

2020 Progress Report

Chair column



Simon Cameron, Upper Waitaki
Water Zone Committee Chair

This year's improvement in water quality at Lake Benmore is welcome news but it hasn't slowed the momentum of the zone committee's work to meet the community's expectations for this valued lake.

Annual water quality monitoring results for the Trophic Level Index (TLI) for Lake Benmore's Ahuriri Arm have lowered to 2.75 in 2020, an improvement from the previous year's TLI of 2.9.

While we're always pleased to be notified of improved water quality results, there's still more work to be done in improving good management practices on farms throughout the Ahuriri catchment and Upper Waitaki.

Another lake under the spotlight in 2020 is Ruataniwha – extremely popular for swimming, rowing and of high recreational value to the community. Unfortunately, in January 2020 the main swimming area had to be closed for several days due to high bacteria results.

The committee took action to both find why this is likely to have happened – with an investigation from Environment Canterbury pointing to human waste – and also help stop a recurrence. This involved working with key community partners to organise additional toilets and prepare educational material on the importance of using toilets in our 2020/21 Love Our Lakes campaign.

Key achievements 2020

- Immediate Steps biodiversity funding of \$95,000 was recommended by the committee for 2020/21 across six local projects: bog pine ecosystem protection on Quailburn Station; continuing fencing of significant tarns on Glenmore Station; native planting near Lake Alexandrina; weed control in the Dobson River; and wetland protection on Balmoral Station. The projects aim to protect the health of waterways and environmental values within the zone.
- The Dobson Valley weed control programme has seen significant growth since it began in 2019, with long-term contributions now confirmed from Department of Conservation, Land Information NZ and Glen Lyon Station. More than \$250,000 has been allocated from 2019 to 2023 to control weeds such as willows, lupins, cotoneaster and elderberry with the aim of protecting the braided rivers, wetlands and dryland ecosystems in this unique area.
- The committee has continued to support Environment Canterbury's work with consent holders impacted by a water quality decline at the Ahuriri Arm of Lake Benmore. In addition, the recently established Omarama Catchment Collective has confirmed their status as an Incorporated Society, which will help with future funding applications aiming to improve the catchments water quality.
- Following investigations into the poor water quality results at Lake Ruataniwha, the committee supported the establishment of a working group that included members from Mackenzie District Council, the Ruataniwha campground, Environment Canterbury and the Te Rūnanga o Moeraki. Toilets and an educational campaign were key targets heading into the 2020 summer.

Environment Canterbury's Jenna Hughes-Games and Jason Butt check up the progress of the Dobson weed control project at Glen Lyon Station.



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

Water spills into Lake Benmore at Loch Laird in January 2020.





Mahinga kai explored at community hāngi

Learning about traditional mahinga kai, including our native tuna (eels), in and around our waterways was the theme of the zone committee's community hāngi in Ōmarama in November.

The event, which was the last meeting for 2020, included talks from local rūnanga representatives on mahinga kai natural resources, and then a delicious hāngi.

Hosted by Richard and Annabelle Subtil at Ōmarama Station, the hāngi was a chance for people of all ages, including Ōmarama School pupils, to enjoy some kai and talk with members of the zone committee about the work they have been doing and water management issues in the area.

Participants then got the chance to move around the area to experience three short mahinga kai talks, including learning about the life cycle and characteristics of tuna (eels) and other native fish and plants, as well as the process for creating a hāngi.



Ōmarama School students and members of the community watch as the hāngi is unearthed.



Members of the public at October's meeting at Tekapo Community Hall.



Local focus for Tekapō/Takapō meeting

The lakes and rivers in the Lake Tekapo/Takapō area were the focus of October's zone committee meeting – held in the township's community hall.

Having the meeting on-site, rather than in Twizel, gave people in the northern area of the catchment an opportunity to get involved in the committee and also hear the latest information about water quality.

A significant part of the meeting was an update from Environment Canterbury's science team on the latest water quality results for lakes in the area, ahead of the next recreational season. This showed that generally the water quality of the lakes good but there was concern about a degrading trend in some rivers.

Those who attended were also able to learn about traditional mahinga kai resources found and used in the Takapō area.



Omarama farmers soak up irrigation advice

'Get to know your irrigation equipment better' was the clear message at a water efficiency field day held near Omarama in March.

Hosted by the recently formed Omarama Catchment Collective, the event was held at Twin Peaks Station and was supported by Irrigation New Zealand and Environment Canterbury.

Steve Breneger, Technical Project Manager for Irrigation New Zealand, met with 19 interested Ahuriri catchment farmers to talk through practical tips to help reduce their water losses under irrigation.

The field day complimented on-the-ground work and visits from Environment Canterbury advisors, to help irrigators in the catchment operate sustainable farms with minimal environmental risks.

Encouraging farmers to operate at Good Management Practice (GMP) or better is a pathway supported by the zone committee to meet the community's environmental outcomes for the area.



Farmers listen to Steve Breneger from Irrigation New Zealand at a water efficiency field day near Omarama.



The Upper Waitaki Water Zone Committee left to right: John Wilkie, Cr Stuart Barwood, Cr John Sunckell, Keiran Whyte, Mat Bayliss, Joy Paterson, Richard Subtil, Michael MacMillan and Simon Cameron. Lisa Anderson, Cr Ross McRobie and Cr Miriam Morton are absent.

Zone description

The Upper Waitaki Zone covers the catchments upstream of the Waitaki Dam, from the Lindis Pass to Burkes Pass, including the Mackenzie Basin, and straddles parts of the Waitaki, Waimate and Mackenzie Districts. The committee is a joint committee of the Mackenzie and Waitaki District Councils, and Environment Canterbury. The zone is in the rohe of Arowhenua Rūnanga, Moeraki Rūnanga and Waihao Rūnanga.

Key Zone contacts

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Zone committee membership 2020

Rūnanga representatives

Keiran Whyte –
Te Rūnanga o Moeraki

Michael McMillan –
Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua

John Wilkie –
Te Rūnanga o Waihao

Community members

Simon Cameron (Chair)

Mat Bayliss (Deputy Chair)

Lisa Anderson

Joy Paterson

Richard Subtil

Council representatives

Cr Ross McRobie
(Waitaki District Council)

Cr Miriam Morton
(Waimate District Council)

Cr Stuart Barwood
(Mackenzie District Council)

