

Central Plains Water Enhancement

Consultation Programme Report to December 2000.

Project Purpose: To improve the security and prosperity of the Central Canterbury Region through water management schemes that enhance ecological and recreational values while providing opportunity for agricultural and horticultural values.

Consultation Purpose: To facilitate a community forum to discuss how water could be used here on the Central Plains of Canterbury, to enable this community, in considering all its values, to provide for its future. The community builds the foundation blocks of the scheme rather than debate the detail on other people's thinking.

The Process:

In order to achieve this the process had to work in tandem with the Stage One Scoping Study undertaken by URS.

Step one: Quantify Demand/ Issues and Outcomes.

- 6 "woolshed" meetings in the rural community were held to determine what demand there is for water and what are the issues and options for this community.
- 6 stakeholder forums, Environmental interests, Commercial and Tourism interests, River Rate and Drainage committees, Tangata Whenua, existing river users and Government Departments. These meetings sought to identify the issues of concern to these groups and the outcomes that they would be seeking in this process.

The outcomes of these meetings is listed as appendix one.

Step two: Potential Water User Groups. From the first round of meetings with the rural sector potential water users were asked to form groups to add ginger to the process by identifying interest in their community for the use of irrigation. Small groups of enthusiastic individuals contacted the members of their community to see if people were keen to indicate their interest on a map and a data base. Colouring in the maps, as it became known was very successful. At this time we have over 300 names on our data base covering an estimated 80,000 hectares.

Step three: The Consultative Working Party was formed. Representatives were selected by the meetings to attend the Consultative Working Party. Some parties were included as they had responded to the Steering Committee's request early in the process.

During Stage one this forum had an important task. To work with the Feasibility Consultants, URS, to select the option or options to progress to stage two. While that work was being done good relationships were forming between the parties. People were able to share their views in a safe forum

and the way the group has functioned has been positive and most pleasing. This has been noted by many of the participants, even those who feel that this project could adversely affect them.

The working party progressed through a process that first asked them "On what will you base your decision?" This led to the development of draft criteria for the assessment of the options. A formal questionnaire was completed and the results collated. Before the results of this work was communicated, the working party completed a "gut feel" analysis. The formal system and the gut feel both achieved the same result with the options including the Wairiri valley scoring best.

The Bus Tour.

An important day out for the working party was to travel right through the plains and see the proposals together and importantly hear what other people felt and valued about this place. This was a great success given the feedback. Now we all have a common picture of what were previously names on maps.

While this programme has formed the formal agenda a number of other meetings have taken place to address significant issues that have arisen during the process.

The Storage Issue.

It was identified early in the process that water would need to be stored somewhere on the plains to give enough reliability of water supply to any scheme to irrigate the defined area. Technical investigation revealed a number of options that were identified on a map, initially without the owners of this property being aware of this. This was the first issue that emerged as a result of the study that showed potential direct effects on individuals. Consultation programmes are often judged on how these unforeseen issues are handled.

The response was to directly contact those property owners affected and go and see them to give them what information we had **before** anyone else communicated this information to those people. Meetings were held at Highpeak Station, Whitecliffs Valley, Wairiri Valley, Waianiwi Valley and Russells Flat. The meetings were successful in achieving their purpose.

The Canal Issue

In order to get the water from the rivers to the storage option and reticulate water to a scheme open water canals would need to be used. As soon as the information was available people whose property may be effected were contacted and invited to a meeting to discuss this in the same manner as the storage options were handled. Two meetings were held on the flat near Darfield and Hororata. A further meeting was held up at Windwhistle.

The views on irrigation canals are divided into two camps. Those that see no advantage to them and those that do. Irrigation canals traveling through a

property is seen as something to put up with if you want water for irrigation and something you don't want if you see no benefit.

The meetings achieved their purpose of informing people what the effects might be. Two issues that emerged are "what is the status of the Public Works Act in this process?" and "How will compensation issues be handled?"

Barrhill Chertsey Irrigation Company.

Talks have been held with this company to see what if any benefits could come from our discussions. This company is working through its consent process to take and use 17 cumecs of water from the Rakaia River. No formal opportunities were identified, we will keep in touch.

Department Of Conservation.

A meeting was held to brief the department on the Central Plains Process. It was a positive meeting and the department has agreed to engage at the working party level.

Orion.

A meeting was held with the CE and senior staff to communicate what Central Plains was doing and to address the issue of Orion's network capability should a scheme proceed. They were pleased that we were giving them ample notice of the need for increased capacity. Talks will continue.

NZ Defence Force.

The Wairiri Valley has a Defence Force Munitions Depot that will be effected by a storage option being built in the valley. Talks are underway and the initial response has been that the NZDF do not see this as a fatal flaw. The talking will continue to find a solution.

Other communication opportunities.

Invitations have been extended to address meetings like the Foundation for Arable Research and the Hororata Lions Club. Where these have been undertaken they have proved a useful mechanism for reaching a wide audience and broadening our communication base.

Where does this leave us at the end of Stage One?

We have sought to conduct an inclusive programme that seeks and identifies all the issues and values the community of interest holds in regard to the use of water here on the central plains. There are competing demands for this valuable resource. The inclusive nature of the process has meant that all parties have felt that they have been heard and in return they have been able to hear the views expressed by others.

The Consultative Working Party has formed strong relationships between the parties. The views of those parties is known to all. The forum is in good heart to tackle Stage Two, the full feasibility study. We look forward to next year to begin work on the detail, together.