



13 March 2007

NEW TUNNEL WILL SIGNIFICANTLY LESSEN IMPACT OF SCHEME ON LANDOWNERS

Central Plains Water Trust today lodged resource consent applications and a notice of requirement to build a 10km tunnel to supply the irrigation scheme's storage lake, alleviating concerns of landowners in the area.

Sheffield farmer, Donald Wright is supporting Central Plains Water's proposal to build the tunnel that will see the impact of the proposed scheme significantly reduced for nearly 30 landowners.

Donald Wright says, "Central Plains Water has been working with me and other landowners to reduce the impact of the proposed scheme on our properties. I am pleased that they have listened to our views and have decided that a tunnel is a viable option."

Central Plains Water Limited Chairman Pat Morrison says, "in an effort to reduce the impact on landowners who were going to be significantly affected by this part of the scheme, we have opted to build a tunnel that will take water from the upper Waimakariri River intake to the proposed Waianiwaniwa reservoir. Today we applied for resource consents to build the tunnel."

The proposed tunnel will start downstream from the Kowai River and run 10km in a straight line to the Waianiwaniwa Valley, exiting into the reservoir by the Malvern Hills Road. "The tunnel will be concrete lined, 3.5 metres in diameter and will be located more than 30 metres below existing ground level. No flora or fauna will be directly affected by construction or operation," says Mr Morrison.

The original plan called for a 15.5km long canal along the southern side of the Waimakariri River and then across the Canterbury Plains near Sheffield, ending with a 3km long tunnel through the Malvern Hills. The consent for the previous open race, which has been replaced by the tunnel, is now being withdrawn.

"Tunnelling was originally considered but at that time it was too expensive. The proposed tunnel is a much better environmental option and due to new advances in technology the costs have lowered to an affordable level," says Mr Morrison.

The proposed tunnel will replace:

- a large canal along the face of the terrace below the Kowai River
- a deep cut at Gorge Hill
- difficult alignments around Sheffield
- an open canal near the Sheffield school
- shallow pipes under the railway and state highway
- complex works near the Hawkins River
- a 3km tunnel under the Malvern Hills.

“The major benefit to landowners is that there will be no ground surface disruption to their property. The method of construction from the Kowai River to the Hawkins River will be by tunnel boring machine rather than blasting, and will not be detectable from the surface. Under the Malvern Hills it might be built by tunnel boring or blasting, but being deeper it is unlikely to be detectable from the surface,” says Mr Morrison.

“For this new application Central Plains Water has consulted with all farmer landowners along the tunnel route (with one exception who is overseas) and has their support. Utility providers and statutory bodies will be consulted as soon as possible, but we expect they will find this proposal has less impact on them than the previous applications.”

Central Plains Water has worked hard to minimise the effects of the scheme on landowners. Last year after consultation, refinement of the scheme’s proposed distribution races saw 300 people no longer impacted says Mr Morrison.

To build the tunnel, Central Plains Water Trust is applying for additional consents from Environment Canterbury and lodging an additional notice of requirement from Selwyn District Council to designate land along the alignment of the tunnel route.

A resource consent hearing has been set for June 2007 to consider the environmental effects of the scheme in fine detail. Central Plains Water will present scientific studies that address the impact of the scheme, and also proposed mitigation strategies at the hearing.

-Ends-

For further information:

Pat Morrison
Chairman – Central Plains Water Limited
(03) 318 3783
021 434 222

Doug Catherwood
Deputy Chair – Central Plains Water Limited
(03) 318 0730