

## Questions and Answers

Release of Draft Strategy  
3 September 2009

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**Q. How long has this work been going?**

A. The Canterbury Strategic Water Study, which was a scientific and technical study began in 2001 and continued until 2007. In 2008 it morphed into the Canterbury Water Management Strategy with a new widely representative Steering Group and a focus on public consultation and discussion.

**Q. How much longer will it take?**

A. The strategy itself will be completed in October/November 2009 at which point it will be submitted to the local authorities, the regional council and Ngāi Tahu for support and endorsement. Once this is forthcoming the implementation process will begin. The CWMS has consistently met its deadlines throughout the last 18 months.

**Q. Isn't this just more bureaucracy?**

A. The current situation is cluttered with legal wrangling. The costs to city and district councils and the regional council for administration in this area are enormous, all because there is insufficient focus and direction. The strategy will provide this and substantially reduce the clutter.

**Q. Will Central Government come to the party?**

A. The Ministers of Agriculture and Environment have been actively involved together with officials from Central Government. All parties are keen for this strategy to succeed. Whether Central Government will make a financial contribution to any part of the implementation of this strategy is still a matter to resolve.

**Q. Will this ambitious programme work financially?**

A. This is a very important question. A financial study is currently underway to ascertain the financial viability of the strategy. Something will be viable. Until the study is complete we will not know what is viable.

**Q. Shouldn't the economic and financial study have been done first, not last?**

A. Until the strategy had defined a clear direction such analysis would have been purely theoretical. With the clear direction this strategy now sets, economic and financial analysis can help identify how much is possible and what the challenges will be.

**Q. What is the preferred storage site?**

A. The strategy has deliberately not identified a single storage site. Instead it has narrowed down the alternatives drawing on the work done in Stages 1-3 of the Strategic Water Study. That Study identified 12 options from many possibilities. This strategy has reduced those to eight.

Many of the options excluded were felt to present too many environmental risks. Each of the options chosen requires further work study, especially from an environmental point of view. In addition, until the work of the zone committees proposed in the strategy is well advanced it will not be clear how much water would be required and where.

**Q. How much water can be reclaimed from efficiencies**

A. Efficiency is a very dynamic concept. We won't know the answer to this question until the zone groups have done their work. The efficiency gains will be greater in some areas and lesser in others. They are, however, assessed to be significant and achievable.

**Q. Won't a water entity be a monopoly with all the problems that suggests?**

A. Yes, it will be a monopoly, but with at least 50% ownership by the local authorities. It will also have to operate within a brief supplied by those local authorities that will emphasise a balance approach to development and environment. There needs to be more planning and stability on the supply side and such a body would offer that.

**Q. Won't some of these zone groups just go off and do their own thing?**

A. Yes, and it's important that they feel they have a meaningful role and some power. That way they will be motivated to find solutions. However, they will have to operate within the Fundamental Principles and the Targets contained in the strategy, so they will not have a completely free hand. They will also have to submit their plans for peer review by the regional committee and the water executive. The method of final approval is still being considered, and the alternatives are outlined in the strategy.

**Q. Will Ngai Tahu have a significant role?**

A. The strategy proposes a role for Ngai Tahu at three levels – through runanga in the zone groups, for the tribe at the regional level and as a Treaty partner with Government at the national level. Details of how this will work have to be worked through by the parties.

**Q. Why would environmentalists agree to this?**

A. There is a win for everyone in this. While environmental interests would need to accede to the building of more storage, that storage would generate more funds for restoration and conservation priorities. There is also a commitment to immediately address ecosystem protection and restoration. It would also help “buy out” efficiencies that will reduce ground water contamination and improve river flows. These gains would not be possible without storage.

**Q. What is meant by ecosystem restoration?**

A. Submissions in April this year expressed a strong concern about the decline in Canterbury’s freshwater environments. The Strategy responds to this by suggesting an Immediate Steps Restoration Programmes that would see significant expenditure/support for on-the-ground actions such as riparian planting, fencing, pest control and wetland protection.

**Q. Why would farming interests agree to this?**

A. With climate change and uncertainty around rainfall, water supply will become less and less reliable. For farmers reliability is king and reliability comes from strategically planned storage. Farmers, we have been assured, would trade efficiencies for reliability.

**Q. Why would the regional Council – Environment Canterbury – agree to this as it involves some change to their role?**

A. ECan has indicated that they are just as frustrated as others with the high degree of difficulty in managing water in the current environment. ECan receives a great deal of criticism on behalf of a system that is not solely of their design. The strategy provides the opportunity to find solutions and make progress on environmental and development priorities.