

# Water Management

## Canterbury Initiatives and Background

Water in Canterbury is a very topical and potentially controversial issue, subject to many studies and public scrutiny.

The most wide ranging review in Canterbury to date has been the Canterbury Strategic Water Study (CSWS). Stage 1 of the CSWS, undertaken by Lincoln Environmental in response to the severe drought of 1998 and published in 2002, concluded that on an annual basis there is sufficient water in Canterbury to meet likely future demand and development, but that there were seasonal and geographic mismatches between supply and demand. The initial study concluded that water storage and distribution should be considered as part of meeting future demands for water, to supplement supply in times of low natural flows.

Under the auspices of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum, and facilitated by Crown and local funding, the CSWS progressed from 2004 through to 2008, respectively identifying a wide range of potential water storage sites (Stage 2), and then undertaking initial high level desk top evaluations of a more limited number of major storage options (Stage 3). These evaluations incorporated environmental, social, cultural, recreational and economic viewpoints and included multi stakeholder group meetings. Stage 3 concluded that a range of issues, opportunities, trade-offs and concerns would need to be considered and managed for any of the storage options to be taken further. Of all the options considered, the Hurunui catchment option (up to 68,000 hectares of irrigated land) was seen to be perhaps the most viable hydrologically, albeit not without other issues and concerns for some stakeholders.

The CSWS findings were subsequently put on hold (from mid-2008), while wider social, environmental and economic aspects were canvassed in a structured feedback process (in late 2008). The Canterbury Strategic Water Study itself was renamed 'Canterbury Water Management Strategy' (CWMS) as it moved through Stage 4 reviews, which culminated in public consultation in May 2009. This eventually resulted in the publication of the finalised strategy in October and adopted by the Council in November 2009.

## The Wider Scene & Context:

### A Hurunui Perspective

New Zealand's GDP and national prosperity continues to be based on primary production and exports from the land. Recent developments at all levels seem to suggest that the country's reliance on its land based economy will become even greater in the years ahead. Hurunui has a traditional focus on grass fed food and fibre production, and the present and future prosperity of our communities, and their wellbeing on all fronts,

relies on Hurunui continuing to play to this traditional primary sector strength.

The downside effects of the severe droughts of the late 1990s (which in fact triggered the initial Canterbury Strategic Water Study) are testimony to the risk of "doing nothing" with regard to future proofing our land based production, and our community prosperity. These same droughts, and downturns in the agricultural economy, led to major visible decline in Hurunui's rural townships, and the implementation of a Hurunui Tourism strategy was one of the responses. Given the pressures of the global economy, and international tourism outlook, it is highly unlikely that tourism in Hurunui could be the platform for widespread prosperity across all communities and sectors, going forward. Although tourism will be important, it will not replace traditional primary production. Further, it must be remembered that our tourism model is land based, given the attractions of our striking landscapes, the traditional North Canterbury rural character and values, the unique Hanmer Springs alpine spa village, viticulture in the Waipara Valley, and more.

We believe that this issue of prosperity and the critical importance of our land based industries and exports, is even more important than many New Zealanders presently realise. World food production is coming under increasing pressure from the competing interests of bio-fuel production, climate change, world population increase, socio economic growth and development in countries such as India and China... "our planet and global communities need high quality food in ever increasing volumes, and New Zealand's key role, historically, presently and into the future, is as an efficient and sustainable food producer and exporter. Such exports will be crucial to provide for New Zealand's import hungry lifestyle and prosperity for all".

The subject of water is therefore of major importance to us. Given the drought prone nature of the Hurunui, we believe the future prosperity of the district can only be assured with reliable sources of water to irrigate and support an increasing proportion of its "food and fibre" producing farmland. Further, there is also an on-going challenge for us to provide plentiful domestic and stock water supplies and to meet New Zealand's drinking water standards.

We firmly believe that this Long Term Plan represents the best opportunity to demonstrate a sense of leadership, by continuing to support the CWMS through the Hurunui-Waiiau Zone committee.

