

# 2018 Annual Report

## Engaging with young people a key focus for 2018



Bill Thomas,  
Ashburton Water  
Zone Committee Chair

The Ashburton Water Zone Committee had a busy and productive year and I am very grateful to the other members of the committee for their time and commitment. I especially wish to thank Gordon Guthrie whose membership concluded at the end of 2018, having served a massive eight years on the committee.

I would like to express how valuable Councillor David Caygill has been to our committee. We appreciate his great knowledge and understanding of the issues and the Resource Management Act.

We were pleased to see Plan Change 2 to the Land and Water Regional Plan (covering the Hinds/Hekeao Plains area) become operative on 1 June, which stems from the Ashburton Zone Implementation Plan Addendum.

Engaging with youth was a focus for the zone

committee this year. We were inspired by a presentation from Wakanui School on their landscape concept and management plan for Wakanui Beach. The students worked with Forest and Bird, the Ashburton District Council, and the community to collect and propagate seeds before holding a planting day.

The Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) trial continues to progress well with the opening of the Hinds River Recharge site. Early indications show significant reduction in groundwater nitrate levels downstream of the MAR site.

A key priority for the committee is increasing the minimum flows of the Hakatere/Ashburton River to 6,000 litres/second, in line with the Land and Water Regional Plan for 2023. Two workshops interpreting the scientific modelling were held in 2018 and this work will continue into early 2019.

## Key achievements 2018

- Allocated about \$70,000 for community driven projects that aim to protect and enhance the natural environment.
- Increased monitoring of land use practices to protect Community Drinking Water Zones and ensure a safe and reliable supply of water.
- Investigations of microbiological contamination in the Hakatere/Ashburton River at State Highway 1 established that faecal contamination is predominantly of an avian source, from highly valued indigenous riverbed bird species. Steps to minimise other controllable faecal sources, such as land runoff and pest species, remain important.
- The Hinds River Recharge site was officially opened in September with 600 native plantings and the first release of water.
- Supported Environment Canterbury's Braided River (BRIDGE) Project to develop a better approach to identifying the extent of the "river bed" on a braided river.
- Plan Change 2 to the Land and Water Regional Plan (recommended in the Zone Implementation Plan Addendum) became operative on 1 June 2018. This plan change sets limits, targets, timeframes and additional policies and rules on water quantity and quality for the Hinds/Hekeao Plains Area.

*Protecting two wetlands in the Hinds area ensure habitats of freshwater mussels and native fish are not affected by grazing stock. A small population of the mussels have been found in the Upper Hinds Catchment in a stream in Swamp Grass wetland. This 8ha area is covered with silver tussock, carex, and native plants that provide shelter for native species along the stream margins. Immediate Steps funding has been granted to help the area regenerate.*





# Delivering the community's vision for freshwater

The Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) puts finding solutions for freshwater management in the hands of the community, with support from councils, Ngāi Tahu, and others. The strategy sets out freshwater goals and targets to deliver the community's vision for freshwater.











**“To gain the greatest cultural, economic, environmental, recreational and social benefits from our water resources within a sustainable framework both now and for future generations.”**

Each of the ten community-led water zone committees work collaboratively to develop freshwater recommendations to ensure council plans give effect to these goals and targets.

Within each target area there are several specific time-bound targets to be achieved and these are monitored and reported on to ensure progress is being made.

The target areas are shown below – read some of the stories about what is being done in the zone to achieve delivery on these on the next page.

## CWMS Targets

|  |                                     |   |                |   |  |  |                                |   |                                 |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|----------------|---|--|--|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|  | Ecosystem health and biodiversity   |  | Kaitiakitanga  |  | Recreational and amenity opportunities |  | Irrigated land area            |  | Regional and national economies |
|  | Natural character of braided rivers |  | Drinking water |  | Water use efficiency                   |  | Energy security and efficiency |  | Environmental limits            |

## MAR Community trust formed

A community trust is being set up to progress long-term Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) in Mid Canterbury.

In 2016, a pilot MAR site was established at Lagmhor where infiltration basins (which act like big leaky ponds) are filled with high-quality clean water which seeps down and recharges the groundwater.

Recent results show groundwater levels around the recharge site have risen and nitrate concentrations have decreased.

A second site has already been established near the Hinds River and testing is underway at nine more sites.

The Ashburton Water Zone Committee gave its endorsement to the trust at its November meeting.

MAR is seen as an effective tool for improving water quality and quantity in the district. It will help reduce nitrate levels, increase groundwater storage and improve biodiversity in lowland streams







## Local farmers chip in to help improve water quality

Water quality in Hinds Plains streams has been given a helping hand thanks to the work of landowners and scientists from the University of Canterbury.

Over the past four years, three local projects received close to \$70,000 in Immediate Steps funding from the Ashburton Water Zone Committee to help address aquatic weed, sediment and nutrient management issues.

This work is being led by the University of Canterbury's Waterway Rehabilitation Experiment (CAREX), which helps find practical ways to improve waterway health.

At Warren Harris' Coldstream farm, woodchip-filled trenches known as denitrifying bioreactors were installed in the ground beside the waterway to help remove nitrates. Recent results show an average 10% reduction in nitrate levels.

Environment Canterbury staff have also been working with farmers in the zone to help develop and implement plans to reduce their impact on the environment.



