

Media Release

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MacKenzie District consulted on water

MacKenzie District's water came under the spotlight at a meeting in Fairlie attended by 16 people representing local community groups and organisations. These meetings, to list the benefits and uses of water, are being held around the region as a prelude to developing a strategy for managing Canterbury's water over at least the next 20 years.

The main theme emerging at the meeting was that irrigation provides stability for the district by mitigating drought and that this provides economic and employment stability, facilitator Julia Laming says. "Sound leadership and science is essential to decision making about water management in Canterbury and all irrigation projects should be sustainable and community-led."

Attendees were especially positive about the Opuha Dam scheme which is considered a real success story, Julia says. "They believe this should be used as a template for future developments because it has had benefits for a diverse range of people and has built the community, both socially and economically."

People were very clear that each district in Canterbury is unique and has unique issues, Julia says. "There can't be a 'one size fits all' approach to water strategy. They want to see local projects and strategies that suit the local environment.

"People are also passionate in their views on the uses and benefits of water. A comment from one of the people there that really struck me was that 'water defines us as New Zealanders – it is who we are'."

The Canterbury Water Management Strategy is being developed under leadership of the Mayoral Forum, a group of mayors and chief executives from all of Canterbury's councils. Mayor John O'Neill represents the MacKenzie District on the Forum and attended the meeting, along with Chief Executive Glen Innes and Canterbury Water Management Strategy Steering Group member Peter Scott.

The Steering Group has been appointed by the Mayoral Forum to develop and implement the strategy. Environment Canterbury provides administrative support to the Steering Group, including facilitation of stakeholder meetings.

This round of meetings is for representatives of community groups and organisations only. There will be opportunities for the general public to be involved later in the year. To find out more about the Canterbury Water Management Strategy programme, go to www.canterburywater.org.nz

Ends

For further information:

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