

# 2020 Progress Report

## Restoring our fragile freshwater systems



Michael Blackwell, Waimakariri  
Water Zone Committee Chair

This year saw a renewed focus on the health of waterways through the Government's Essential Freshwater package, which was announced in August. Plan Change 7 to the Canterbury Land & Water Regional Plan, part of which relates specifically to Waimakariri, has almost progressed through its submission and hearings process.

In their deliberations, the hearing commissioners will take account of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM), a key element of the new package.

Te Mana o te Wai underpins the NPS-FM. This concept prioritises the health of freshwater systems. Our community must view their systems and practices through this new lens. The Zone Committee is an ideal conduit to help facilitate change. This includes a series of mahinga kai workshops to help farmers evolve their farming operations.

It was pleasing to witness our community's willingness to enhance Waimakariri's waterways during the Plan Change 7 hearings. I hope Plan Change 7 will produce bold and far-reaching changes which support the Canterbury Water Management Strategy.

Compared with most of New Zealand, Waimakariri is ahead of the curve in terms of engaging with farmers, environmental groups and the wider community, but we still have plenty of work ahead to restore our rivers and streams.

2021 will see the Zone Committee continue to facilitate positive change by working collaboratively with Environment Canterbury, the Waimakariri District Council and our three newly formed working groups - Biodiversity, Landcare and Catchment.

## Key achievements 2020

- Over 85% of the Waimakariri Zone Implementation Programme Addendum recommendations (including those incorporated into proposed Plan Change 7 of the Land & Water Regional Plan), have been progressed during 2020.
- The Zone Committee supported recommendations to fund 5 Immediate Steps biodiversity projects.
- The committee facilitated discussions in the coastal areas around the Te Aka Aka estuary. These focused on establishing catchment groups at Saltwater Creek and Waikuku.
- The committee established three working groups to engage with the community and address freshwater priorities in the zone. The working groups are prioritising catchment group formation, biodiversity and land care, while engaging with and encouraging farmers and other community members to deliver catchment-based outcomes.
- Mahinga kai support for the farming community started in 2020, with the first shed talks hosted by Environment Canterbury Poū Matai Ko Makarini Rupene.

Poū Matai Kō Makarini Rupene discussed mahinga kai with the community via farmer "shed talks". Crayfish in your drains? Lizards in the flax? Whitebait in the creek? The Zone Committee supported Makarini's work as he focused on Waimakariri where he grew up and lives. His role is focused on raising awareness of how to use the land and environment in a way that cultivates an understanding of mahinga kai and sustainability.





# 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 deliver 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

## Extraordinary year provides a chance to pause and reflect

2020 has been an extraordinary year in more ways than one.

This time last year we had not heard of Covid-19 or the exceptional lengths governments from around the world would take to slow its spread. Keeping any group working productively together in such circumstances can be a challenge but each committee has embraced new technology to communicate, adapted their work programmes and continued their commitment to improve water management in their zone. The committee's year in review report highlights their achievements in what has been a challenging year.

2020 has provided an opportunity to pause and reflect on the achievements of the last ten years of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy and in particular the progress that had been made to put a Resource Management Act planning framework in place (Land and Water Regional Plan). A plan, however, is only as good as the actions that follow. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum asked councils to work in partnership with Rūnanga and committees to refocus their work more on facilitating action on the ground with their local communities. This review of the zone committees has taken longer than expected, because

of Covid-19 disruptions, but we expect to have a new Terms of Reference completed by the end of the year. Councils have also taken the opportunity to clarify their three-year priorities, and where they would like support from committees, in a Letter of Shared Priorities.

The next few years will continue to be challenging for many local communities as they grapple with the implementation of the new National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management and National Environmental Standards for Freshwater. Further, the government has announced its intention to repeal the Resource Management Act and Ngāi Tahu has sought a declaration in the High Court seeking Rangitiratanga over freshwater in its rohe. These changes may be unsettling for many local communities.

The new Terms of Reference and Letter of Shared Priorities will give committees a clear focus for future action and an ability to support their local communities to navigate this next wave of change designed to further improve the mauri and health of our freshwater and the way it is managed.

| A key focus for the zone committee is always the health of the Ashley River/Rakahuri.







## Wetland projects prominent

When Barb and Greg Morriss first embarked on an ambitious project to restore a 250-metre stream running off Saltwater Creek, the area resembled “an overgrown jungle”.

