

# Solutions in sight for rural quake-damaged land

Farmers and rural land holders still face extensive drainage, flooding and land damage after the massive November 2016 magnitude 7.8 earthquake.

PICTURE: Supplied

■ Pippa Brown

Rural landowners with quake-damaged land will be offered solutions at the next Kaikoura Plains Recovery Project meeting at Donegal House on Friday.

Agfirst agriculture engineering consultant Ian Howatson, who helped carry out field trials on two local farms, will speak.

The three-year project, funded by the Ministry of Primary Industries Earthquake Recovery Fund, was set up last year to help land holders recover.

Farmers faced extensive drainage, flooding and land damage after the magnitude 7.8 earthquake in November 2016.

Shaking from the earthquake caused changes in land levels. Land, that had previously been classed as wet dried up, while in other areas springs popped up and turned into wetland.

Kaikoura Plains Recovery Project manager Jodie Hoggard said there were still no concrete answers.

"The cause will always be (due to) a combination of things. A lot of it will be around historic drainage — old tile systems — or subsurface drainage and overflow pipes, areas where historically it has been drained and the shifting of the ground layers or levels has caused damage to drainage systems.

"From a dairy farming view, in particular, having wet paddocks is not a good thing and these crazy wet conditions that we are still getting causes more problems."

Mr Howatson, who has helped install two drainage systems as trials on two local dairy farms, will speak about the reasons for the land changes and possible solutions to it.

"He can talk through the background about why we are seeing some of these

issues, what possible solutions they can consider on the farm, and run us thought those particular trials we have done already," Ms Hoggard said.

The pilot study had been an opportunity to try to deal with particular issues on the worst affected areas of the farms, and to try to bring new techniques and different ways of farming, she said.

Ms Hoggard said it was great to have his expertise in front of the farmers. She hoped the drainage discussion day would be of interest to a wide audience, not only dairy farmers, and other farmers could learn from the pilot study. The project covered an area from Hapuku through to Scotts Road on the Inland Road, or State highway 70.

"The information was relevant for the wider community to be aware of and it would offer new ways of thinking about things and best practice.

"The biggest proportions of farmers are

dairy, but we also have sheep and beef farmers and lifestyle block holders who can come and glean information and we can help them, too."

Drainage issues have been the main issue post-quake for farmers.

"Other than a straight up management point of view the conditions like they are can cause all sorts of problems environmentally, with water quality issues and sediment runoff and nutrient filtering.

"If you have excessively loaded soils already and there is still more water coming in on top and trying to farm that land all that stuff can only really head straight to the streams really."

**Drainage discussion day to find farm drainage options and solutions post-earthquake, 10.45am to 1pm at Donegal House, Schoolhouse Road, Kaikoura, Friday, June 29. Contact Jodie Hoggard on 03 367 7081 or 027 551 5902 or e-mail [jodie.hoggard@ecan.govt.nz](mailto:jodie.hoggard@ecan.govt.nz)**