

News Release
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**Study Points Way Forward for the Region –
Says Water Enhancement Committee**

Central Plains Water has welcomed a major study of Canterbury's water resource, published today by Environment Canterbury, Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry for the Environment.

Doug Marsh, chairman of Central Plains Water, the steering committee established by the Christchurch City and Selwyn District Councils to investigate the feasibility of a water enhancement scheme for Central Canterbury, said the signals from the study were very positive for the proposed scheme.

“The key finding of this study is that co-ordinated management of all the region's surface and groundwater resources will ensure the needs of recreational, agricultural, industrial and civic water users can be met into the future. This has been the rationale of Central Plains Water since it was established in March 2000. It is very gratifying to find that our conclusions are now being championed by local and national government agencies that are completely independent of the work Central Plains Water has undertaken.

“Effectively, the study says it is possible to provide environmental enhancements across Canterbury while accessing significant economic benefit from our region's water resource. This clearly endorses the ongoing adherence by Central Plains Water to a triple bottom line philosophy encompassing environmental, social and economic objectives,” he said.

According to Mr Marsh, the study also supports the view that large scale community water enhancement projects can tie water use for irrigation into improvements for ecosystems, recreation and cultural values.

“What is particularly pleasing in the report is the clear signal that the smaller rivers, historically stressed from abstraction, can be rehabilitated through integrated management of the whole resource and by focusing demand on the larger rivers. Taking this approach, and utilising the effect that an irrigation scheme can have on recharging the groundwater resource that supplies the smaller spring-fed streams on the lower plains shows how the needs of irrigators and recreational users of our rivers can both be met,” he said.

The Canterbury Strategic Water Study found that approximately one million hectares in the region has the potential for irrigation, but that not all of the water that might be used for this is in the right place at the right time. Redistribution of water between catchments and the use of storage reservoirs is suggested by the report as the answer.

When comparing annual water demand with water availability, the study concludes that the region has enough water to meet its foreseeable abstractive needs while providing for in-stream flow requirements, but implies that significant water storage will be required to meet future water demand.

Also, according to the study, redistribution of water between catchments will be required to reduce pressure on small streams and meet long-term water demand. Rehabilitation of the smaller rivers stressed from abstraction will require a reduction in stock water and irrigation takes, or augmentation from larger rivers.

Further information:
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