The Morrisses, who milk 400 cows on a 250-hectare block, had noticed their stream was flooding surrounding land more often and decided to allow the area to revert to its original form as a wetland. Barb said this move made sense from both environmental and operational points of view.

In 2017, they received \$10,000 of Immediate Steps biodiversity funding for planting. Barb said this kick-started the project, which has grown into a truly collaborative effort.

The zone committee also allocated \$25,000 of Immediate Steps funds to support protection of a swamp wetland at Okuku Downs in the Lees Valley hill country.

Chair Michael Blackwell said the project rated well in terms of protecting a wetland with high ecological values – a priority for the Zone Committee.

“It’s great to see this sort of project getting underway,” he said. “This is a high-value project protecting 48 hectares of relatively intact ecosystems including a red tussock wetland, adjacent mānuka hill slope and a section of Okuku Downs Stream.”



Barb and Greg Morriss with Environment Canterbury Poū Matai Kō (mahinga kai facilitator) Makarini Rupene



## Nick Ledgard receives community service award

The Zone committee was delighted to see Nick Ledgard receive a Community Services Award in 2020 from the Waimakariri District Council after nominating him for his work to protect braided river birds and their habitat.

Nick has spent over 20 years caring for birds on our braided rivers. He is long-time chair of the Ashley–Rakahuri Rivercare Group, which conducts surveys and river management work to protect key indigenous riverbed birds, such as the endangered wrybill and black-billed gull, which breed in the lower reaches of the Ashley River/Rakahuri.

Nick enthusiastically shares his extensive knowledge through articles and talks with schools, service groups, councils, public gatherings and on local radio. He’s also an expert in trees and actively involved in efforts to control the spread of wilding pines.

In December, Nick took the zone committee out to visit one of the nesting islands on the Ashley River/Rakahuri – see photo at left. He continues to inform understanding of the endangered nature of the region’s braided rivers and birdlife.



Nick Ledgard shows zone committee members Ashley/Rakahuri nesting islands.



## Catchment groups

In February this year the zone committee held a field trip around Taranaki Stream (see photo at right). This initiated discussions on setting up catchment groups with local landowners.

Zone committee member Carolyn Latham facilitated further discussions with local landowners with guest presenters to address topics of interest. These discussions led to the Sefton Saltwater Creek Catchment Group’s formation. The group has a vision of “Healthy water, healthy land, healthy people, healthy future”. It is currently focused on getting advice on suitable plant options for saline environments.

The zone committee has further encouraged group formation in 2020 through its two other working groups. The Landcare Working Group is focused on support of farmer-led initiatives to improve local environmental outcomes. The Biodiversity Working Group is driving the formation of a trust to enable landowners and managers to conserve, enhance and sustainably manage indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems in Waimakariri District.



Zone Committee field trip to Taranaki Stream





*The Waimakariri Water Zone Committee, left to right: Carlyne Latham, Cr Megan Hands, David Ashby, Wendy Main, Erin Harvie, Judith Roper-Lindsay, John Cooke, Michael Blackwell, Arapata Reuben, Cr Sandra Stewart, inset: Cameron Henderson.*

## Zone description

The Waimakariri Zone boundaries are similar to those of the Waimakariri District Council. The zone lies north of the Waimakariri River and extends from Pegasus Bay in the east to the Puketeraki Range in the west. Much of the land to the eastern part of the zone is naturally subject to poor drainage and occasional flooding. The rivers, streams, lagoons and wetlands have always been important places and a food basket for Ngāi Tūāhuriri. The zone is part of the Rūnanga's takiwā.

## Key Zone contacts

**Andrew Arps** – North Canterbury Zone Manager  
andrew.arps@ecan.govt.nz | 027 554 4007

**Murray Griffin** – Waimakariri Water Zone Committee Facilitator  
murray.griffin@ecan.govt.nz | 027 705 4798

**Marco Cataloni** – North Canterbury, Zone Lead (ECan)  
marco.cataloni@ecan.govt.nz | 027 241 7951

## Zone committee membership 2020

### Rūnanga representatives

Arapata Reuben –  
Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tūāhuriri

John Cooke –  
Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tūāhuriri

### Community members

Michael Blackwell (chair)

Cameron Henderson (deputy chair)

Carlyne Latham

Judith Roper-Lindsay

Erin Harvie

Wendy Main

David Ashby

### Council representatives

Cr Sandra Stewart  
(Waimakariri District Council)

Cr Megan Hands  
(Environment Canterbury)

