the zone is not sufficient to respond to these pressures so a national response is needed. It is hoped that the government agencies that will be working closer together will provide opportunities to upgrade facilities and increase awareness. • The committee sponsored a "Love Your Lakes" campaign to encourage visitors and recreationalists to use waste disposal facilities. This is the second year of the campaign and included advertising on the radio. • The committee also supported a Canal Clean Up day around Twizel and gave 'Love your Lakes' reusable shopping bags as a thank you to those that volunteered to clean up litter at the event. • The Otematata Wetlands Walkway restoration project received $13,000 of funding for further development and planting. This follows a previous grant of $12,000 in 2016 – also funded through the Immediate Steps programme and supported by Environment Canterbury's biodiversity team. Ten years ago, the wetlands site was a relic of the Benmore dam construction. What wasn't covered in gravel pits was overgrown with weeds, like gorse and broom. Now, the site is a popular recreation area and much closer to its goal of returning to native biodiversity. The Otematata Ratepayers Association says the walkway is now a busy – and accessible – spot for anyone wanting to get close to nature. They have also noticed more native wildlife returning to the area, including bellbirds and pūkeko. Supporting community biodiversity projects such as the Otematata Wetlands is part of the Upper Waitaki Water Zone Committee's aim to create a corridor of natives from mountains to the sea – ki uta ki tai. • The zone committee held a hāngī at Omarama Stream and recognised taonga species such as the longfin eel. • Omarama School children were invited to Omarama Station by rūnanga and landowners Richard and Annabelle Subtil to learn about its native tuna relocation programme and to join in the Zone Committee hāngī after its November meeting. John Wilkie, rūnanga representative on the zone committee, explained the importance of relocating tuna – native longfin eel - which are considered a taonga (treasure) having lived in our lakes, swamps, rivers and streams for more than 23 million years. The project, which has also been supported by Meridian Energy, has been trapping and moving the migrating adult tuna back downstream below the dams, to help increase their numbers and allow them to breed at sea.
Plans and Rules are understood and complied with There is widespread community understanding of and compliance with the Waitaki sub-regional section of the LWRP.	On Schedule	• Land Management Advisors and Biodiversity staff have continued to work alongside land owners and consent holders to support the understanding of plans and rules across the zone. This has supported the development of Farm Environment Plans, and has a focus on including local requirements under the subregional plans.
Improved Scientific Knowledge We have increased catchment knowledge in priority areas (science) and we understand the effectiveness of interventions (monitoring)	On Schedule	• Work has continued on the development of the Integrated Monitoring Framework, and this is supporting further work with the Omarama Stream Water user group, and the identification of possible sources of phosphorus and nitrogen. This work also feeds into the management of water quality in Lake Benmore • Science investigations are complete or underway to support the following issues in the Zone: - Lake Middleton Hydrology - Movement of nutrients and water in the Wairepo Arm - Loch Laird Faecal Source Tracking