

Embargo until November 11, 2006



## **Selwyn District Council publicly notifies Central Plains Water's consents**

Selwyn District Council today (11 November) publicly notified Central Plains Water's land use consents and notices of requirements for designations.

This means that Selwyn District Council is satisfied that Central Plains Water's application contains sufficient information for potentially affected people to be able to make submissions for or against the scheme.

Central Plains Water Project Manager, Derek Crombie says, "The public notification of the land use and designation applications by Selwyn District Council is a major milestone for the scheme and the final step in moving towards formal hearings."

The land use applications deal with the construction and operation of the distribution network, while the requirement for designations cover the intakes, headrace canal, dam site and reservoir - areas that must be in a set location.

In November 2005, Central Plains Water Limited was the fifth irrigation company in New Zealand to be granted requiring authority status by the Minister for the Environment. This status was challenged by opponents of the scheme and earlier this year the Auditor-General was asked to review the Minister's decision. The Auditor-General found that there were 'no indications that the Minister [of the Environment] had not complied with his statutory obligations' when he when he approved the company's application for requiring authority status.

"We understand that the scheme is of significant interest to a number of landowners in the Selwyn District," says Derek Crombie. "Over the past two years we have held many drop in meetings for people to view the scheme's plans and talk to representatives from Central Plains Water. These meetings have worked well and as result of this, and other consultation, 300 landowners are no longer affected by the scheme and other changes have occurred that lessen the impact of the scheme on other landowners. We plan to hold more of these meetings up until submissions close on January 29, 2007."

Once submissions close Selwyn District Council and Environment Canterbury will announce a date for a joint hearing. They have appointed independent commissioners who will decide whether or not the consents should be granted, and if so, under what terms and conditions. The commissioners will also make recommendations on the proposed designations.

"We encourage people to support the Central Plains Water scheme. It is important for Canterbury. Communities from Opuha to Amuri, Waipara to Waitaki, are seeing tangible benefits from irrigation. The equations are simple. Water on land makes produce – grass, crops, vines, vegetables, flowers – grow. A consistently reliable supply of water gives landowners a much more secure basis on which to plan a growing season, and a much greater variety of what can be profitably grown," says Derek Crombie.

Overall the economic benefits are significant, not just to the Central Plains, but to Christchurch and the region as a whole. Canterbury farmers spend around \$750 million annually on goods and services provided by Christchurch businesses. Export income

from Canterbury's rural sector accounts directly and indirectly for 60-70% of Christchurch's economic activity.

"The scheme will lead to more employment - direct and indirect employment is estimated to increase by around 2,400 jobs (1,000 in agriculture and 1,400 in processing). It will also lead to better roads, more new business start-ups, better services, more classrooms in the local schools and a generally more vibrant community.

"If the Central Plains Water scheme does not go ahead, surface water will continue to be allocated from the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers to individual farmers or small groups of farmers (up to the allowable flow levels established by their respective National Water Conservation Order and Regional River Plan). Our scheme offers an alternative to this status quo. In addition to providing irrigation water, the scheme will provide a range of environmental and recreational benefits that can only be delivered by a large scale, centrally managed, community scheme," says Derek Crombie.

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**For further information:**

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