Woodchip-filled trenches were installed in the ground beside the waterway to help remove nitrates.



## Funding helps boost tuna numbers

The Ashburton Water Zone Committee granted funding for a planting project that will enhance the tuna (eel) habitat in Harding Creek. Tuna have been spotted regularly in the small waterway and it is important to ensure the environment in which they thrive is protected.

New Zealand has two species of tuna, the native longfin and the shortfin. Tuna are a good indicator of in-stream health and there are fewer of them today because of the loss of wetland habitats.

The money from the Immediate Steps fund will also help with regenerating native plants and improving biodiversity along the margins of the creek. In an area with less than 10% of the indigenous vegetation remaining, it is important to increase and support as much native biodiversity as possible.

The landowner has already undertaken other significant planting projects along the lower section of the creek.

Regenerating native plants and improving biodiversity values is a key priority of the Ashburton Water Zone Committee.



Planting natives along waterways helps to protect tuna habitat and boosts biodiversity in the area.



## New project helps protect drinking water

The Ashburton Water Zone Committee welcomed an increase in the monitoring of land-use practices that can affect community drinking supplies.

Zone Committee Chair Bill Thomas said ensuring the community has a safe supply of drinking water was a non-negotiable priority for the committee.

"In the past two years, we have seen greater awareness of the need to protect our community drinking water zones and ensure nearby land-uses are not impacting on water quality."

Earlier this year, the committee signed off on a new 'Safe and Sustainable Drinking Water' priority outcome that will help ensure there is a sustainable supply of water that meets the needs of future generations and complies with drinking water standards.

There are just under 30 community drinking water protection zones in the district and Environment Canterbury is increasing its water quality monitoring and compliance monitoring to help make sure this happens.



Environment Canterbury is increasing its water quality monitoring and compliance programmes to help protect the resource.





Zone committee members visited Craig and Helen Elliott's Farm at Lauriston to learn about their extensive riparian planting.

## Future challenges and opportunities

The Ashburton Water Zone Committee is very keen to remain relevant in today's world and is endeavouring to have a broad section of the community represented on the committee and set meaningful agendas. This may mean fewer formal meetings each year and more field days and workshops to better understand the issues, build our knowledge, and be accessible to the community.

This will hopefully make engaging with the committee a more enjoyable experience and enable the committee to provide a greater contribution to water management in the zone.

Some of the key priorities for the coming year include:

- Developing recommendations on how to increase of minimum flows for the Ashburton River.
- Receiving progress updates on the Managed Aquifer Recharge Pilot and considering how this technology could be used in other parts of our zone.
- Engaging more effectively with young people in the zone and through the Ashburton District Council, Environment Canterbury, Rūnanga and local schools.
- Work with interested parties to develop solutions that address the community's concern about the reliability of water supply to the Wakanui hapua/lagoon.
- Maintain oversight of investigations into poor water quality in Carters Creek and make recommendations for improvement.

## Zone description

The Ashburton Water Zone is divided by the Ashburton and Hekeao/Hinds rivers, which have their origins in the foothills.

The rivers, lakes and wetlands that once covered large areas of the zone have always been an important place and food basket for Ngāi Tahu. Three rūnanga consider the zone part of their takiwā – Arowhenua Rūnanga, Taumutu Rūnanga and Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga.

## Zone committee membership

William Thomas  
(Community member)  
- Chair

Chris Allen  
(Community member)  
- Deputy Chair

Ben Curry  
(Community member)

Gordon Guthrie  
(Community member)

John Waugh  
(Community member)

Angela Cushnie  
(Community Member)

Cargill Henderson  
(Community Member)

Karl Russel  
(Arowhenua Rūnanga)

Arapata Reuben  
(Tūāhuriri Rūnanga)

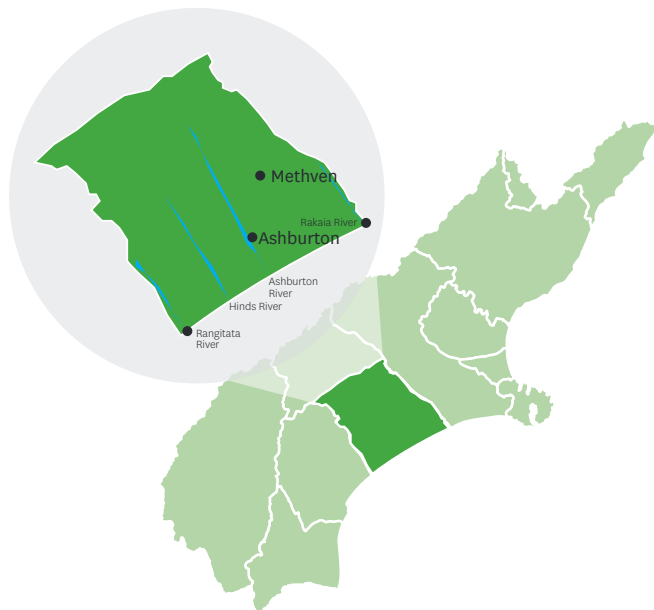
Stuart Wilson  
(Ashburton District  
Council representative)

David Caygill  
(Environment  
Canterbury Councillor)

## Key Zone contacts

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The Ashburton Water Zone Committee is a community led committee supported by councils.

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