

## Ashburton - Work Programme Progress update 30 June 2018

### Ashburton Work Programme Summary:

Significant progress has been made across all work programmes related to the five outcomes in Ashburton Zone. Earlier in the year, the focus was on the Ashburton/Hakatere River, Biodiversity and Good Management Practice outcomes, particularly the latter as it aligned with two regional campaigns being rolled out by Environment Canterbury. However, in the latter part of the year, new energy has been put into the Hekeao/Hinds River and Drains outcome in response to the reinvigorated Hinds Drains Working Party process and the need to provide wrap around support for this work. This area of activity will now be a focus for the latter part of 2018.

Outcome	Status	Progress update
<p><b>Good management practice (GMP)</b> All farmers are operating at Good Management Practice (GMP) or better</p>	On Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The journey to achieve widespread uptake of good management practice by farmers within the Ashburton Zone has continued with positive results over the past year.</li> <li>Zone team staff held ongoing meetings with rural professionals including rural bankers, real estate agents and farm advisors to upskill and inform of GMP requirements. The feedback from these groups shows an increasing normalisation of environmental best practice with rural professionals recognising the need to integrate similar conversations into their engagements with farmers.</li> <li>Support has been provided to the newly formed Mid Canterbury Independent Irrigators Group which disseminates information to its members. Overseer advice, plan and rule interpretation and the water data programme have all been covered.</li> <li>A trial Audit 101 workshop was held with 30 participants to increase knowledge of auditing requirements. A follow up workshop is planned for 2018/19.</li> <li>Staff have attended industry workshops including Mayfield Hinds Valetta Irrigation, DairyNZ, DeerNZ, Landcare Trust and FAR to provide GMP and FEP advice.</li> <li>Two consent to farm campaigns targeting farmers with more than 50 ha of irrigation and those in the Hinds catchment with more than 5 hectares have been undertaken, with staff providing support via drop in sessions, advertising and resource materials and phone calls and email. Almost all (99%) of farmers from the first campaign are on track to move towards consent. Early results from the Hinds campaign show most who have contacted Environment Canterbury are deemed to be permitted activities, but phone follow up will now commence with the ones who haven't engaged with the campaign.</li> <li>A review of the irrigation efficiency bucket test programme was held with the next stage commencing in Selwyn/Waihora Zone. Case studies from the Ashburton pilot have been circulated and interest in a follow up programme for Ashburton farmers remains high.</li> <li>PC2 became operative 1 June 2018 and resource materials have been prepared and distributed to key stakeholders, industry and farming interests.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Biodiversity</b> Landowners, rūnanga, stakeholders, local authorities and others are working together to protect and enhance biodiversity throughout the zone.</p>	On Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ashburton District Council Biodiversity Working Group continues to provide a forum for co-ordination of biodiversity work programmes across the zone. This has been strengthened by a joint-meeting of the Ashburton Zone Committee and working group. Following the meeting, a Zone Committee member has been asked to join the working group to generate greater awareness of each group's activities. Other actions resulting from this meeting include a focus on dryland vegetation opportunities, greater alignment being sought between Environment Canterbury and Ashburton District Council consenting and compliance processes and investigation of signage to highlight biodiversity values in the zone.</li> <li>Priority weed and pest control for braided river habitat in the Rakaia and Rangitata Rivers has been carried out with support from the Regional Immediate Steps funding programme.</li> <li>The focus on developing biodiversity values in two priority areas within the zone, the foothills and coast/lowland streams, continued with new projects approved around Mt Harding Creek near Methven and the Staveley/Mt Somers area. An investigation into a possible donga project within Five Star Beef's property is underway.</li> <li>Further potential Mahinga Kai sites were identified as part of our summer student's investigation into springs and streams on both sides of the Ashburton River over the 2017/18 summer. New springs were mapped and previous spring head locations confirmed by the study, which was undertaken with landowner support. The next stage is to more fully investigate the sites and liaise with Arowhenua on the implementation of Mahinga Kai access points.</li> <li>TrustPower environmental funding was apportioned to a new major project within the Rakaia Gorge which has a recreational and biodiversity emphasis.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Hakatere/Ashburton River</b> Improve the ecosystem health of the Hakatere/ Ashburton River.</p>	On Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efforts to increase the minimum flow of the Ashburton River and improve its ecosystem health are ramping up. The Ashburton Zone Committee has asked for full science modelling on water takes near the Ashburton River which may have an impact on its flow. This work has been undertaken and the results are being peer reviewed before a presentation back to the committee in June 2018. The proposed Long Term Plan includes budget for a potential consent review.</li> <li>• Ashburton District Council (ADC) has reported to the Ashburton Zone Committee about its progress towards meeting the reduction in stockwater take target. ADC is now developing a surface water strategy which will encompass surface water activity as well as other surface water matters.</li> <li>• Faecal source tracking of E Coli continued over the summer months and results are communicated to the Zone Committee.</li> <li>• Pre-season and end of season habitat protection meetings were held with favourable results being tabled for both habitat and bird breeding, mainly due to high flows in the river. No island creation was needed due to high flows but will be scheduled for next season. Weed and pest control was carried out by a mix of community volunteers and paid contractors with successful results. In particular, high fledging rates for gulls and terns were noted.</li> <li>• A new project to improve the ecosystem health of Carters Creek is under development. Ashburton District Council has contributed by improving stormwater sumps leading into the catchment and fitting some sumps with a litter bag to collect debris. Environment Canterbury's Field Services team have removed several tonnes of rubbish from the creek and improved bank stability in some sections. Faecal source tracking of E Coli results has also commenced to provide greater clarity around contributors to poor water quality. A project scoping exercise is underway to determine where the focus should be in the coming financial year.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hekeao/Hinds River and Drains</b> Hinds River and Drains are managed in a way that provides for multiple needs/interests.</p>	On Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong progress is being made towards the completion of Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) and Targeted Stream Augmentation (TSA) trials. The MAR year 1 pilot project has been completed and results communicated to the community. Consent for further MAR trials was obtained and 18 projects commenced earlier this year. A Governance Group has been established to oversee the trials and build a business case for a catchment-wide scheme. A TSA scholarship has commenced with support from Environment Canterbury and the Waterways Centre for Freshwater Management. Early results from this study will be available later this year.</li> <li>• The Hinds Drains Working Party has been reconvened to look at implementation of their recommendations. They will work with an Environment Canterbury planner to assess whether plan changes are necessary to implement their recommendations.</li> <li>• The Boundary Drain Trial consent was exercised. Implementation of the monitoring approach is still being pieced together. An external project manager has been approved to get the Boundary Drain Trial monitoring process underway and oversee fish passage and Mahinga Kai work programmes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community understanding</b> The urban and rural community understand the environmental, economic and social trends occurring in the zone and there is widespread ownership of catchment health.</p>	On Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular communication with the Ashburton community through a variety of mediums continues to engender widespread ownership of catchment health. Environment Canterbury- generated articles and advertisements have raised awareness of showcase the respective roles of the Zone Committee, Environment Canterbury and the efforts of other agencies and community groups to make a difference to water and biodiversity outcomes in the zone.</li> <li>• Quarterly reporting of water quality and ecosystem monitoring results via the Ashburton Zone Committee.</li> <li>• Fish&amp;Game presented their fish monitoring and habitat enhancement monitoring results early in 2018.</li> <li>• A community planting day in October 2017 drew more than 100 participants from the community and helped raise awareness of both recreational and biodiversity outcomes under the CWMS.</li> <li>• A joint letter with Community Public Health encouraged landowners with bores to undertake water quality testing</li> </ul>