
Water Management Strategy seeks public views

Public consultation is now underway on the future management of Canterbury water. An options booklet outlining a number of alternative approaches on how best to create a sustainable future for Canterbury water is being delivered to all households in the Canterbury region.

The booklet, aimed at encouraging all those in the community with an interest to have their say about the long-term future of water, provides four different options for consideration. Feedback and submissions will assist the development of the draft Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) due for completion later this year.

Bede O'Malley, Chair of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy Steering Group says, "This is the community's call to action. We are strongly urging everyone living in the region to think about what their 50-year vision for water in Canterbury might be and to use the public consultation process as an opportunity to tell us what they believe the best approach will be to achieve the desired outcome.

"Having attended recent stakeholder workshops and listened to all sides of the water debate I believe more than ever that development and environmental protection can occur together. It will require some give and take but it is achievable. The time has come where we need to listen to each other and work together in finding a solution to the regions water issues that will ultimately work in the best interests of everyone."

The strategy is an initiative of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum (a forum of all Canterbury Councils) who recognised the need for a more coordinated and forward thinking approach to the management of Canterbury's water. They have appointed a Steering Group, chaired by Ashburton District Mayor, Bede O'Malley and made up of local government, environmental, farming, industry, tangata whenua and recreational interests to oversee the project.

Mayor O'Malley says, "It is a well known fact that there is growing pressure on our water resource in Canterbury and effective stewardship is now crucial before it is too late.

“We need to bring together all of the different interests and concerns for water, whether they be those who are most concerned about the environment, the regional economy, recreational users, or tangata whenua, and work collaboratively to ensure this valuable resource is effectively used and maintained for future generations.”

The public consultation will involve a series of public meetings to be held throughout the region from 18 – 22nd May. Submissions are being called for and hearings are scheduled for the first week in June.

The need for a strategy came about following concerns raised by the primary production sector after the severe droughts in the region in the late 1990s. This led to a study completed in 2002 by Environment Canterbury, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry for the Environment that found that there is considerable seasonal pressure on water resources under the present management system.

Mayor O'Malley says, “Our goal is to gain the greatest cultural, economic, environmental, recreational and social benefits from our water resources within a sustainable framework both now and for future generations.

“We know a workable solution is achievable. It's not going to be simple and it won't be a quick fix solution but we are committed to this project and to securing long-term sustainable water management for the Canterbury region.”

Those wanting to find out more detailed information about the Canterbury Water Management Strategy are encouraged to visit the website: www.canterburywater.org.nz.

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For further information or comment please contact Bede O'Malley on 027 631 4784

Please find an electronic copy of the booklet attached to this release.