## Hurunui – Waiiau Zone Committee

In July 2010, the Hurunui Waiiau Zone Committee was formed as a joint committee of the Hurunui District Council and Environment Canterbury. This committee was the first of the Canterbury formed 'Zone Committees' to be established as part of the broader Canterbury Water Management Strategy. The Hurunui Waiiau Zone Committee has worked collaboratively

to develop recommendations on water management in as described in the Zone Implementation Programme (ZIP). See a summary of the ZIP appended to this Plan. A full copy is available on our Council website.

The Zone Committee and this ZIP are part of implementing the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) in the Hurunui Waiau Zone. The CWMS sets as its first order priorities: environment, customary use, community supplies and stock water; with second order priorities as irrigation, renewable electricity generation, recreation and amenity. The Zone Committee recognizes that clean drinking water, land use, water quality and quantity, environmental flows and allocation for the rivers, biodiversity protection and enhancement, irrigation, hydro power development and water storage options, and the principles of kaitiakitanga are all (intimately) interrelated and must be considered as a whole rather than in isolation. The ZIP recommends actions and approaches for collaborative and integrated water management solutions to achieve the CWMS vision, “to enable present and future generations to gain the greatest economic, environmental, recreational and cultural benefits from our water resources”. In accordance with the CWMS, the Zone Committee has arrived at its recommendations through consensus.

## Drinking Water Quality

Under this Strategy, we fully acknowledge that our focus on productive development must be matched with a similar energy and commitment to drinking water standards. See the ‘Key Issues’ and ‘Water Supply’ sections of this plan for a comprehensive explanation of our intentions to address this issue across the Hurunui district.

## Land and Water Quality Use Research

Council will continue to support initiatives, with Enterprise North Canterbury and Environment Canterbury, and other appropriate agencies, to position Hurunui at the forefront of land use and water quality research programmes, projects and pilots in the interests of Hurunui and all rural New Zealand. We believe Hurunui is well placed to pursue this lead role, especially given our dry east coast climate and our strong relationships with entrepreneurial landowners and agencies. We believe that this is a critically important component of our overall strategic and comprehensive approach, particularly to demonstrate that the Hurunui Water Management Strategy in relation to storage and irrigation will require landowners to commit to best industry practise and the uptake of available science.

## Environmental, Social and Recreational Interests

The environmental, social and recreational values of our rivers and lakes are critical to the Hurunui. This point cannot be overemphasised. We fully recognise this and support the concept of having healthy rivers, lakes and streams in the district. We have established a close working relationship with the Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury and Ngai Tahu, and are extending this to other agencies and interest groups on both a general and case specific basis. (e.g. Our present work on the Waipara River is an example of our commitment to play a proactive role in facilitating solutions balancing environmental, recreational and other interests.)

## Advocacy

It should be clear from this strategy that we see the Hurunui Water Management Strategy as a critical component that has the potential to influence, positively or negatively, every aspect of wellbeing and prosperity in this district. Accordingly, we are committed to pursue every advocacy role we can, in support of the Hurunui Water Management Strategy. In particular, we will:

- Continue to play a positive, proactive part in the Canterbury Water Management Strategy
- Lobby Government to position any water development project that meet the aims of the ZIP as important infrastructure developments, in the interests of Hurunui, Canterbury and NZ
- Maintain and/or build relationships with all key stakeholders and interest groups

## Conclusion: The Key Principle of “Balance”

This section on Water Management as outlined has been deliberately included to recognise the importance of the strategic issue of water. We cannot over emphasise the key principle of balance that we firmly believe must be achieved if true prosperity for all is to result. This is not a strategy about irrigation and land use development at any cost. It is equally not a strategy about locking up our resources and assets for the benefit of a few, whoever they may be. The guiding themes of the Hurunui Water Management Strategy are responsible and sustainable growth and development for Hurunui and the prosperity of its communities. At the same time, it is to also protect natural and traditional environmental and recreational values, and a commitment to pursuing and applying best practice land use and water quality research, scientific advances

in water use efficiency and water conservation. Hurunui is at the forefront of this balanced, comprehensive and critically important strategy. That is the role we are engaged in with our community's support and encouragement.



Hurunui River - Acrylic on Canvas - by Stella Sales